

## European Parliament resolution on Estonia's application for membership of the European Union and the state of negotiations (5 September 2001)

**Caption:** On 5 September 2001, the European Parliament adopts a resolution on Estonia's application for accession to the European Union and on the state of negotiations.

**Source:** European Parliament resolution on Estonia's application for membership of the European Union and the state of negotiations (COM(2000) 704 - C5-0604/2000 - 1997/2177(COS)). [ON-LINE]. [Strasbourg]: European Parliament, [20.05.2005]. A5-0251/2001. Available on [http://www3.europarl.eu.int/omk/omnsapir.so/pv2?PRG=CALDOC&FILE=010905&LANGUE=EN&TPV=PROV&SD OCTA=8&TXTLST=1&Type\\_Doc=FIRST&POS=1](http://www3.europarl.eu.int/omk/omnsapir.so/pv2?PRG=CALDOC&FILE=010905&LANGUE=EN&TPV=PROV&SD OCTA=8&TXTLST=1&Type_Doc=FIRST&POS=1).

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## European Parliament resolution on Estonia's application for membership of the European Union and the state of negotiations (5 September 2001)

(COM(2000) 704 - C5-0604/2000 - 1997/2177(COS))

### The European Parliament,

- having regard to Estonia's application for membership of the European Union, submitted on 24 November 1995, pursuant to Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union,
  - having regard to the 2000 Regular Report from the Commission on Estonia's progress towards accession (COM(2000) 704 - C5-0604/2000),
  - having regard to the Enlargement Strategy Paper on progress towards accession by each of the candidate countries presented by the Commission (COM(2000) 700),
  - having regard to the decisions taken by the European Council, notably at Copenhagen (21 and 22 June 1993), Helsinki (10 and 11 December 1999), Nice (7-9 December 2000) and Gothenburg (15 and 16 June 2001),
  - having regard to the Accession Partnership for Estonia concluded in 1999.
  - having regard to its resolution of 4 October 2000 on Estonia's membership application to the European Union and the state of negotiations (COM(1999) 504 - C5-0027/2000 - 1997/2177 COS)(1),
  - having regard to Rule 47(1) of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy and the opinions of the other committees concerned (A5-0251/2001),
- A. mindful of the absolute necessity to make a success of the EU enlargement process,
- B. convinced that this presupposes openness, frankness and respect for agreed rules and principles, on the part of the EU institutions and the Member States as well as on the part of the candidate countries,
- C. convinced also that, in the most difficult final phase of the negotiations, all parties must refrain from making unreasonable demands; expecting that, instead, their actions will demonstrate their unstinting commitment to the project of healing the wounds inflicted upon our continent by tragic events in the past,
- D. whereas Parliament has made an important contribution to defining the principles and policies that are now guiding the enlargement process; whereas these principles and policies have proven their worth,
- E. whereas Estonia continues to make good progress in its preparations for EU membership and has clearly emerged as one of the leaders among the candidate countries,
- F. whereas the quality of Estonia's preparations and the extent to which it has been ready to make commitments have allowed the negotiations to proceed at a steady pace,
- G. whereas the momentum should be maintained and this implies that particular problems and potential obstacles are clearly identified and properly dealt with,

### Fulfilment of the Copenhagen criteria

#### Political criteria

1. Recognises that Estonia clearly satisfies the political criteria for EU membership;
2. Welcomes the fact that the problems with the legal environment in which the relationship between ethnic minorities in Estonia and Estonian society at large is evolving have essentially been resolved; encourages Estonia to proceed with the implementation of its programme 'Integration of Estonian Society 2000-2007';
3. Supports the view that further development of Estonian language skills within the mainly Russian-speaking ethnic minority groups is important; is concerned, therefore, about the persistent difficulties in ensuring easy access to Estonian language training of sufficient quality, in particular in the North-Eastern part of the country, where it is most needed;
4. Encourages Estonia to accelerate ongoing efforts to reform the judiciary, improve prison conditions and prevent instances of misconduct by police and correction personnel;
5. Congratulates Estonia on regularly receiving more favourable rankings in corruption estimates than virtually all other EU candidate countries and also some Member States; is aware that there is nevertheless scope for further improvement and notes Estonia's efforts to that end;
6. Welcomes the recent decision of the Estonian Parliament (Riigikogu) to repeal several provisions of the old penal code (Kriminaalkoodeks) that discriminated against homosexual men and lesbian women by adopting the new penal code (Karistusseadustik);

#### **Economic criteria**

7. Supports the Commission's conclusion, in the last Regular Report, that Estonia is a functioning market economy and should be able to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the EU in the short term, provided that it stays on its current path of reform;
8. Congratulates Estonia on its highly successful economic development, characterised by strong growth, limited inflation, a considerable inflow of foreign direct investment, balance in the public finances and a current account deficit that is gradually being brought down;
9. Notes that this success is made possible not least by a clear policy for macro-economic stability, extensive reliance on market forces, emphasis on education and a keen interest in exploiting the possibilities opened by technological progress;

#### **Acquis criteria**

10. Notes the detailed overview and assessment included in the Commission's 2000 Regular Report; notes, also, that Estonia considers this report to be objective; recognises that, since its publication, Estonia has made further progress in transposing the acquis;
11. Welcomes the successful provisional closure of accession negotiations on the environment chapter; trusts that the rhythm of transposition and implementation of the acquis will be maintained, so that interim targets and investment plans can be met as agreed in accession negotiations, in particular with regard to EU nature conservation legislation, which has to be fully enforced by the date of accession; calls for the proposed amendments to the Protected Natural Objects Act, currently under discussion in the Estonian Parliament, to be approved;
12. Notes that the environment chapter has been provisionally closed with Estonia and that four transition periods have been negotiated, including one for drinking water lasting up to 2013; calls for careful monitoring of progress, with the involvement of all stakeholders, including environmental NGOs, in meeting the intermediate targets that have been agreed, and of the implementing measures and financing arrangements that are envisaged;

13. Points to the need for a greater level of public awareness and consultation on issues concerning the creation of a Natura 2000 network of protected areas; welcomes the decision of the Estonian Government to allocate considerable resources from the state budget to restore and manage valuable semi-natural habitats; encourages the Government to continue this policy in order to prevent the degradation of these important habitats;
14. Stresses that it is absolutely necessary that each new Member State should be able to properly implement the *acquis communautaire* in its entirety; notes the Commission's analysis, in its latest report, of where and to what extent Estonia needs to improve its administrative capacity still further; also notes that Estonia approves the broad lines of this analysis;
15. Sympathises with Estonia's general efforts to eliminate all unnecessary bureaucracy and its interest in innovative solutions to administrative problems, including through the intelligent use of new technology; welcomes the prospect of forthcoming proposals from Estonia on how the Community *acquis* can be simplified, clarified and made easier to implement; recalls, however, that the requirement for the proper implementation of the existing *acquis* still applies, irrespective of any conceivable, proposed or already adopted amendments to it;
16. Regards it as unacceptable that foreign works can continue to be disseminated legally in Estonia without permission and without any fee being paid to the author;

### **The Pre-Accession Strategy**

17. Points to the difficult situation in North-East Estonia, where high unemployment, degradation of the environment, uncertain economic prospects, spread of HIV, insufficient capacity of the judiciary and other phenomena form a cluster of problems that calls for a comprehensive response;
18. Recalls that Estonia, after accession, will receive considerable EU funding for regional development; calls on it to resolutely address existing problems with regard to institutional structures and administrative capacity and to pay particular attention to partnership with all levels of government, social partners and NGOs, so as to make sure that it will be prepared to make the best possible use of future EU support;
19. Stresses the need to ensure a larger degree of flexibility as regards the size of projects to be financed under ISPA programme, so as to better respond to the needs of local and regional communities;
20. Notes opinion polls in Estonia which point to a drop in support for EU membership and is concerned that some of the candidate countries may turn their backs on the reunification of Europe, since this would diminish the force and capacity of European cooperation;

### **The negotiations and crucial issues in view of Parliament's assent to Estonia's accession**

21. Notes the Union's own preparations for enlargement and takes into account the decision that it should be ready to receive new members from 1 January 2003; points out that the timing of the first accessions should therefore in practice depend exclusively on the candidate countries' preparations and the successful conclusion of their negotiations; notes, however, that the political commitment of EU leaders must be reinforced;
22. Welcomes and supports the road map for the conclusion of the negotiations prepared by the Commission and endorsed by the Nice European Council; notes that progress so far is in line with it; concludes that it should be realistic for the first accessions to take place before the European elections in 2004, but recalls that the road map gives little margin for delay and urges that the pace be kept up;
23. Considers that it is of crucial importance for the cohesion of the Union that the *acquis communautaire* should accord the same rights and obligations to all Member States; stresses that this principle needs to be defended against ill-founded demands for transitional solutions or special arrangements, whether from

candidate countries or existing Member States;

24. Declares its intention to vigorously oppose any attempt that might be made to introduce any new requirement for candidate countries; considers that avoiding unnecessary delays in the negotiations and accessions is important for the Union's credibility;

25. Resolutely distances itself from any action whatsoever to block negotiations on a specific chapter, or to block the accession of any country, in order to insist on a demand which is of no relevance at all to the chapter in question, or which has nothing to do with the state of preparedness for accession of the country or countries affected by this action;

### **Other major issues and recommendations**

26. Draws attention to the fact that unemployment is high and that considerable disparities in economic development also pose challenges to economic and social cohesion;

27. Welcomes the fact that the Estonian SAPARD agency has finally been accredited; stresses the importance of integrated rural development for the enlargement process; notes with concern, however, the rural population's lack of information on, and growing dissatisfaction; calls on the Commission to help ensure that there is a considerable improvement in the information provided to the rural population on rural development plans and in its involvement in them;

28. Welcomes Estonia's forthcoming accession to the European Environmental Agency, its first full membership of an EU body; notes that its membership of the agency will open up new opportunities for Estonia to take part in exchanges and to receive support in adapting the EU's environmental rules, in a situation where the country continues to suffer the after-effects of half a century of Soviet communist occupation;

29. Supports Estonia's efforts to become fully integrated into Euro-Atlantic security structures and stresses Estonia's right to determine its security policy independently;

30. Looks forward to Estonia's full participation in the Common Foreign and Security policy; is convinced, not least in the light of Estonia's present and past active participation in the UN's peace-keeping activities, that Estonia can make an important contribution to the EU's efforts, in accordance with the Treaty, to strengthen the Union's security, preserve peace and enhance international security, promote international cooperation and develop and stabilise democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights;

31. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the parliaments of the Member States and the government and parliament of Estonia.