

Official position of the other Institutions and Organs -

European Council

Cologne European Council, 3 and 4 June 1999

An extract of the Presidency Conclusions

(...)

IV. FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

39. In the past few months considerable progress has been made towards taking the European Union into the twenty-first century. With agreement on Agenda 2000, necessary reforms entailed by enlargement have been decided upon and the financial framework of the Union has been secured for the next seven years.

Enlargement process

57. The European Council notes with satisfaction that the accession negotiations have further gathered momentum and are on the right track. It welcomes the positive results of the second round of substantive negotiations in the first half of 1999 with Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia on a number of important and complex areas. The European Council emphasises its resolve to continue to maintain the momentum of negotiations. To that end the European Union will open negotiations in all areas covered as early as possible next year.

58. The European Council welcomes the fact that the analytical examination of the "acquis" with Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Slovakia has now moved on from the multilateral phase to the crucial bilateral phase, which will allow those countries to speed up their preparations for membership. The Helsinki Council will examine the progress made by the accession candidates and draw the necessary conclusions.

59. It emphasises once again the conclusions reached by the European Council in Luxembourg that decisions on the opening of further negotiations can only be taken on the basis of the criteria established by the Copenhagen European Council. At the same time it highlights the importance also attaching to the prospect of accession for applicant countries with which negotiations are not yet under way. For this reason it invites the Commission, in its next progress reports, to consider measures which can help crystallise that prospect for all applicant countries. The European Council welcomes the constant progress in the candidate countries and encourages them to continue their reforms and adjustment efforts.

60. The European Council emphasises the importance of high standards of nuclear safety in Central and Eastern Europe. It stresses the importance of this issue in the context of the Union's enlargement and calls on the Commission to examine this issue thoroughly in its next regular progress reports on the applicant countries, due in autumn 1999.

61. The European Council welcomes the fact that, on the basis of the Commission's updated opinion on Malta's accession application, it has now been possible to make a start on analytical examination of the Union "acquis" with Malta. The Commission will also submit a report, in good time for the Helsinki European Council meeting, on Malta's progress in preparation for accession, to form the basis, together with the corresponding reports on the other applicant countries, for any decisions to be taken by the Helsinki European Council.