

Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2007/2271(INI)	Procedure completed
Commission's 2007 enlargement strategy paper		
Subject 8.20 Enlargement of the Union		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	AFET Foreign Affairs		03/10/2007
		PPE-DE BROK Elmar	
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	CULT Culture and Education		26/11/2007
		Vers/ALE TRÜPEL Helga	
Council of the European Union	Council configuration	Meeting	Date
	General Affairs	2839	10/12/2007
European Commission	Commission DG	Commissioner	
	Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations	REHN Olli	

Key events			
06/11/2007	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2007)0663	Summary
10/12/2007	Resolution/conclusions adopted by Council		Summary
13/12/2007	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
24/06/2008	Vote in committee		Summary
26/06/2008	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0266/2008	
09/07/2008	Debate in Parliament		
10/07/2008	Results of vote in Parliament		
10/07/2008	Decision by Parliament	T6-0363/2008	Summary
10/07/2008	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	

Procedure reference	2007/2271(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Strategic initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 089o; Rules of Procedure EP P.F.
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	AFET/6/56995

Documentation gateway

Non-legislative basic document		COM(2007)0663	06/11/2007	EC	Summary
Committee opinion	CULT	PE398.582	25/01/2008	EP	
Committee draft report		PE404.495	03/04/2008	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE405.859	28/04/2008	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A6-0266/2008	26/06/2008	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T6-0363/2008	10/07/2008	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2008)4891	27/08/2008	EC	
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2008)5307	29/09/2008	EC	

Commission's 2007 enlargement strategy paper

PURPOSE: to present a general strategy paper on enlargement for 2007-2008.

CONTENT: the Commission presents its annual strategy paper on EU enlargement which details how the renewed consensus on enlargement, agreed by EU leaders at the December 2006 Summit, is implemented. As a reminder, this consensus is based on the principles of consolidation of commitments, fair and rigorous conditionality and better communication with the public, combined with the EU's capacity to integrate new members.

Countries targeted by the strategy: the Commission considers that the pull of the EU is contributing to stability and encouraging important political and economic reforms in the candidate countries, which are Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia ? FYROM ? and Turkey. The Commission also reviews the progress achieved by the so-called potential candidate countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo under international trusteeship. It concludes that there has been steady though uneven progress in the Western Balkans, and that the region continues to face major challenges. In addition, Turkey's accession to the EU is well underway, however there is a need to revitalise reforms. It is crucial to maintain the visibility and credibility of their accession prospects.

Main conclusions and recommendations of the document:

- enlargement has contributed to peace, democracy and stability throughout the continent and brought concrete benefits in terms of increased trade, investment and economic growth. The Union is now more competitive and better able to respond to the challenges of globalisation. Enlargement has enhanced the EU's weight in the world;
- the present enlargement agenda covers the Western Balkans and Turkey, which have been given the prospect of EU membership once they fulfil the necessary conditions;
- steps have been taken to improve the quality of the enlargement process: difficult reform issues are now being addressed at the beginning of the process; in the accession negotiations, full use is now made of benchmarks as conditions for opening and closing chapters; the negotiation process is more transparent; each country progresses from one stage to the next in its course towards the EU, when it has fulfilled the necessary conditions;
- each country will be judged on its own merits but significant effort must be made to address fundamental issues, such as state-building, rule of law, reconciliation, administrative and judicial reform, fighting corruption and organised crime and improving good neighbourly relations.

Overview of the progress made in these countries:

- Croatia: accession negotiations are advancing well but Croatia still needs to make further progress particularly in judicial and administrative reform, minority rights, and refugee return, as well as in restructuring of steel and shipbuilding industries;
- Turkey: Turkey has introduced major reforms since 1999. In 2006, Turkey went through a constitutional crisis which led to early parliamentary elections. These were free and fair, and the new parliament is representative of the country's political diversity. Democracy prevailed in civil- military relations. Turkey now needs to renew the momentum of its political reforms, particularly on freedom of expression, the rights of non-Muslim religious communities, judicial reform, the fight against corruption, strengthened rights

for women, children and trade unions, cultural rights, as well as civilian oversight of the security forces. Furthermore, Turkey still has to implement the Additional Protocol to the Association Agreement and normalise its relations with Cyprus;

- Kosovo: clarity needs to be reached as rapidly as possible on the status of Kosovo. There is a need for a sustainable solution that will ensure a democratic and multi-ethnic Kosovo and contribute to regional stability;
- FYROM and other potential candidate countries: The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has made progress but it still needs to accelerate the pace of reforms in key areas. Albania and Montenegro have made progress in a number of areas but still face major challenges. Bosnia and Herzegovina has yet to assume full ownership of its governance and needs to move ahead in reforms, in particular of the police. Serbia has shown that it has the administrative capacity to make substantial progress towards realising its European perspective. However, Serbia still has to achieve full cooperation with the ICTY. The region as a whole needs to move forward in building modern democracies and developing a political culture of dialogue and tolerance.

As a result, in 2008 it is expected that:

- the Commission will speed up accession negotiations with Croatia, leading to several chapters being provisionally closed, provided that the country maintains the necessary reform momentum;
- the Commission will speed up accession negotiations with Turkey: the pace of negotiations depends on the results of the reforms in Turkey. Turkey's progress could gather momentum if it succeeds in meeting opening benchmarks (in particular, reform of the Turkish Penal Code concerning the freedom of expression and the implementation of the Additional Protocol to the Association Agreement);
- the EU will provide further support for stability in Kosovo by making full use of its policy instruments;
- all Stabilisation and Association Agreements can be signed with all Western Balkan countries and enter into force;
- the Western Balkan countries will strengthen their regional cooperation within the framework of the South-East Europe Cooperation Process;
- efforts will be made to promote people-to-people contacts between the Western Balkans and the EU (particularly through visa liberalisation for citizens of the Western Balkan countries).

Accession Partnerships and Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA): European Partnerships should be proposed, setting out updated reform priorities for each country and focusing on state-building, governance and administrative and judicial reform. These priorities will be reflected in programming financial assistance under the new Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA).

Commission's 2007 enlargement strategy paper

The Council held an exchange of views and adopted the following conclusions:

- In line with the enlargement strategy agreed by the December 2006 European Council and the Council conclusions of 11 December 2006, the Council welcomes the Commission's communication on the enlargement strategy and main challenges 2007-2008 of 6 November and takes good note of the analysis and recommendations contained therein. The renewed consensus on enlargement, which is based on consolidation of commitments, fair and rigorous conditionality and better communication, together with the capacity to integrate new members, continues to form the basis of the EU's enlargement strategy. An improved quality of the enlargement process will ensure that enlargement continues to foster peace, democracy and stability throughout the continent and to bring concrete benefits in terms of increased trade, investment and economic growth. 2008 will be a particularly crucial year for supporting the transition process in the Western Balkans. The Council recalls that the future of the Western Balkans lies in the European Union.

The Council reaffirms that the pace of the negotiations depends notably on the negotiating countries' progress in addressing opening and closing benchmarks as well as the requirements of the Negotiating Frameworks, including the implementation of the Accession Partnerships, currently in course of revision, with each country being judged on its own merits. The Council recalls that chapters for which technical preparations have been completed will be opened in accordance with established procedures, in line with the Negotiating Frameworks. In this context, the Council looks forward to the Intergovernmental Conferences with Turkey and Croatia later this month. It is also essential that the enlargement policy maintains fair and rigorous conditionality at all stages of the negotiations.

In this regard, the Council welcomes the Commission's intention to continue enhancing the quality of the enlargement process by tackling key priorities in areas of public administration and judicial reform and the fight against corruption at an early stage.

The Council then returned to the situation in Turkey (see [INI/2007/2269](#)) and in Croatia (see [INI/2007/2267](#)).

Commission's 2007 enlargement strategy paper

The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted the own initiative report by Elmar BROK (EPP-ED, DE) on the Commission's 2007 enlargement strategy paper, noting that past enlargements have fostered economic growth, promoted social progress and brought peace, stability, freedom and prosperity to the European continent. While they consider that past enlargements have generally been a great success, MEPs stress that lessons can be learned from previous accessions to improve the quality of the overall enlargement process.

MEPs reaffirm their commitment to all candidate countries with the understanding that full and rigorous compliance with all the criteria laid down in Copenhagen is imperative and that the Union must make efforts to strengthen its integration capacity. According to MEPs, the Union's Enlargement Strategy should comply with the provisions of the EU Treaty and reflect the commitments already entered into by the Union, while striking a balance between the Union's geo-strategic interests, the impact of political developments outside its borders, and the Union's integration capacity. They also recall that integration capacity is linked to the Union's ability to promote economic and social progress and a high level of employment in its Member States, to assert its identity on the international scene, to promote the rights and interests of Member States and European citizens alike, to develop an area of freedom, security and justice, and to build on its *acquis communautaire* while upholding fundamental rights and freedoms.

Integration capacity: MEPs consider that the concept of integration capacity comprises four elements:

1. accession states should contribute to and not impair the ability of the Union to maintain momentum towards the fulfilment of its political

- objectives;
- 2. the institutional framework of the Union should be able to deliver efficient and effective government;
- 3. the financial resources of the Union should be adequate to meet the challenges of social and economic cohesion and of the Union's common policies;
- 4. a comprehensive communication strategy should be in place to inform public opinion about the implications of enlargement.

Furthermore, MEPs consider that the Copenhagen criteria must be fully respected and complied with by Member States as well, in order to avoid requiring of applicant countries higher standards than those applied in some parts of the Union.

Budgetary impact of all subsequent enlargements: MEPs consider that the budgetary as well as the broader economic and social implications of further possible enlargements must be taken into due consideration during the mid-term review of the 2007-2013 multi-annual financial framework and the drafting of subsequent financial frameworks. They are also convinced that any acceding State should try to resolve its main internal problems (territorial and constitutional set-up) before it can join the Union, and the EU should assist in resolving those issues.

No enlargement without consolidation: MEPs take the view that every enlargement must be followed by adequate consolidation and political concentration, that is to say, by a serious reassessment of the Union's policies and means in order to respond to the expectations of European citizens and to guarantee the viability of the Union as a political project. MEPs consider that enlargement without adequate consolidation and preparation could damage the Union's internal cohesion and could have serious implications for the Union's capacity to act (weakening its institutions, making Member States more vulnerable to external pressure and undermining the Union's credibility as a global actor).

More communication: MEPs are of the view that further enlargements should be accompanied by a concerted communication policy involving all stakeholders. This communication policy should be designed to explain the political, economic, social and cultural benefits of enlargement. Furthermore, countries with European prospects should make every effort to prepare their public opinion for integration into the Union, involving civil society in this process from the outset.

Concentric circles: MEPs are convinced that the Enlargement Strategy should be flanked by a more diversified range of external contractual frameworks and that these frameworks could be structured as mutually permeable concentric circles. This means that countries would be offered the opportunity, under strict but clear internal and external conditions, to move from one status to another if they so wish and if they fulfil the criteria pertaining to each specific framework.

Strengthened Neighbourhood Policy for eastern neighbours: MEPs affirm that participation in the European Neighbourhood Policy does not constitute a substitute for membership or a stage leading necessarily to membership. They are convinced that the Commission's strengthened neighbourhood policy is not sufficient and that a specific policy should be proposed for eastern neighbours that fulfil certain democratic and economic conditions. For these countries, the Union should establish an area based on common policies covering, in particular, the rule of law, democracy and human rights, foreign and security policy cooperation, economic and financial issues, trade, energy, transport, environmental issues, justice, security, migration, visa-free movement and education. These common policies should be shaped jointly with the participating countries and be underpinned by adequate financial assistance.

Towards a European Commonwealth for southern countries: MEPs also welcome the re-launch of the "Barcelona Process: A Union for the Mediterranean". They recall that, as a first step, these relations should translate themselves into the establishment of a Free Trade Area, to be followed by closer relations along the lines of a European Commonwealth. They also call for specific measures for countries bordering the Black Sea with a view to establishing a Union for the Black Sea, which should include the EU, Turkey and all Black Sea littoral states. MEPs also believe that countries which enjoy recognised membership prospects but still have considerable ground to cover before they can achieve candidate status, could usefully participate, on a totally voluntary basis, in arrangements similar to the above-mentioned bilateral or multilateral frameworks.

Balkans: MEPs welcome the signing of the Stabilisation and Association Agreements with Serbia and with Bosnia-Herzegovina, which they regard as a further step in consolidating the ties between that region and the EU. They call for the negotiations for visa liberalisation with the countries of the Western Balkans to be speeded up and, lastly, urge the Commission to come up with concrete proposals for a more diversified external relations policy towards these neighbours.

Commission's 2007 enlargement strategy paper

The European Parliament adopted by 534 votes to 44, with 45 abstentions a resolution on the Commission's 2007 enlargement strategy paper.

The initiative report had been tabled for consideration in plenary by Elmar BROK (EPP-ED, DE) on behalf of the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

In its resolution, Parliament agrees with the Commission that past enlargements have been a great success, benefiting the old as well as the new EU Member States by fostering economic growth, promoting social progress and bringing peace, stability, freedom and prosperity to the European continent. It believes that lessons can be learned from previous accessions and that further ways of improving the quality of the enlargement process must be based on the positive experiences accumulated so far.

Overall, Parliament reaffirms its commitment to all candidate countries with the understanding that full and rigorous compliance with all the criteria laid down in Copenhagen is imperative and that the Union must make efforts to strengthen its integration capacity. According to the Parliament, the Union's Enlargement Strategy should comply with the provisions of the EU Treaty and reflect the commitments already entered into by the Union, while striking a balance between the Union's geo-strategic interests, the impact of political developments outside its borders, and the Union's integration capacity. It also recalls that integration capacity is linked to the Union's ability to promote economic and social progress and a high level of employment in its Member States, to assert its identity on the international scene, to promote the rights and interests of Member States and European citizens alike, to develop an area of freedom, security and justice, and to build on its acquis communautaire while upholding fundamental rights and freedoms.

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4. a comprehensive communication strategy should be in place to inform public opinion about the implications of enlargement.

Furthermore, Parliament considers that the Copenhagen criteria must be fully respected and complied with by Member States as well, in order to avoid requiring of applicant countries higher standards than those applied in some parts of the Union.

Budgetary impact of all subsequent enlargements: Parliament considers that the budgetary as well as the broader economic and social implications of further possible enlargements must be taken into due consideration during the mid-term review of the 2007-2013 multi-annual financial framework and the drafting of subsequent financial frameworks. It is also convinced that any acceding State should try to resolve its main internal problems (territorial and constitutional set-up) before it can join the Union.

No enlargement without consolidation: Parliament takes the view that every enlargement must be followed by adequate consolidation and political concentration, that is to say, by a serious reassessment of the Union's policies and means in order to respond to the expectations of European citizens and to guarantee the viability of the Union as a political project. It considers that enlargement without adequate consolidation and preparation could damage the Union's internal cohesion and could have serious implications for the Union's capacity to act (weakening its institutions, making Member States more vulnerable to external pressure and undermining the Union's credibility as a global actor).

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Balkans: Parliament welcomes the signing of the Stabilisation and Association Agreements with Serbia and with Bosnia-Herzegovina, which it regards as a further step in consolidating the ties between that region and the EU. It calls for the negotiations for visa liberalisation with the countries of the Western Balkans to be speeded up and, lastly, urges the Commission to come up with concrete proposals for a more diversified external relations policy towards these neighbours.