

# EU - CROATIA JOINT PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE

**Sixth Meeting**  
**1-2 October 2007**  
**Brussels**

## **DECLARATION and RECOMMENDATIONS** *adopted on 2 October 2007*

The Joint Parliamentary Committee EU-Croatia held its 6th meeting on 1-2 October 2007 in Brussels, under the co-chairmanship of Mr Pal SCHMITT (HU, EPP-ED), for the European Parliament and Mr Gordan JANDROKOVIĆ (HDZ -Croatian Democratic Union), for the Croatian Parliament.

It exchanged views with:

- H.E. Ambassador Álvaro Mendonça e Moura, Permanent Representative of Portugal to the EU, on behalf of the Presidency-in-Office of the Council of the European Union;
- H.E. Ambassador Vladimir Drobnyak, Chief Negotiator for Accession of Croatia to the EU, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Croatia;
- Mr Jan Truszczyński, Deputy Director General at DG “Enlargement”, on behalf of the European Commission.

The members of the Joint Parliamentary Committee addressed the following subjects:

State of play of the accession negotiations and overall preparations  
for the accession of Croatia to the EU, with a particular view to benchmarks

State of implementation of the reforms in the sectors of the judiciary,  
the public administration and the fight against corruption;  
review of the outstanding legislation to be adopted

Achievements and outstanding issues in the areas of refugee return;  
review of progress made for the protection of minorities in Croatia

Croatia and its neighbours: review of the outstanding issues and  
neighbourhood relations

Economic situation

They also had an exchange of views with Mr Miklós Barabás, President of the European Economic and Social Committee's Western Balkans Contact Group.

The Joint Parliamentary Committee, in accordance with Rule 3 of its Rules of Procedure and Article 116 of the EU-Croatia Stabilisation and Association Agreement, addressed the following Declaration and Recommendations to the Stabilisation and Association Council, the institutions of Croatia and of the European Union:

### **On EU-Croatia negotiations for accession to the EU and the implementation of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement**

1. welcomed the overall efforts and achievements of the Institutions of Croatia to move the country forward towards full membership of the European Union;
2. reviewed with satisfaction the dynamic negotiation process over the semester of the German Presidency-in-Office of the Council of the EU and considered that the negotiations should continue to proceed smoothly and at a sustained pace, in particular during the Portuguese and the Slovenian Presidencies-in-Office;
3. recalled that negotiations should lead , as soon as all the criteria have substantially been met and the negotiations are completed, to the accession of Croatia as soon as possible to the European Union;
4. recalled that the European Parliament, in its resolution of 25 April 2007, encouraged Croatia to do its utmost to carry out the necessary reforms so that the negotiations can be concluded in time for the European Parliament to give its assent before the parliamentary elections of June 2009;
5. welcomed namely the opening and provisional closure of Chapters 25 on Science and Research, and 26 on Education and Culture, as well as the opening, so far, of ten additional negotiation chapters in 2006-2007 (Economic and Monetary Policy; Enterprise and Industrial Policy; Customs Union; Intellectual Property Law; Freedom to Provide Services; Company Law; Financial Services; Information Society and Media, Statistics; Financial Control); noted the progress in the fulfilment of benchmarks with a view to the opening of negotiations on ten important chapters (Public Procurement; Competition Policy; Employment and Social Policy; Free Movement of Capital; Free Movement of Goods; Agriculture; Justice, Freedom and Security ; Food Safety; Environment; Regional Policy); called for efficient continuation of work on all the other chapters;
6. expressed the certainty that preparations for accession to the EU will continue to be among the top priorities for Croatian authorities in view of the upcoming parliamentary elections and that European issues will continue to be a matter of consensus and not be part of the pre-election campaign;
7. was pleased to note that Croatia has contributed to the smooth functioning of the various joint bodies connected to the Stabilisation and Association Agreement and that the implementation of the latter has continued without major difficulties; as regards financial cooperation, encouraged the Croatian Government to strengthen its administrative capacity in order to benefit intensively from the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA);
8. invited the European Commission and the Member States to continue providing active support and efficient technical assistance to Croatia in the process of accession negotiations;

## **On the political criteria:**

9. congratulated Croatia on the adoption of key pieces of legislation and stressed that all matters related to the rule of law, and in particular the reforms of the judiciary and public administration, the fight against corruption and organised crime are priorities of high importance to be dealt with continuously;

### **- the judiciary**

10. took note with satisfaction of the reduction of the backlog of pending and enforcement cases and the ongoing informatisation of the sector; encouraged to pursue a further improvement of the functioning of the judiciary, including the reduction of length of the procedures, and

- a further rationalisation of the system of the Courts;
- a further improvement of professionalism and competence through a systematic and well planned training;
- legislative adaptations allowing alternative means of resolution of disputes;

11. welcomed the continuation of full cooperation of Croatia with the ICTY; with a view to the recent ICTY ruling, expressed a supportive understanding for the reactions of Croatia, having in mind the basic principles of the UN Security Council's Resolution establishing the ICTY; expected from the International Tribunal that all those who will be found guilty will receive their just and appropriate sentence; encouraged to pursue continuous impartiality in conducting war crime cases;

### **- public administration**

12. was pleased to note the gradual implementation of the Strategy for the Reform of Public Administration and encouraged the adoption of the regulations and other provisions still outstanding, in particular those deriving from the Civil Service Law; encouraged as well the completion of the establishment of the human resources management Departments across the Croatian state administration and to pursue a better understanding and support of their mandate, especially at senior officials level;

13. looked forward to the full entry into force, after next November parliamentary elections, of the Act on amendments to the Act on Transfer of Power, according to which civil servants, as well as Municipality, City and County employees appointed through administrative competition, will not have to offer their mandates at the disposal of the winners after elections and would not be recalled by a political decision; encouraged to pursue with de-politicisation of the Croatian public administration;

14. whilst emphasizing that the fight against corruption remains a challenge for Croatia and that additional progress is needed, was pleased to note a significant improvement of Croatia's rate in the Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index which increased in 2007 to 4.1; welcomed the convincing activities of the Office for the Suppression of Corruption and Organised Crime (USKOK), and looked forward to their continuation as well as to the continuation of raising awareness campaigns;

## **on the situation of minorities and refugee return**

15. took note of Croatia's increased attention to minority issues and encouraged Croatia to continue with the implementation of the Constitutional Law on National Minorities, particularly of its provisions related to the employment of members of national minorities; was pleased to note that Croatia demonstrated commitment to integrate minorities in the political system, guaranteeing adequate representation of minorities in the Parliament and civil service, police forces and the judiciary;

16. welcomed the continuing increase in the allocation of funds from the State Budget for the activities of national minority institutions and associations; commended at the same time the Croatian Government's active participation in the Decade of Roma Inclusion and the increase of the funds allocated to implement the National Programme for Roma and the Action Plan of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, as well as the project for free legal assistance to the Roma;

17. welcomed the overall progress achieved as regards refugee return, reconstruction and repossession of housing, while underlining that the implementation of housing or compensation programmes for former tenancy rights holders should continue as planned and precise procedures should be established for the issue of employees' rights in formerly occupied areas; encouraged the Croatian authorities to pursue with their efforts to create the economic and social conditions necessary for the sustainability of refugee return and to continue engaging themselves in regional discussions on this issue;

## **On regional cooperation and relations with neighbours**

18. welcomed the South East Europe Cooperation Process' successful presidency of Croatia and the positive efforts of Croatia for the further strengthening of multi-lateral relations with its neighbours and for actively pursuing initiatives in all matters of common interest, thus acting as a dynamic player in the region;

19. encouraged Croatia and its neighbours to continue enhancing work for finding definitive solutions to all pending bilateral issues, in particular those on borders and also those on demarcation;

20. welcomed the possibility for the Croatian citizens who live in Croatia to continue crossing the border to Italy, Hungary and Slovenia with an ID and an attached form for entry to and exit from the state border;

21. sincerely welcomed the informal agreement reached on 25 August last between the Prime Minister of Croatia Ivo Sanader and the Prime Minister of Slovenia Janez Jansa on the submission of their border dispute to the International Court of Justice in The Hague;

## **On Croatian economy**

22. was pleased to observe that the Croatian economy grew in a stable and open environment, and that the first half of 2007 saw a further acceleration of economic activity, which was reflected in the decreasing trend of unemployment, a year-on-year GDP real growth rate of 7%, a decrease of the general government budget deficit to 2.2% of GDP and an average

annual rate of inflation of 2%; encouraged the Croatian authorities to maintain high the priority of structural reforms, including enterprise restructuring and completion of privatisation, and to involve local government in those reforms; encouraged the next Government to work on a decentralisation strategy and a new system of financing the local authorities in order to enhance their efficiency and reduce the inequalities;

## **Future of Europe**

23. took positive note that Croatia, as a candidate country negotiating the accession to the EU, wants to take an active part in the debates on the future of Europe contributing to the development of the best possible institutional framework for the enlarged Union;

24. welcomed the fact that the European Parliament is discussing its future composition for the next legislature 2009-2014 and, in this context, is naturally contemplating its future enlargement, having notably Croatia, which is on good course to assume obligations arising from EU membership by the end of the decade, in mind; reflected positively on the proposed agreement which would guarantee Croatia would follow in the good practices used for Bulgaria and Romania and, upon accession, would allow to fix the number of representatives in the European Parliament.

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