

Comments from the Parliament of the Czech Republic on the EU enlargement process (April 2001)

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The Czech Republic has lately considerably intensified its integration efforts. We welcome the results of the Nice summit because they make the EU enlargement possible. We are looking forward to the discussion on further EU development. The Swedish presidency with its emphasis on integration agenda sends very positive signals to the candidate countries.

I believe it is very important to apply rational criteria when assessing the readiness of the candidate countries for their EU accession. Thus the decisive factor should not be the degree of enthusiasm for EU expressed by individual candidate states but their ability to succeed as a future member of the European Union. The potential EU membership represents for us a great challenge and a chance to prove our qualities. We can assure you that Czech population is grateful for this chance. We do understand that the EU cannot be a panacea for our problems and shortcomings. We must overcome them ourselves, naturally with an effective assistance provided by our friends from member states.

We are satisfied that the communication between the Czech Parliament and the European Parliament has lately significantly improved. We are glad our mutual exchange of opinions has not been limited only to the satisfactory agenda of the Joint Parliamentary Committee. Czech parliamentarians (as well as their counterparts from other candidate countries) have been invited on several occasions to attend the meetings of the European Parliament committees. The most recent one was the meeting of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy of the European Parliament held on March 20th, 2001 which dealt with the situation in the Czech Republic. We have also appreciated the appearance of one of our members at a meeting organised by the Committee on Constitutional Affairs on the same day, which was devoted to the results of the Nice summit and to the post-Nice process.

The visits of the European Parliament members to the candidate countries have also become more frequent. For example on March 28th we discussed the relevant issues in Prague with the EP Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs members and in May we are expecting the delegation from the EP Committee on Industry, Foreign Trade, Research and Energy.

We believe the increased interest of the European Parliament in direct contacts with the members of national parliaments from the candidate countries is a positive signal and we hope it will persevere also in future. We feel particularly positive about the position of the European

Parliament according to which the first candidate countries will be able to take part in the EP elections in 2004. We are convinced the Czech Republic will be in the first group of the new EU members.

Prague, April 3th , 2001

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