



PERMANENT REPRESENTATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF HUNGARY
TO THE EUROPEAN UNION

16th of February 2011, Strasbourg

Another step for Croatia's EU membership

Speaking on behalf of the Hungarian Presidency, Mr. János Martonyi, Minister of Foreign Affairs has welcomed the European Parliament's constructive contribution to Croatia's accession process. The progress report on Croatia, adopted by the European Parliament on the 16th of February 2011 acknowledges the progress made by Croatia in its European integration process and states that accession negotiations may be closed during the Hungarian Presidency, provided that Croatia completes the reforms already started. This is a clear support from the European Parliament for the Hungarian Presidency to complete negotiations by June.

“Since the start of the negotiations, 34 chapters (out of the 35) have been opened for negotiation, of which 28 have been provisionally closed.” said Mr János Martonyi on behalf of the Hungarian Presidency of the Council. Mr. Martonyi added that the conclusion of the accession talks is within reach, however Croatia must responsibly fulfil the remaining criteria. Seven chapters remain open (competition policy, agriculture and rural development, fisheries, regional policy and the alignment of structural instruments, justice and fundamental rights, budgetary and financial provisions and other affairs). The Council especially expects convincing delivery from Croatia on Chapters 23 (justice and fundamental rights) and 8 (competition policy).

The report emphasizes that the Croatian judiciary system has become more efficient and the amendment of the Constitution is a very positive step. Cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia has significantly improved, though some documents requested by the prosecutor are still missing. According to the European Parliament's report, the reform of public administration, fight against corruption, return of refugees and transformation of shipyards pose the greatest challenges. The European Parliament expresses its concern in the report that according to the latest Eurobarometer survey the majority of Croatian citizens would find EU membership disadvantageous. Thus the members of the European Parliament call on the Croatian Government and NGOs to increase awareness for the integration procedure.

The European Parliament adopts annual country specific reports on candidate countries based on the reports of the European Commission published every autumn. If the Hungarian Presidency succeeds in closing accession negotiations then this was last report of the European Parliament on Croatia.

As Mr Martonyi emphasized in his speech before the European Parliament, *„enlargement reinforces peace, democracy and stability in Europe, serves the EU's strategic interests, and helps the EU to better achieve its policy objectives in important areas which are key to economic recovery and sustainable growth. Enlargement serves as a key driver for political and economic reform, and moves forward at a pace which is largely determined by the (potential) candidate countries' respect of the Copenhagen criteria and their proven capacity to take on the obligations of membership.”*

For further information please contact:

Gergely POLNER, spokesperson (+32-491-355460; press.beu@kum.hu)

<http://www.eu2011.hu/news/presidency-praises-ep-report-croatian-eu-membership>