

THE DUTCH SOCIALISTS: "IT'S PREMATURE TO CONCLUDE ABOUT BULGARIA'S READINESS FOR THE EU"

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Harry van Bommel (MP for the Socialist Party (SP) of the Netherlands) answered to our questions about the enlargement of the EU with Romania and Bulgaria.

Did your party reject or support the treaty for Bulgaria's and Romania's admission to the EU?

The Socialist Party of the Netherlands (SP) has voted against ratification at this moment. We have proposed to postpone ratification until after the European Commission report will be published, foreseen on May 16th. Since our proposal was rejected, we voted against.

What is the opinion of your party about the degree of readiness of these two countries to join the EU?

We believe that it is too early to come to a conclusion about the readiness of both countries. We therefore want to postpone ratification until after the next Commission report, which is expected to be published in May.

In which spheres are the basic difficulties and obstacles?

The main obstacles are corruption and free movement of labour. The experience with the 10 new member states have shown that the movement of workers from these countries to the Netherlands exceeded predictions of our government. Instead of 22,000 as suggested by the government, it turned out to be over a 100,000.

What is the general public feeling in the Netherlands about Bulgaria and Romania as future members of the EU?

The general feeling in the Netherlands is that the European process goes too fast and is too far-reaching, and too expensive. Further expansion of the EU is not very popular at this moment. On basis of the European Election Study 2004, political scientists from University Twente claim that there is little enthusiasm among the Dutch public for enlargement of the EU with Romania and Bulgaria.

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Do you think that a delay of 6 months or a year would change a lot in the two countries before their actual integration?

Hopefully it would. And if the European Commission comes to the conclusion that both countries are ready for accession, we would rethink our position. Postponing ratification enables us to take the decision of enlargement on the basis of more and better information. In May this year, the European Commission will publish its next progress report on Romania and Bulgaria. More important, before that date the Dutch government will publish research about the consequences of migration since the enlargement of 2004. We would like to know all the facts before we make such a far-reaching decision.

Meanwhile, independent MP in the Dutch parliament G. Wilders refused to comment on the issue. His press-officer Martin Bosma explained that "... Mr Wilders receives many invitations for interviews and meetings. He can only do a small selection of them. Mr Wilders, therefore, will not do an interview with your portal."