

BROK SAID THAT THE NEW ROMANIAN GOVERNMENT IN PARTICULAR HAD ACHIEVED CONSIDERABLE PROGRESS

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Elmar Brok MEP (EPP-ED, Germany), Chairman of the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee, has called on the European Commissioner for Enlargement to maintain reform pressure on Bulgaria and Romania. The European Parliament has the right to be consulted before giving its assent to the accession of these two countries. "The Commissioner has met this pre-condition. Nonetheless, I would have wished for a more outspoken statement by him on how to keep up the necessary pressure for reform in Bucharest and Sofia in the case of a positive recommendation by the Commission for the 1 January 2007 accession date", Brok said in the plenary debate in the European Parliament on the Oral Question on the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the European Union.

Brok said that the new Romanian government in particular had achieved considerable progress. "However, the decisive question is not only whether reforms have been started, but whether they have been implemented." On this question, the Commission had not given the final answer, especially regarding real progress in the reform of the judiciary and the fight against corruption in these countries. In particular, Brok referred to the safeguard clauses in the Accession Treaties which allow individual chapters to be disbanded in case of deficits for up to three years after accession on 1 January 2007 or 2008.

"Of course, the Commission can invoke these safeguard clauses regardless of the recommendation of 16 May. In view of maintaining the reform process, however, the question is whether it might not be better to move the final recommendation to autumn this year", Brok emphasised. The Commission would have to make sure that adequate monitoring is in place for the first three years after joining the EU, Brok said.