

HEARINGS OF BULGARIAN AND ROMANIAN COMMISSIONERS DESIGNATE

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The European Parliament will conduct a hearing with each of the Commissioners-designate on Monday 27 November, the site of the European Parliament announced. This background note contains information for journalists wishing to follow the hearings.

On 1 January 2007 the Accession Treaties of Bulgaria and Romania will enter into force and both countries will join the European Union, bringing the number of member states up to 27.

The appointment of two nationals from Bulgaria and Romania to the European Commission will be an important sign of their integration into the European Union and - along with Bulgarian and Romanian members joining the European Parliament - will mark the beginning of the full participation of these two new Member States in the decision-making process at European level.

Prior to their appointment, the European Parliament will conduct a hearing with each Commissioner designate followed by a formal vote of approval.

The hearings will take place on 27 November 2006. The current 732 Members of the European Parliament and the 53 national parliamentarians from Romania and Bulgaria who are currently observers at the EP, will have the chance to test the candidates' qualifications. To prepare for the hearings, each candidate has been asked to fill in a written questionnaire.

Based on the outcome of the hearings, the European Parliament will proceed to a vote of approval at the December plenary session in Strasbourg. Only after the Parliament's vote will the Council formally appoint the new Commissioners.

This background note gives some information about the hearings process and also provides practical details for journalists wishing to cover the events.