

POETTERING: "REFORMS IN BULGARIA & ROMANIA MUST CONTINUE WITH DETERMINATION"

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◆*The reform process in Bulgaria and Romania must continue with determination in order to fulfil the membership criteria by autumn and to reach a decision on accession by 1 January 2007*", said **Hans-Gert Poettering**, Chairman of the EPP-ED Group in the European Parliament, during a debate with the European Commission on its Progress Report for Bulgaria and Romania. The Commission's proposals are a step in the right direction.

Poettering appreciated the enormous achievement accomplished by the two countries after 45 years of Communist mismanagement in order to build a functioning society based on the rule of law, democracy and freedom: *"We do not wish to lecture, but together we want to bring the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to a successful conclusion"*, said Poettering.

Now is not the time to question dates already set, but to encourage the countries to implement the necessary reforms in a way to make sure that a decision can be made this autumn on the accession of Romania and Bulgaria by 1 January 2007.

Poettering launched an appeal to also make clear in the Member States of the European Union that the implementation of the rule of law and democracy in countries that have been subject to communist rule for so many years was an impressive success story.

The Constitutional Treaty, which is supported by a large majority of European Parliaments, provides, with its common rules and the definition of common values, an important base for the future of Europe.

Poettering criticised the absence of the Council of Ministers during this important debate with the European Commission. He thus called not only on the Council Presidency but also on the Secretariat of the Council to ensure the presence of the Council during future important debates taking place in the European Parliament.

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