



Adopted resolution

A clear EU Perspective for South-Eastern Europe

The year 2006 is and will be crucial for the future of the South-Eastern European countries:

- the talks on the future status of Kosovo have started,
- the future of Montenegro will be decided in a referendum in May,
- accession negotiations will start after the end of the screening process for Croatia (and maybe also for Macedonia) and
- talks on the Stabilisation and Association Agreement for Bosnia and Herzegovina were opened in January.

The European Greens appreciate the Austrian EU Presidency's clear statement that the objective for all of the SE European states is EU accession.

But there is growing scepticism in EU member countries, where doubts are increasingly cast on the enlargement process in general, and on the process for South East Europe specifically. This has mostly to do with weak economic progress and resulting high unemployment in the EU member states.

With their own future perspectives weakened citizens of the EU are not as enthusiastic any more about the "European peace project" which means support for EU integration for a stable, democratic and prospering South-Eastern Europe.

In the countries of South Eastern Europe especially young people have never had the chance to travel and to see for themselves what this "promised land" of the EU is all about: Strong visa restrictions and high visa prices inhibit travelling - something unimaginable until 15 years ago, when about the only countries citizens of Yugoslavia needed visa for were China and the USA. Now, with high unemployment and very little future perspectives, the lack of job opportunities and the isolation as regards travelling, makes nationalist and extremist movements more and more attractive for frustrated young people.

The EU promises of alleviating visa restrictions should be accompanied by immediate action.

Therefore the European Greens demand from the EU presidency

that the EU and its member states should send a clear signal to all the states of South-Eastern Europe (Western Balkans) that the perspective of becoming members of the Union is still of paramount importance by

- developing a coherent enlargement strategy for all South-Eastern European countries in order to close the gap between those countries that already have a candidate status and those that have no candidate status,
- remodelling the new Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) so that official and potential candidate countries will receive the same pre-accession financial assistance, thereby avoiding a "Balkan Ghetto" in the non-candidate countries.
- offering short term visiting programs for certain identified groups, especially young people (e.g. each member state invites 100 young women and men for a month in the summer of 2006) and
- lifting visa restrictions for all citizens of South-Eastern European countries in the medium-term.