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To: undisclosed-recipients;;
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Subject: PES rejects link between Benes decrees and Czech EU accession

News from the Party of European Socialists

16 April 2002

PES rejects link between Benes decrees and Czech EU accession

The Party of European Socialists today declared that repressive post-war laws in former Czechoslovakia "are not part of the accession negotiations and should have no bearing on them".

On behalf of the PES, its vice-president Jan Marinus Wiersma and the vice-president of the PES Parliamentary group Simon Murphy today welcomed a joint statement by Czech Premier Milos Zeman and European Commissioner Gunter Verheugen on the so-called Benes decrees.

Said Mr Wiersma and Mr Murphy: 'The PES rejects the draft proposals on the Benes Decrees put forward by the European Parliament's rapporteur on the Czech Republic since they contain, amongst other points, a reference to the accession process.

'The PES accepts that the decrees and later legislation are being assessed in relation to EU/EC law.

'The PES underlines once more that the enlargement of the EU is a forward-looking process that should not be hampered by reliving past battles. Our history should, of course, not be ignored but it must be put in the right context.'

Mr Wiersma is to visit Slovakia on Thursday for talks on the country's accession to the EU.

end

Note to editors: President Eduard Benes's decrees deprived ethnic minorities of their citizenship, appropriated their assets and properties, and resulted in the expulsion and forced deportation of large numbers. Ethnic Hungarian and German communities were particularly affected.

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