

Information Guide



Enlargement Policy

A guide to the European Union's Enlargement Policy, with hyperlinks to sources of information within European Sources Online and on external websites

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Introduction

On 1 July 2013, Croatia became the European Union's 28th Member State.

Today is a historic day for Croatia and for the European Union.

Today is a good day to remember what we have achieved together in Croatia and in the EU.

We have built a unique society in Europe: a democratic and social society with the richest internal market of the world and institutions based on the respect for the rule of law and human rights - we have together built the most free, most socially just and prosperous region in the world.

Since its foundation, the European Union has been a promise of peace. For the Western Balkans, a region that less than two decades ago was torn and devastated by war, European Union and integration has become a magnet of peace and change.

Croatia is a pioneer with a true European spirit: You have created institutions based on the values of democracy, reconciliation and the rule of law; you have reformed your economy and made it more competitive; you have demonstrated that through determination and hard-work EU membership can be achieved.

From: [Speech](#) by Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament, 1 July 2013.

In the history of a nation, there are few events such as this one that the citizens of the Republic of Croatia are celebrating today. This is not only a political dream of a generation of politicians of the new Croatian state coming true. The accession of the Republic of Croatia to the European Union is confirmation of our citizens' conviction that each one of us belongs to the European democratic and cultural circle and the European set of values.

From: [Toast](#) proposed by Ivo Josipović, President of Croatia, 30 June 2013.

Background

The term 'enlargement' refers to the expansion of the European Union with the accession of new Member States. In six enlargement rounds since the 1950s membership has increased from the original six Member States (Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands) to 28:

1973 (9): Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom
1981 (10): Greece
1986 (12): Portugal and Spain
1995 (15): Austria, Finland and Sweden
2004 (25): Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia
2007 (27): Bulgaria and Romania
2013 (28): Croatia

In 1985 Greenland, an autonomous province of the Kingdom of Denmark, decided to leave the European Communities. Another territorial change occurred when German re-unification took effect on 3 October 1990 and the five 'new Länder' of Eastern Germany became part of the European Union.

On 1 May 2004, eight countries of Central and Eastern Europe plus the Mediterranean island states of Cyprus and Malta joined the European Union in what was an unprecedented round of accession. Although previous enlargements had brought substantial increases both in terms of territory and population, that event (nicknamed

the 'Big Bang' enlargement) was by far the most significant. It was followed on 1 January 2007 by the accession of Bulgaria and Romania, thus adding 12 new Member States in just three years and taking the Union's population from some 375 to 480 million.

To mark five years since the 'big bang' enlargement, on 20 February 2009 the Commission published the Communication 'Five years of an enlarged EU - Economic achievements and challenges' ([COM\(2009\)79](#)). Press Release [IP/09/300](#) stated:

The recent enlargements of the European Union were a milestone in the process of unifying Europe and have brought benefits to citizens throughout the Union. Economically, enlargement has led to increased living standards in the new Member States, while creating export and investment opportunities for the old ones. It has also helped consolidate democracy, stability and security on our continent. An enlarged EU carries more weight when addressing issues of global importance be it climate change or the world economy and its governance. Five years on the EU is not only bigger, it is also stronger, more dynamic and culturally richer. In the current difficult global context, the big challenge is to resist any temptation of protectionist tendencies that would destroy the huge benefits for citizens brought about by the creation of a border free single market of 500 million people.

Later in the year, on 10 June, the European Economic and Social Committee held a commemorative debate on 'the important role played by civil society in bringing down the iron curtain and in the last waves of EU enlargement' (Press Release [081/2009](#)). Speaking at the EESC debate, the Commissioner for Enlargement, Olli Rehn, noted in [SPEECH/09/292](#) that:

In economic terms, the Eastern enlargement has been a win-win process, beneficial for the people both in new and not-so-new member states. To give but one example, trade between the new and the not-so-new Member States grew almost threefold in less than ten years. Even more illustrative is the fivefold growth of the trade among the new members. These are a key factor that explains why, from 2004 until the outbreak of the current financial crisis, there was robust growth in employment in both new and older Member States.

On 18 June 2009, the Committee of the Regions (CoR) stressed the role of local and regional authorities in the accession process and adopted two Opinions on the Union's enlargement strategy and the main challenges for 2008-2009, one on [Candidate countries](#), the other on [Potential candidates](#) (see CoR [Press Release](#)).

Speaking on 14 May 2013 on the topic 'Copenhagen accession criteria: 20 years that changed Europe' (see [SPEECH/13/409](#)), the European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy, Štefan Füle, said:

Enlargement is a gradual process, based on solid and sustainable implementation of reforms by the countries concerned. This is where the impact of conditionality driven by the Copenhagen criteria comes into play. The prospect of accession drives political and economic reforms, transforming societies and creating new opportunities for citizens and businesses. It reinforces the European Union's political and economic strengths.

The accession of countries in Central and Eastern Europe in 2004 united East and West after decades of artificial separation, contributing to overall stability and security. It also provided concrete, mutual benefits of:

- deeper trade integration;
- a larger internal market;

- economies of scale; and
- expanded investment and job opportunities.

The current enlargement wave provides further impressive evidence of the transformative power of conditionality combined with a clear European perspective. Less than twenty years ago, the region of the Western Balkans was seen as a place of destruction and despair. Now it is consolidating peace and stability.

Legal basis and procedures

In the [Treaty on European Union](#) (TEU), provisions on the accession process are set out in Article 49, which reads:

Any European State which respects the values referred to in Article 2 and is committed to promoting them may apply to become a member of the Union. The European Parliament and national Parliaments shall be notified of this application. The applicant State shall address its application to the Council, which shall act unanimously after consulting the Commission and after receiving the consent of the European Parliament, which shall act by a majority of its component members. The conditions of eligibility agreed upon by the European Council shall be taken into account.

The conditions of admission and the adjustments to the Treaties on which the Union is founded, which such admission entails, shall be the subject of an agreement between the Member States and the applicant State. This agreement shall be submitted for ratification by all the contracting States in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements.

Article 2, referred to in Article 49, reads:

The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.

Elsewhere in the TEU, Article 50 allows for a Member State to withdraw from the Union, and Article 12 requires national Parliaments to be notified of applications for accession.

The accession process

The second paragraph of Article 49 of the [Treaty on European Union](#) outlines the procedure leading to an Accession Treaty:

The conditions of admission and the adjustments to the Treaties on which the Union is founded, which such admission entails, shall be the subject of an agreement between the Member States and the applicant State. This agreement shall be submitted for ratification by all the contracting States in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements.

Negotiations start with a [screening](#) phase, in which the Commission and the candidate country jointly draft 'roadmaps' identifying legislative measures to be taken. Negotiations tackle the existing body of EU legislation (the *acquis*) typically dividing it into more than

30 chapters, most of which focus on a specific policy area, such as energy, competition, public procurement, taxation (for examples of screening reports, see [Documents](#) page).

Although each applicant must adopt the *acquis* in full, there is the possibility for transitional periods to be agreed for the implementation of specific pieces of Community legislation. Such periods were granted to countries joining the EU in 2004 in a variety of policy fields. The option to invoke transitional periods is also available to existing Member States and was notably used in relation to the free movement of workers in the 2004 and 2007 enlargements, with some Member States allowed a transitional phase before fully opening their borders to workers from the new members (for workers from the countries that joined the EU in 2004, all restrictions on the right to work in any Member State were lifted from 1 May 2011).

While accession negotiations with all candidates are carried out within a single framework, they also operate on the basis of differentiation amongst the candidates, with negotiations proceeding according to a country's individual progress.

The conclusion of negotiations leads to the drafting of an [Accession Treaty](#) (scroll down page) to which the European Parliament has to give its assent and which also has to be ratified by all Member States. In most Member States, ratification will take the form of an act of Parliament, though others might hold a referendum.

Those involved in [accession negotiations](#) are Ministers of the Member States and applicant country, who meet in bilateral Intergovernmental Conferences every six months, and ambassador - who meet every month. Although on the EU side the Member States are parties to the negotiations, it is the Commission that drafts the proposals presented to the applicant by the Permanent Representative of the Member State holding the Presidency of the Council at that time (when Bulgaria and Romania were applicants, the Commission gave [details of the negotiating process](#)).

In response to interest in joining the European Union expressed by Eastern Bloc countries following the breakdown of communist regimes, the December 1994 Essen European Council decided to 'boost and improve' the accession preparation process by approving a 'comprehensive strategy', the key element of which was to prepare the countries concerned for integration into the Union's internal market (see especially Annex IV of the [Presidency Conclusions](#)).

(A summary of the accession process is given in [Steps towards joining](#); news of current accession negotiations can be found in the DG Enlargement [Newsletter](#)).

With the adoption of [Agenda 2000](#) (text courtesy Archive of European Integration; see also [Summaries of EU legislation](#) [archived]) at the December 1997 [Luxembourg European Council](#) and the decision to open negotiations with the first group of applicant countries, the EU started preparing itself for enlargement, agreeing a financial framework and modifying existing instruments in order to better respond to a situation in which a large number of countries undergoing a difficult process of political, social and economic transformation wanted to join the Union.

The key element of this [pre-accession strategy](#) was the [Accession Partnership](#), an instrument for determining a candidate's particular needs for pre-accession assistance, and for bringing all forms of EU assistance within a single framework. Country-specific, multi-annual documents were agreed by the Council, revised as necessary to reflect progress made by the applicant.

The government of each candidate country prepares and manages a National Programme for the Adoption of the *Acquis* (NPAA - see [Summaries of EU legislation](#)), detailing its approach to adopting Community legislation as set out in the Accession Partnership.

Progress is monitored by the European Commission, which publishes annual Progress Reports (sometimes called 'Regular Reports') for both candidate and potential candidate countries (for examples, see [Documents](#) page). The Commission's assessments form the basis for the Council's decisions on applicants' progress.

Presenting the Commission's enlargement package to the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee on 5 November 2008, Olli Rehn, Commissioner for Enlargement, outlined the findings of the Progress Reports on both the candidate and potential candidate countries (see Press Releases [SPEECH/08/592](#), [MEMO/08/675](#) (candidates), [MEMO/08/672](#) (potential candidates)).

On 14 October 2009, the Commission adopted the Communication 'Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2009-2010' ([COM\(2009\)533](#)). The document included a summary of the progress made over the last 12 months by each of the candidates and potential candidates (see also Press Releases [IP/09/1519](#), [IP/09/1516](#), [MEMO/09/449](#) and [MEMO/09/450](#)).

On 9 November 2010 the Commission adopted the Communication 'Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2010-2011' ([COM\(2010\)660](#); see also Press Releases [IP/10/1485](#) and [SPEECH/10/638](#)). Part of the annual 'enlargement package', the Communication assessed the Union's enlargement agenda, outlined the state of preparations, the challenges ahead, and the way forward for the Western Balkans, Turkey and Iceland. It proposed that Montenegro be given Candidate Country Status and recommended that accession negotiations should start with Albania and Montenegro once they addressed a number of key priorities. The report also confirmed that Croatia was entering the final phase of its accession preparations.

The rest of the package comprised individual country reports, which can be found via the [Strategy and Progress Reports](#) page. The Commission also issued a [Citizens' summary](#) and Press Releases on individual countries: Albania - [MEMO/10/553](#); Bosnia and Herzegovina - [MEMO/10/557](#); Croatia - [MEMO/10/558](#); FYROM - [MEMO/10/556](#); Iceland - [MEMO/10/561](#); Kosovo - [MEMO/10/554](#); Montenegro - [MEMO/10/552](#); Serbia - [MEMO/10/560](#); Turkey - [MEMO/10/562](#).

On 14 December 2010, the Council adopted Conclusions on enlargement policy (see Press Release [17871/10](#)), stating:

Enlargement reinforces peace, democracy and stability in Europe, serves the EU's strategic interests, and helps the EU to better achieve its policy objectives in important areas which are key to economic recovery and sustainable growth.

Enlargement serves as a key driver for political and economic reform, and moves forward at a pace which is largely determined by the (potential) candidate countries' respect of the Copenhagen criteria and their proven capacity to take on the obligations of membership.

On 5 December 2011, the Council adopted [Conclusions](#) on the enlargement and stabilisation and association process. Although they noted that key challenges remain in most enlargement countries, Ministers also stated:

The enlargement process continues to reinforce peace, democracy and stability in Europe and allows the EU to be better positioned to address global challenges. The transformative power of the enlargement process generates far-reaching political and economic reform in the enlargement countries which also benefits the EU as a whole.

In its 10 October 2012 Communication 'Enlargement strategy and main challenges 2012-2013' ([COM\(2012\)600](#)); see also Press Release [IP/12/1087](#)), the Commission stated:

At a time when the EU faces major challenges and significant global uncertainty and gains new momentum for economic, financial and political integration, enlargement policy continues to contribute to peace, security and prosperity on our continent. The imminent accession of Croatia, the start of accession negotiations with Montenegro and candidate status for Serbia send a strong signal of the transformative power of enlargement and what is possible in an area riven by war just half a generation ago. Enlargement to southeast Europe helps avoid the far higher costs of dealing with the consequences of instability. It is an investment in sustainable democracy and demonstrates the EU's continued capacity as a global actor.

Amongst the recommendations set out in the report, the Commission called (for a fourth time) for the EU to open accession negotiations with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. It also recommended that Albania be given candidate status, and proposed negotiating a Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) with Kosovo

The October 2012 enlargement package also included Progress Reports on individual countries:

Albania: [SWD\(2012\)334](#)

Bosnia and Herzegovina: [SWD\(2012\)335](#)

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: [SWD\(2012\)332](#)

Iceland: [SWD\(2012\)337](#)

Montenegro: [SWD\(2012\)331](#)

Serbia: [SWD\(2012\)333](#)

Turkey: [SWD\(2012\)336](#)

The Commission's Communication provided the basis for the 11 December 2012 General Affairs Council [Conclusions](#) on enlargement and the Stabilisation and Association Process.

See also European Parliament Library Briefing [EU Accession procedure](#).

Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance

During the 2007-2013 period, financial support to both candidate and potential candidate countries is available from the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), established by [Council Regulation \(EC\) 1085/2006](#) (see also [Summaries of EU legislation](#) [archived]). The IPA provides funding to address five 'components':

- Transition assistance and institution building
- Cross-border cooperation
- Regional development
- Human resources development
- Rural development.

The original legislation was implemented by [Commission Regulation \(EC\) 718/2007](#), which was amended in January 2010 by [Commission Regulation \(EU\) 80/2010](#).

The Commission's proposed financial framework for 2014-2020 'A Budget for Europe 2020' ([COM\(2011\)500](#) of 29 June 2011) allocated €12.5 billion to the IPA. According to a Commission news item, the future IPA:

will reward efforts of EU candidates to meet accession benchmarks and will encourage them to integrate the strategic Europe 2020 objectives into their national priorities.

The assistance will be implemented on the basis of comprehensive reform strategies, with emphasis on regional cooperation, implementation of EU laws and standards, capacity to manage the Union's internal policies upon accession, and delivery of tangible socio-economic impacts in the beneficiary countries. More use will be made of innovative financing arrangements set up with international financial institutions, with EU funds acting as a catalyst for leveraging investment in infrastructure.

The IPA replaces the previous Instrument for Structural Policies for Pre-accession (ISPA), established under Council Regulation (EC) 1267/1999 (see [Summaries of EU legislation](#) [archived]).

The Commission's Annual Report on ISPA for 2008 was adopted on 29 October 2009 as [COM\(2009\)590](#). The 2009 Report ([COM\(2010\)622](#)) focused on activities in Croatia - the only country covered by ISPA at the time.

On 20 July 2011, the Commission published a proposal ([COM\(2011\)446](#)) to amend the IPA Regulation in order to move Iceland and Montenegro from the list of potential candidate countries to the list of candidate countries. [Regulation \(EU\) 153/2012](#) was subsequently adopted on 15 February 2012.

The Commission announced on 20 December 2011 that it was making available almost €1 billion under IPA to support reforms in countries wanting to join the EU: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo, Turkey, and Iceland (see Press Release [IP/11/1570](#)).

The Commission's '2011 annual report on financial assistance for enlargement (IPA, PHARE, CARDS, Turkey Pre-Accession Instrument, Transition Facility)' was adopted as [COM\(2012\)678](#) of 20 November 2012.

A proposal for a successor to the IPA (to be called 'IPA II') was adopted by the Commission on 7 December 2011 as [COM\(2011\)838](#) (check progress via [PreLex dossier](#)).

Acceding countries

Croatia

Croatia is scheduled to become the 28th EU Member State on 1 July 2013. Its status has thus changed from 'candidate country' to 'accessing country'.

Croatia officially applied for EU membership in February 2003. Following a positive Opinion on Croatia's Application for Membership of the European Union ([COM\(2004\)257](#)) by the European Commission in April 2004, Croatia was given the status of [candidate](#) in June 2004. Later in 2004, the Commission gave its recommendation to start accession negotiations, and on that basis the December 2004 [Brussels European Council](#) scheduled the opening for 17 March 2005, provided that Croatia fully co-operated with the [International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia](#) (ICTY). On 16 March 2005, EU Heads of State and Government decided that Croatia had not co-operated sufficiently, and therefore delayed the opening of negotiations until 3 October 2005 - when the ICTY confirmed an improvement in Croatia's willingness to co-operate. Following a Commission Proposal of 9 November 2005 for a Council Decision on the Principles, Priorities and Conditions contained in the Accession Partnership with Croatia ([COM\(2005\)556](#)), the

Council adopted [Decision 2006/145/EC](#) on 20 February 2006; a revised Accession Partnership was adopted in February 2008 as [Council Decision 2008/119/EC](#).

Based on the [Croatia 2007 Progress Report](#), the Commission's view in its [Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2007-2008](#) was that Croatia was continuing to meet the Copenhagen political criteria, with progress on implementing strategies for reforming the judiciary and fighting corruption and full cooperation with the ICTY. The Commission noted, however, 'that considerable challenges remain in key areas, such as reform of the inefficient judicial system, public administration reform and fighting corruption' and that more attention 'needs to be paid to minority rights, especially refugee return', as well as to the prosecution of war crimes and resolving 'outstanding bilateral problems with neighbours'. Croatia was said to be a functioning market economy, which 'should be able to cope with competitive pressures and market forces within the Union in the medium term' although concerns were expressed about a number of issues, including significant State intervention in the economy remained and inefficiencies in public administration and the judiciary which 'continued to hamper private sector development.' Although Croatia had 'improved its ability to take on the obligations of EU membership', the Commission reported that 'significant efforts lie ahead in order to reach full alignment.'

The Croatia 2008 Progress Report, dated 5 November 2008 ([SEC\(2008\)2694](#); summarised in [Key findings](#)) stated that implementation of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement was largely continuing without major difficulty, though exceptions included noncompliance with some state aid provisions and the existence of an excise duty regime for cigarettes. The Report also noted that 'public administration remains weak and the required reforms continue to represent a major challenge for Croatia.'

On 29 October 2009, the Commission adopted 'A financial package for the accession negotiations with Croatia' ([COM\(2009\)595](#)).

10 June 2011 was described as an historic day for Croatia and the EU, when the European Commission proposed that the Council should close the last four of the 35 chapters in the accession negotiations (see Press Releases [MEMO/11/397](#) and [MEMO/11/399](#)). On 24 June, the European Council commended Croatia for its 'intensive efforts' in the accession negotiations and invited the Council to take the steps necessary to conclude negotiations by the end of June (Press Release [EUCO 23/11](#)). On 30 June, the Council decided that an Accession Treaty should be signed by the end of 2011, with Croatia likely to join the EU on 1 July 2013 (Press Release [IP/11/824](#)).

In its 12 October 2011 progress report on Croatia ([SEC\(2011\)1200](#); see also Press Release [MEMO/11/688](#)) the Commission briefly describes relations between Croatia and the EU, analyses the situation in Croatia in terms of the political and economic criteria for membership, and reviews Croatia's capacity to assume the obligations of membership (the *acquis*).

The Accession Treaty was signed on 9 December 2011 and published in the Official Journal on 24 April 2102 (see [Treaty](#) text).

Adopted on 24 April 2012, the Commission's 'Monitoring report on Croatia's accession preparations' ([COM\(2012\)186](#)) found that, despite some issues needing further attention, Croatia's preparations for EU membership were mainly on track (see also Press Release [MEMO/12/273](#)).

In its 10 October 2012 Monitoring Report on Croatia, the Commission concluded that the country was continuing to make good progress overall, but identified 10 priority actions to be taken (see Press Release [MEMO/12/765](#)).

The Commission adopted its last Monitoring Report on Croatia's preparations for joining the EU on 26 March 2013. The report confirmed that Croatia would be ready to join the EU on 1 July 2013 (Press Release [IP/13/283](#)). That report followed on 27 March by the Commission's first report on Croatia's administrative preparations (Press Release [IP/13/289](#)).

On 21 June 2013, the Commission announced the appointment of the first Head of the European Commission Representation in Croatia (see Press Release [IP/13/581](#)).

Croatia formally joined the European Union on 1 July 2013, becoming the EU's 28th Member State.

(Further information can be found via the DG Enlargement pages on [Croatia](#)).

Current candidates

There are currently five [candidate countries](#): Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Iceland and Serbia.

Turkey and Croatia started accession negotiations in October 2005; the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) was granted candidate status in December 2005, with the Commission recommending the opening of accession negotiations in October 2009; Montenegro submitted its application for EU membership on 15 December 2008 and its status as a candidate country was confirmed by the European Council on 17 December 2010; Iceland applied for EU membership in July 2009 and the European Council decided on 17 June 2010 to open negotiations.

Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo (under UN Security Council Resolution 1244) are all [potential candidates](#).

Turkey

Turkey has had close ties to the European Economic Community and its successors for many years. In 1963 an Association Agreement ([Ankara Agreement](#)) was signed with the aim of promoting trade and economic relations. On this basis a far reaching [customs union](#) was eventually established between Turkey and the European Union in December 1995. However, important chapters such as agriculture, services and public procurement are excluded.

Turkey officially applied for membership of the EC in 1987 but was only granted the status of candidate country at the 1999 [Helsinki European Council](#). Turkey's potential accession has proved to be far more controversial than that of the Central and Eastern European countries and it was not until the [Copenhagen European Council](#) on 12-13 December 2002 that EU leaders finally agreed that 'if the European Council in December 2004, on the basis of a report and a recommendation from the Commission, decides that Turkey fulfils the Copenhagen political criteria, the European Union will open accession negotiations with Turkey without delay' (for Copenhagen criteria, see 'Legal basis and procedures' above).

On 6 October 2004, the Commission presented a positive Recommendation on Turkey's progress towards accession ([COM\(2004\)656](#)) to the Council and the European Parliament, which said that Turkey had sufficiently fulfilled the political criteria and that the Commission therefore recommended that accession negotiations should start. However, in the light of very recent reforms in Turkey the Commission added that 'the irreversibility of the reform process, its implementation in particular with regard to

fundamental freedoms, will need to be confirmed over a longer period of time.’ (see [Summaries of EU legislation](#) [archived]).

On the basis of the Commission’s Recommendation, the December 2004 [Brussels European Council](#) decided that accession negotiations with Turkey should be started on 3 October 2005.

Negotiations with Turkey are conducted within a [Negotiating Framework](#) drafted by the Commission in October 2005. On 9 November 2005, the Commission presented a Proposal for a Council Decision on the Principles, Priorities and Conditions contained in the Accession Partnership with Turkey ([COM\(2005\)559](#)) defining ‘short and medium-term priorities for the country’s preparations for further integration with the European Union’. The resulting [Council Decision 2006/35/EC](#) was adopted in January 2006; a revised Accession Partnership was adopted in February 2008 as [Council Decision 2008/157/EC](#) (see also [Summaries of EU legislation](#) [archived]).

Published in November 2007, the Turkey 2007 Progress Report ([SEC\(2007\)1436](#)) judged the country to be ‘sufficiently’ fulfilling the Copenhagen political criteria, with positive aspects including the holding of parliamentary elections, progress in reform of the public administration and in improving the efficiency of the judiciary, and progress on human rights issues. Problem areas identified by the Commission included corruption, freedom of expression and the rights of non-Muslim religious communities, and children’s and women’s rights.

Turkey was deemed to be ‘a functioning market economy’ and ‘should be able to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union in the medium term, provided that it implements its comprehensive reform programme to address structural weaknesses.’ However, relations with Cyprus remained a cause for concern, with Turkey maintaining restrictions on direct transport links between the two, and also failing to comply with its obligations under the additional protocol to the Ankara Agreement in December 2006.

Dated 5 November 2008, the Turkey 2008 Progress Report ([SEC\(2008\)2699](#); summarised in [Key findings](#)) found that the government of Turkey had expressed commitment to the EU accession process, but had ‘not put forward a consistent and comprehensive programme of political reforms.’ On 1 September 2008, the government had announced a draft National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis and started a consultation process, but the Programme had not been adopted. Amongst other criticisms, the Report also re-iterated concerns over human rights, with the relevant institutions said to lack independence and resources.

A revised Accession Partnership was adopted on 18 February 2008 as [Council Decision 2008/157/EC](#).

In its 12 October 2011 Communication ‘Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2011-2012’ ([COM\(2011\)666](#); see also Press Release [MEMO/11/694](#)) the Commission stated:

With its dynamic economy and its important regional role, Turkey is a key country for the European Union. This has been highlighted by the current regional and global political and economic developments. Turkey has continued EU-relevant reforms, but significant further efforts are required, including on guaranteeing core fundamental rights. Regrettably, accession negotiations have not moved on for more than one year. The Commission will work for a renewed positive agenda in EU Turkey relations, one that will continue to support reforms, in particular an inclusive constitutional reform process, and economic integration. This agenda could cover a broad range of areas of common interest including political reforms, foreign policy dialogue, alignment with the EU acquis, visas, mobility and

migration, energy, the fight against terrorism, trade and participation in EU programmes. The country's contribution to the EU will only be fully effective within a credible and active accession perspective.

The Commission's 10 October 2012 Progress Report on Turkey ([SWD\(2012\)336](#)) highlighted areas of progress, but also warned of growing concerns over the country's lack of progress towards meeting the political criteria for EU membership (see also Press Release [MEMO/12/771](#)).

(Further details can be found on the DG Enlargement pages on [Turkey](#), while the Summaries of EU legislation [Ongoing enlargement](#) section includes pages on [Turkey's pre-accession strategy](#) [archived] and [Turkey - adoption of the Community acquis](#) (17 topic-specific chapters); information on the history of EU-Turkey relations, ongoing accession negotiations and legal texts can also be found on the website of the [EU Delegation to Turkey](#)).

The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) was, after Slovenia and Croatia, the third ex-Yugoslav Republic to officially seek membership of the EU. It did so in March 2004 and, following the positive Commission Opinion on the Application from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for Membership of the European Union ([COM\(2005\)562](#)) on 9 November 2005, the December 2005 [Brussels European Council](#) decided to grant Macedonia candidate country status. On 9 November 2005, the Commission had also presented a Proposal for a Council Decision on the Principles, Priorities and Conditions contained in the European Partnership with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia ([COM\(2005\)557](#)) setting out 'short- and medium-term priorities for the country's preparations for further integration with the European Union'. Meeting on 30 January 2006, the Council adopted the proposal as [Council Decision 2006/57/EC](#); a revised Accession Partnership was adopted in February 2008 as [Council Decision 2008/212/EC](#).

The Commission's analysis of FYROM's progress presented in 'Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2007-2008' ([COM\(2007\)663](#)) was based on the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2007 Progress Report ([SEC\(2007\)1432](#)), which showed that progress had been made towards meeting the political criteria and in reforming the judicial system, that 'some encouraging results' had been achieved in the fight against corruption, and that 'Overall, human rights and the protection of minorities, including inter-ethnic relations have improved.' Concerns were expressed, however, that political tensions were delaying reforms and that corruption was still widespread. The Commission also noted that the 2001 [Ohrid Framework Agreement](#) 'for securing the future of Macedonia's democracy and permitting the development of closer and more integrated solutions between the Republic of Macedonia and the Euro-Atlantic community' was continuing 'to contribute to the consolidation of democracy and the rule of law.'

FYROM was considered to be well advanced in its efforts towards establishing a functioning market economy, although unemployment remained 'particularly high' and institutional weaknesses were hampering the functioning of the market economy. There was also criticism of the state of the judiciary and of the legal system ('The degree of legal certainty is still low') and - despite 'some progress in the fulfilment of the short term priorities of the European partnership' - at the time the report was written, the country still faced 'major shortcomings in implementing and effectively enforcing legislation.'

The 2008 Progress Report ([SEC\(2008\)2695](#); summarised in [Key findings](#)) was critical of the conduct of the June 2008 elections in the country and of some subsequent political developments, including the use of an emergency procedure to introduce new legislation. Concern was also expressed about 'shortcomings in implementing and effectively

enforcing legislation, mainly in areas as free movement of goods, taxation, food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary policy.'

In its 12 October 2011 Communication 'Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2011-2012' ([COM\(2011\)666](#); see also Press Release [MEMO/11/689](#)) the Commission stated that FYROM:

continues to sufficiently fulfil the political criteria. Some progress has been made on core reforms. The implementation of adopted legislation, as well as guaranteeing the freedom of expression in the media, strengthening independence of the judiciary, reform of public administration, and fighting corruption continue, however, to represent significant challenges.

The Commission reiterates its recommendation that negotiations for accession to the European Union should be opened with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The Commission also reiterates its proposal to move to the second stage of association as provided by the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, without further delay.

The Commission's 10 October 2012 Progress Report on FYROM ([SWD\(2012\)332](#)) concluded that the country continues to fulfil the political criteria for EU membership and again recommended that accession negotiations be opened (see also Press Release [MEMO/12/766](#)).

(Further information can be found via the DG Enlargement pages on [the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia](#) and the website of the [EU Mission to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia](#)).

Iceland

In a letter dated 16 July 2009, the Prime Minister of Iceland, Ms Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir, and the country's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Össur Skarphéðinsson, presented Iceland's application to join the European Union (EU). On 27 July, the Council asked the European Commission to submit an opinion on the application. According to a [news item](#) from Iceland's Ministry for Foreign Affairs, at a meeting on 23 July, when the application was formally presented to the President of the Council, Iceland's Minister for Foreign Affairs said:

This is [an] historic day for Iceland after years of discussions and debate. We see this as a logical next step in our approach to Europe, with which we have been cooperating for a long time.

Iceland is already familiar with the EU and its legislative processes, through the European Economic Area Agreement and the Schengen Agreement (see European External Action Service pages on [Iceland](#)). In a statement following receipt of Iceland's written membership application on 16 July (see Press Release [IP/09/1159](#)), Commission President José Manuel Barroso said:

The decision of the Icelandic Parliament is a sign of the vitality of the European project and indicative of the hope that Europe represents. Iceland is a European country with long and deep democratic roots. Iceland has very close relations with the EU after some 40 years of EFTA membership and 15 years in the European Economic Area.

On 27 July 2009, the General Affairs Council asked the Commission to submit an opinion on Iceland's application (see [Council conclusions on Enlargement](#)). If accepted, the application will be subject to the usual accession negotiations, with fisheries likely to be a

particularly challenging issue (trace developments via the Commission's DG Enlargement page on Iceland; see also the website of the [EU Delegation to Iceland](#)).

The European Commission issued its Opinion on Iceland's EU membership bid on 24 February 2010. The Commission identified challenges for the accession process, but acknowledged Iceland's adherence to the common values of the EU (see Press Release [IP/10/186](#)).

On 17 June, the European Council agreed that Iceland meets the political criteria for membership and decided to open accession negotiations (see Press Release [IP/10/759](#) and [Presidency Conclusions](#)). Those negotiations were formally opened on 27 July (Press Releases [IP/10/1011](#), [12609/10](#)).

A Second meeting of the Accession Conference with Iceland at Ministerial level, held on 27 June 2011, marked the start of substantial accession negotiations (see Press Releases [12150/11](#) and [IP/11/791](#)). The European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy, Stefan Füle, said:

This accession conference marks an important step forward in Iceland's accession process. I am pleased that at this early stage of negotiations we open four and even close two negotiating chapters, and I am confident that this achievement provides momentum to meet the challenges of the accession process.

Iceland became eligible for financial assistance from the EU to prepare for accession under [Regulation \(EU\) 540/2010](#) of 16 June 2010, which amends Council Regulation (EC) 1085/2006 establishing the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). Funding is available to help with the implementation of EU law (the 'acquis'), prepare for the use of EU Structural Funds and to inform Iceland's citizens about the EU and its policies (see also Press Release [IP/10/943](#)).

In its 12 October 2011 Communication 'Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2011-2012' ([COM\(2011\)666](#); see also Press Release [MEMO/11/690](#)), the Commission stated:

Iceland's accession process has made headway over the past year. Progress in negotiations is due to Iceland's already highly integrated structures through its long established democracy, its membership of the European Economic Area and the Schengen zone, and its high calibre public administration.

The Commission's 10 October 2012 Progress Report on Iceland ([SWD\(2012\)337](#)) concluded that Iceland continues to fully meet the political criteria for EU membership, can be considered a functioning market economy and, overall, is well advanced in its preparations for membership (see also Press Release [MEMO/12/767](#)). Iceland's coalition government later announced that EU accession negotiations would not be a priority ahead of the April 2013 general election (see European Parliament Library Briefing [Iceland slows down enlargement talks](#)).

(Further information can be found via the DG Enlargement pages on [Iceland](#) and the website of the [EU Delegation to Iceland](#)).

Montenegro

The Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) between the European Union and Montenegro signed in October 2007 entered into force on 1 May 2010. The 'Commission Opinion on Montenegro's application for membership of the European Union' of 9 November 2010 (issued as [COM\(2010\)670](#)) found:

that negotiations for accession to the European Union should be opened with Montenegro once the country has achieved the necessary degree of compliance with the membership criteria and in particular the Copenhagen political criteria requiring the stability of institutions guaranteeing notably the rule of law.

To that end, the Commission identified a number of key priorities for Montenegro to address. However, in the light of the progress made, the Commission recommended that Montenegro should be granted the status of candidate country and the December 2010 European Council subsequently granted Montenegro candidate status (see [European Council Conclusions](#)).

In its 12 October 2011 Communication 'Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2011-2012' ([COM\(2011\)666](#)), the Commission stated:

Montenegro has made good progress in meeting the Copenhagen political criteria, achieving overall satisfactory results, in particular in the identified key priorities. The legislative and institutional framework has been improved with a view to strengthening the work of the parliament, the electoral framework, professionalism and de-politicisation of public administration, the independence and accountability of the judiciary, fight against corruption and organised crime, media freedom and cooperation with civil society. Sustained efforts are needed, however, in further developing a track record in the area of rule of law, in particular with respect to high-level corruption and organised crime cases. Positive steps have also been made in anti-discrimination policies and in improving the situation of displaced persons. This now needs to translate into reducing discrimination in practice towards vulnerable groups, including displaced persons.

In its October 2011 Communication, the Commission considered that Montenegro had achieved the necessary degree of compliance with EU membership criteria - in particular the Copenhagen political criteria - and had successfully addressed the key priorities set out in 2010 as a pre-requisite to opening accession negotiations. On that basis, the Commission recommended that accession negotiations be opened with Montenegro (see Press Releases [IP/11/1182](#) and [MEMO/11/692](#)).

Accession negotiations with Montenegro were officially launched on 29 June 2012. Montenegro is the first country to which a new approach to accession will apply, with an increased focus on fundamental freedoms, judiciary, fight against corruption and organized crime (see Press Release [MEMO/12/650](#)).

The Commission's first Progress Report on Montenegro was adopted on 10 October 2012 as [SWD\(2012\)331](#) (see also Press Release [MEMO/12/769](#)). It concluded that the country has made further progress in establishing a functioning market economy, has improved its ability to take on the obligations of EU membership, and continues to sufficiently meet the political criteria for EU membership.

(Further information can be found via the DG Enlargement pages on [Montenegro](#) and the website of the [Delegation of the European Union to Montenegro](#)).

Serbia

In its 12 October 2011 Communication 'Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2011-2012' ([COM\(2011\)666](#)), the Commission recommended:

that the European Council should grant Serbia the status of candidate country, taking into account progress achieved so far and on the understanding that Serbia re-engages in the dialogue with Kosovo and is moving swiftly to the implementation in good faith of agreements reached to date.

Serbia is well on its way towards sufficiently fulfilling the political criteria set by the Copenhagen European Council in 1993 and the conditions of the Stabilisation and Association process, provided that progress continues and that practical solutions are found to the problems with Kosovo.

On that basis, the Commission foresees that accession negotiations with Serbia will be opened as soon as further significant progress is made in normalising relations with Kosovo. On 12 October 2011, the Commission therefore recommended that EU candidate status be granted to Serbia (see Press Releases [IP/11/1182](#) and [MEMO/11/693](#)). At its meeting on 5 December 2011, the Council recommended that Serbia be granted candidate status (see Council [Conclusions](#)), which was subsequently confirmed by the March 2012 European Council (see European Council [Conclusions](#)).

The Commission's 10 October 2012 Progress Report on Serbia ([SWD\(2012\)333](#)) concluded that the country continues to sufficiently fulfil the political criteria for EU membership and the conditions of the Stabilisation and Association process. The Commission highlighted the need for a visible and sustainable improvement in relations between Serbia and Kosovo (see also Press Release [MEMO/12/770](#)).

(Further information can be found via the DG Enlargement pages on [Serbia](#) and the website of the [Delegation of the European Union to Serbia](#)).

Potential candidates

There are currently three countries with 'potential candidate' status: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo (under UNSCR 1244). The prospect of EU membership for the Western Balkan states was agreed by the [Feira European Council](#) in June 2000 and confirmed by the [Thessaloniki European Council](#) in June 2003 (since then, Croatia, Macedonia and Serbia have moved from potential candidate to candidate status).

Stabilisation and Association Process

The [Europe Agreements](#) concluded with Central and Eastern European countries ahead of the 2004 enlargement provided a legal framework for association, setting out the political and economic relations with the EU and helping the country concerned adopt and transpose the *acquis communautaire*. (Europe Agreements differed from the Association Agreements previously signed with membership applicants, in that they incorporated both a structured political dialogue and sought to establish a free-trade area with the EU relatively quickly.)

In May 1999, the Commission issued a Communication 'on the Stabilisation and Association Process for Countries of South-Eastern Europe: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania' ([COM\(1999\)235](#) - text courtesy Archive of European Integration). According to the Communication, an element of the [Stabilisation and Association Process](#):

would be a new category of agreement - Stabilisation Association Agreements - for which all those countries would, in principle, be eligible.

In June 1999, the [General Affairs Council](#) noted that work had started on formulating a policy based on the Commission's Communication, and agreed to introduce Stabilisation and Association Agreements (SAAs). The Stabilisation and Association Process was thus established, with the aim of integrating the Western Balkan countries into the European Union by setting out common political and economic goals and creating a free-trade area. Within the SAP, the Stabilisation and Association Agreements create a contractual

relationship between the EU and each Western Balkan country (as the earlier Europe Agreements did for the candidate countries in Central Europe). Each SAA must be ratified; until it is, an Interim Agreement (IA) will usually be in force. For the texts of SAAs / IAs see [Albania](#) and [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) (IA; see also Press Releases [IP/08/1067](#) and [MEMO/08/459](#)). There is no SAA with Kosovo; there is instead a [European Partnership](#) agreement, with a Stabilisation and Association Process Tracking Mechanism (STM) being the main instrument for political dialogue between the Government of Kosovo and the European Commission under the Stabilisation and Association Process (see DG Enlargement pages on [Kosovo](#)).

The Interim Agreement between EU and Serbia on trade and trade related matters ([Council Decision 2010/36/EC](#)) entered into force on 1 February 2010, creating a free trade area between the EU and Serbia and regulating a number of issues including competition and State aid.

On 14 June 2010, the Council decided to proceed with the ratification process of the SAA between the EU and Serbia and on 25 October 2010, the Council invited the Commission to deliver an opinion on Serbia's application for membership (see [Council Conclusions](#) and Press Release [MEMO/10/520](#)).

Cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) is an essential element of the SAA. The arrest of the former Bosnian Serb General Ratko Mladić on 26 May 2011 was welcomed by the EU and seen both as an important international obligation and a positive development in Serbia's bid for EU membership (see Press Release [MEMO/11/350](#)).

(For further information see [Stabilisation and Association process, Summaries of EU legislation](#) and Press Release [MEMO/07/240](#)).

In 2004, the EU concluded partnership agreements with the potential candidate countries of the Western Balkans, under [Council Regulation 533/2004](#) 'on the establishment of European partnerships in the framework of the stabilisation and association process' (see [Summaries of EU legislation](#)). Modelled on the Accession Partnership, these [European Partnerships](#) 'lay down the principles, priorities and conditions of the relations between the EU and Western Balkan potential candidate countries and serve to prepare them for European integration.' They are needed:

in order to assist the western Balkan countries in preparing for membership within a coherent framework and in developing plans with timetables of reforms and details in terms of measures of how they intend to address the requirements for further integration into the European Union.

(Details of European Partnerships can be found in Summaries of EU legislation files for [Albania](#), [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) [archived], [Montenegro](#) [archived], [Serbia, including Kosovo](#) [archived], [former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia](#) [archived]. There are brief country profiles, notes on relations with the EU, and links to key documents on the DG Enlargement country-specific pages for: [Albania](#), [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#), [Kosovo](#), and [Serbia](#)).

Western Balkans

The Communication 'Western Balkans: enhancing the European perspective' ([COM\(2008\)127](#)) was presented by the Commission on 5 March 2008. It reiterated the Union's commitment to the Western Balkans, set out new initiatives for promoting people-to-people contacts, developing civil society and enhancing economic and social development. It also summarised developments since November 2007 (see also Press Releases [IP/08/378](#) and [SPEECH/08/140](#)).

In November 2008, the Commission and the Union's High Representative for the CFSP presented a joint report entitled 'EU's policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina: the way ahead' to the Council. A summary (available as Press Release [IP/08/1672](#)) stated:

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is a potential candidate country with its own unique challenges. A tailor-made strategy and strong international engagement, including active and comprehensive use of all EU's tools and mechanisms, will be necessary to keep it moving forward steadily towards the European Union.

The report also emphasised that, despite BiH signing a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU in June 2008:

The gap that exists at present between the citizens' aspiration to join the EU and their politicians' will to deliver must be closed if BiH is to advance on its European road.

On 3 February 2009, the Commission published an overview of 'EU regionally relevant activities in the Western Balkans 2008/09', highlighting 'EU-supported activities and initiatives across a wide range of sectors implemented in 2008 and planned for 2009' (see Press Release [IP/09/204](#)).

The General Affairs Council of 27 July 2009 noted in its [Conclusions on Enlargement](#) that the Council:

will return to Albania's application for membership once the Albanian election procedure has been completed.

On 31 July 2009, the Commission approved €100 million in budget support for Serbia and €85 million for the Western Balkans and Turkey to help ease the economic and social consequences of the economic crisis (see Press Release [IP/09/1213](#)). A further €39 million was approved for Bosnia and Herzegovina on 11 August (Press Release [IP/09/1230](#)).

On 9 December 2009, the European Commission, the European Investment Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the Council of Europe Development Bank launched the [Western Balkans Investment Framework](#) (WBIF) to finance priority projects in the region. Initially focusing on infrastructure, the WBIF allocated €26 million to help fund 26 projects in various sectors across the region (see Press Release [BEI/09/246](#)). The first [annual report](#) on the WBIF was published in December 2010. It showed that the initiative provided over €6 billion in 2010, supporting 73 projects.

The Commission's 12 October 2011 Communication 'Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2011-2012' ([COM\(2011\)666](#)) assessed the current state of the enlargement agenda, including the outlook for the Western Balkans (see also Press Releases [IP/11/1182](#), [MEMO/11/686](#), and [MEMO/11/687](#)).

The Commission's 10 October 2012 Progress Report on Albania ([SWD\(2012\)334](#)) concluded that the country had made good progress towards fulfilling the political criteria for membership of the EU, delivering a number of substantial reforms. The Commission therefore recommended that Albania be granted EU candidate status, subject to meeting certain criteria (see also Press Release [MEMO/12/763](#) and European Parliament Library Briefing [Albania: ready for candidate status?](#)).

The Commission's 10 October 2012 Progress Report on Bosnia and Herzegovina ([SWD\(2012\)335](#)) concluded that Bosnia and Herzegovina had made only limited progress

towards meeting the political criteria for EU membership and in achieving more functional, coordinated and sustainable institutional structures (see also Press Release [MEMO/12/764](#)). Similar concerns were voiced by Commissioner Štefan Füle, speaking to the European Parliament on 22 May 2013 (see [SPEECH/13/441](#)).

On 10 October 2012, the Commission adopted a Communication 'on a Feasibility Study for a Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the European Union and Kosovo' ([COM\(2012\)602](#); see also the accompanying Staff Working Document [SWD\(2012\)339](#)). The Commission found that Kosovo's status under international law is not a legal obstacle to the conclusion and implementation of an EU-Kosovo Stabilisation and Association Agreement (see also European Parliament Library Briefing [Kosovo's European integration process](#)). On 22 April 2013, the Commission proposed an agreement to allow Kosovo to participate in 22 EU programmes (see Press Release [IP/13/348](#)).

Speaking on 24 May 2013, at the conference '10 Years after Thessaloniki: An appraisal of the EU perspective and challenges in the Western Balkans', Commissioner Štefan Füle addresses the future of enlargement in the context of the economic crisis (see [SPEECH/13/459](#)). On 12 November 2012, the Commission announced EU investment of €81 million to support key reforms in Albania (Press Release [IP/12/1198](#)).

European Neighbourhood Policy and EFTA states

Other countries have been given clear signals that accession to the EU is not an option at present - if at all. In the framework of the [European Neighbourhood Policy](#) (ENP) which is aimed at the EU's 'new Eastern and Southern neighbours', the European Union seeks to 'prevent the emergence of new dividing lines' in Europe by offering an alternative to EU membership:

The vision for the policy is of a ring of countries, sharing the EU's fundamental values and objectives, drawn into an increasingly close relationship, going beyond co-operation to involve a significant measure of economic and political integration. This will bring enormous gains to all involved in terms of increased stability, security and well being. The approach is founded on partnership and joint ownership.

The ENP is aimed at 16 states of the former Soviet Republics in Eastern Europe and the Southern Caucasus, and of the Maghreb and Mashreq: Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia and Ukraine (see [map](#)).

Although [Russia](#) is not included in the ENP, it has been offered a special relationship with the European Union, building on the concept of [common spaces](#) agreed at the May 2003 St. Petersburg Summit.

The June 2008 Summit between EU and the Russian Federation saw the launch of negotiations on a new EU-Russia agreement, but the process stalled over the Russia/Georgia conflict (see also the EEAS profile of [Russia](#) and [EU-Russia Summit](#) page).

The four EFTA countries are closely linked to the European Union by numerous agreements. Three of them ([Iceland](#), [Norway](#) and [Liechtenstein](#)) are members of the [European Economic Area](#) (EEA) which extends the Single Market legislation (except for agriculture and fisheries) to their territories. Iceland submitted an application to join the EU in July 2009 (see 'Potential candidates' above). Norway's population rejected accession to the EU in both 1972 and 1994. The remaining EFTA country, [Switzerland](#), applied for EU membership in May 1992. However, after ratification of the EEA

Agreement was rejected in a referendum, accession negotiations were suspended until further notice.

The European Commission announced on 15 May 2013, that it had adopted proposals concerning an EU-Ukraine Association Agreement - although the EU would only sign an agreement if Ukraine had made progress on a number of issues (see Press Release [IP/13/437](#)). Following the EU Ukraine Cooperation Council in Luxembourg on 24 June 2013, Commissioner Füle confirmed that Ukraine must do more to meet the EU's demands (see [MEMO/13/605](#)).

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June 2013

Original compilation: December 1999 (Eric Davies)

Revised: 2006 (Thomas Pritzkow), 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012 (Eric Davies)

Hyperlinks checked: November 2016 (Bastien Beauducel)