

IMPORTANT LEGAL NOTICE - The information on this site is subject to [a disclaimer](#) and a [copyright notice](#).



Europa

The European Commission

Enlargement

Enlargement

SELECT A COUNTRY

Countries

Topics

News

Library

Contacts

Enlargement Weekly

25 February 2002

Welcome to Enlargement Weekly. This weekly bulletin provides an overview of where European Union enlargement has got to, who's doing what in the EU, in the institutions and candidate countries, and how the main challenges are being met.

Articles this week

- ★ [EU Foreign Affairs ministers assess enlargement plan](#)
- ★ [EU reviews progress with baltic states](#)
- ★ [First ministerial exchanges on agriculture plans](#)
- ★ [Boosting bulgarian links with Greece](#)
- ★ [Enlargement News in Brief](#)
- ★ [Enlargement Agenda](#)

EU FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTERS ASSESS ENLARGEMENT PLAN

Following a preliminary discussion at their informal meeting in Caceres last week, European Union foreign ministers took a formal look at the European Commission's proposals for dealing with the next three chapters of the negotiations at the General Affairs Council on February 18. The draft EU negotiating positions that will now have to be prepared on financial and budgetary provisions, agriculture and regional policy are particularly sensitive, because of the implications for the EU budget.

European Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen outlined the thinking behind the Commission's information note on the common financial framework 2004-2006 proposal responding to questions raised in the previous discussions among ministers and in the European permanent representatives committee, made up of the member state ambassadors to the EU.

The discussion focused in particular on the link between the financial package and the financial framework agreed by the EU in Berlin in 1999. Issues included the overall level of expenditure envisaged, the question of agricultural direct payments, the balance between direct aid and restructuring elements, the likely ability of new member states to absorb EU structural assistance, and the principle of granting budgetary compensation after enlargement.

The discussion reaffirmed that the negotiations will be based on the present acquis and on the financial framework ceilings decided by the European Council in Berlin in 1999. The Council then asked the Commission to submit draft common positions for these three sensitive chapters "as soon as possible", since it is still determined to adhere to the "roadmap" timetable endorsed by the EU summits at Nice, Göteborg and Laeken. "Timely submission" of these drafts is essential to be able to meet the goal of closing negotiations with those candidates that are prepared by the end of 2002.

EU REVIEWS PROGRESS WITH BALTIC STATES

Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia held their annual Association Councils with the EU on February 19. These meetings, parallel to EU accession negotiations, are the occasion for reviewing progress in bilateral relations with the EU, on the basis of the Association Agreements that are currently the legal base for EU links with each of the candidate countries.

The meetings were chaired by Josep Piqué, the Spanish minister for foreign affairs and President-in-Office of the Council of the European Union, flanked by Friis Arne Petersen, permanent secretary of state for foreign affairs of Denmark, representing the next EU Presidency, and European Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen.

Each of the three Councils gave a formal welcome to progress over recent months in the enlargement process - notably the conclusions of the Göteborg and Laeken summits, with the confirmation that the enlargement process is irreversible - and reaffirmed the EU "roadmap" as the framework for the completion of the enlargement negotiations. They also provided the opportunity to confirm the "determination of the Union to bring the accession negotiations with those candidate countries that are ready to a successful conclusion by the end of 2002".

Indulis Berzins, minister for foreign affairs of Latvia, headed the Latvian delegation, and received congratulations for "the important steps taken by Latvia to promote the integration of non-citizens into society" - as well as encouragement to continue, notably through the implementation of the society integration programme that Latvia has created. The Council also noted the Latvian government's commitment to reform the public administration and the judiciary, and to fight corruption. It confirmed that Latvia should be able to cope with the competitive pressure and market forces within the Union in the near term, "provided that makes further efforts in maintaining the pace of, and completing, its structural reforms".

Measures to improve the business environment were praised, and there were compliments for Latvia's macro-economic stability and high growth, alongside encouragement to pursue efforts to fight unemployment, and to pursue fiscal discipline. Alignment of Latvian legislation with the EU acquis, in particular on the internal market and on data protection, visas and border control, was noted, but increased efforts were urged in agriculture, energy, environmental regional policy and the co-ordination of structural instruments, on asylum and migration, and in strengthening Latvia's administrative capacity.

Lithuania's minister for foreign affairs, Antanas Valionis, was congratulated on the recent adoption by the Seimas of Lithuania's national anti-corruption strategy and of the new Law on Courts. Lithuania was encouraged to ensure the effective implementation of these laws and more in general, to continue public administration and judiciary reform as well as the fight against corruption.

The Association Council welcomed that Lithuania is a functioning market economy and should be able to cope with the competitive pressure and market forces within the Union in the near



term, provided that it makes further substantial efforts to continue with the vigorous implementation of its structural reform programme.

"Significant progress" was noted in the privatisation of the banking and other sectors, but action was urged on unemployment reform of the labour market, and on full implementation of the new legal framework for business. Macro-economic stability and the recent pegging of the Lithuanian Litas to the Euro were welcomed. Adoption of Lithuania's Schengen Action Plan including the decision to align with the visa acquis in 2003 - and preparations for closure and decommissioning of the Ignalina nuclear power plant were welcomed. The EU side at the Council asked for a clear and binding confirmation of Lithuania's commitment regarding the final closure of Ignalina Unit 1 before 2005 and a clear and binding commitment by Lithuania to close Unit 2 by 2009 at the latest. Lithuania highlighted the need to find an appropriate solution for the financial side of the closure of Ignalina.

Kristiina Ojuland, Estonia's new foreign minister, was congratulated for Estonia's continued implementation of measures to integrate non-citizens and non-Estonian speakers, and the recent removal of language requirements for candidates running in parliamentary and local elections. Satisfaction was expressed at the ongoing modernisation of Estonia's judiciary and public administration, although the need for continued improvements in these areas was recorded. Estonia's return to high economic growth, further strengthening of its macroeconomic stability and continued structural reforms were welcomed.

Estonia's attention was directed particularly to the problem of unemployment, the need for a faster land registration process, and restructuring of the oil-shale industry, and to further legislative alignment on the internal market, agriculture, fisheries, taxation, energy and the environment.

Ojuland confirmed that the foreign policy goals of the new Estonian government remain unchanged, and Commissioner Verheugen expressed his conviction that the excellent relationship with Estonia will continue. "Estonia has achieved significant progress and it has been the result of possible political commitment and hard work," Mr Verheugen said. "I am convinced that the new government will pursue the dynamism of the negotiations," he added.

FIRST MINISTERIAL EXCHANGES ON AGRICULTURE PLANS

The week has seen the first focused ministerial exchanges on the European Commission's thinking on managing the agriculture dimension of enlargement. European Union minister discussed the Commission proposals at the Agriculture Council on February 19, after candidate country's agriculture ministers discussed them at a special session of the European Parliament's agriculture committee on February 18.

In the Agriculture Council, European Agriculture Commissioner Franz Fischler made a presentation of the plans agreed by the Commission on January 30, stressing again the balance in the proposals between the interests of the current EU15 and the need to stimulate and support sustainable agricultural reform in the candidate countries.

He underlined that the Commission's approach had many advantages: "It is compatible with the Berlin financial ceiling and compatible with the acquis, it does not prejudice further developments of the CAP, it respects the roadmap timetable, it is good for restructuring agriculture in new member states. In short, it is a balanced and fair package", he said. He explained that a rapid introduction of direct payments would lead to a negative impact on restructuring. "High levels of direct payments would undermine the effects of rural development programmes in early years. Excessive cash injections could create significant income disparities and social distortions in rural areas."

Fischler stressed the importance of the rural development package brought forward by the Commission. "For 2006, we have set aside around 1800 million from the FEOGA-Guarantee fund. Additional funding would come from FEOGA-Guidance in Objective 1 areas. An EU co-



financing rate of 80% should ensure that the new members can match this money with national funds. We propose the use of SAPARD structures, including SAPARD agencies for programme administration." Fischler rejected the idea of not granting direct payments at a "We have well-founded arguments to grant 25% of direct payments in 2004. The price gap between EU and candidate countries for most products and countries has narrowed since the Agenda 2000 proposals. The direct payments of the 1992 reform have lost some of the compensatory character and are increasingly related to income support objectives. There is clear need for income stabilisation in new member states at a safety net level to cushion the effects of restructuring on commercial farms. And the phasing-in provides a basis for a framework of good agricultural practice and cross-compliance."

At this stage the Council is offering only broad orientations to the Commission - and these are also being articulated through the General Affairs Council (see above). The Presidency plan to organise a fuller discussion of the agriculture chapter of enlargement at the next session of the Agriculture Council on 19 March. The Presidency also announced that it intended to make a further contribution to the debate by soliciting a wide range of opinions on the proposals: it to send both the candidate countries and the member states a questionnaire, which it says will serve as a guideline for the upcoming discussions.

Just up the road, in the European Parliament, a wide range of opinions was being offered by the candidates' agriculture ministers - many of them critical. A particular target was the Commission's plan to phase in farm subsidies over ten years, starting with 25 % of the direct payments currently paid in existing EU member states.

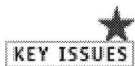
Poland's deputy prime minister and farm minister, Jaroslaw Kalinowski, suggested the EU was aiming to reunite Europe "on the cheap". Hungary's state secretary for agriculture, Tamas Eder, said the plans discriminated against the new member states - putting Hungarian cereal farmers at a competitive disadvantage of 46 per tonne compared to their counterparts in the current member states. Hungary's demand remains that the Common Agricultural Policy as a whole should be extended to it from the first day of accession, including the direct support schemes. "We regret that the proposal of the European Commission is far from our negotiating position and legitimate expectations", he said.

The Czech minister, Jan Fencel, said the financial means suggested for the new member countries were "insufficient", and the arguments of the European Commission were "mostly not relevant" in the case of Czech agriculture. Bulgaria's minister, Mehmed Dikme, noted with regret that his country is almost entirely excluded from the Commission's plans: "This does not correspond to our understanding of the idea of the European project and of the principle of equality with regard to all negotiating countries for EU membership", he said.

"The present proposal from the European Commission does not ensure equal and fair competition conditions and development possibilities to Latvia's agriculture", said Latvia minister, Atis Slakteris. Some proposals "have caused concern in Lithuania - first of all, the proposals related to the regime for direct payments", said its minister, Jeronimas Kraujelis. And the production capacities under the reference periods proposed by the Commission "do not reflect in some cases the existing situation in production and development trends."

Many Euro-MPs on the agriculture committee were sympathetic to the accession country concerns. Willi Görlach, the committee's rapporteur on enlargement and support for the accession countries, questioned the readiness of EU finance ministers to foot the bill for enlargement. But the committee urged candidates to focus their accession demands on support for rural development and structural reform rather than on direct payments. Agriculture committee chair Joseph Daul underlined the need to find a workable compromise in the accession negotiations, without alienating voters in accession referendums in the candidate countries. CAP reform must not be allowed to hold up enlargement, and enlargement must not be allowed to hold up CAP reform, said Mr Görlach.

BOOSTING BULGARIAN LINKS WITH GREECE



The European Union is providing 170 million to improve cross-border links between Greece and Bulgaria, through the EU's INTERREG III programme. The funding will be devoted to co-operation and economic development in Eastern Macedonia, Thrace and Western Macedonia in Greece, and the southwest and south-central regions of Bulgaria - regions separated by the mountainous area of Rhodopi.

The EU money will be complemented by 56.7 million from national and regional budgets and 20.5 million from private funding. On the Bulgarian side, 120 million will be provided under the Phare programme.

The programme covers an area of 40,202 km² (16.6% of the territory of Bulgaria and 16.5% of the territory of Greece, and a total population of 2.8 million people. The programme's priorities are:

- Cross-border infrastructure: principally upgrading road and rail infrastructures, opening of new crossing points, and creation and modernisation of border crossings and customs facilities, including border control and security installations (EU contribution: 105.4 million).
- Economic development and employment: principally encouraging co-operation between firms, strengthening co-operation between universities and research centres, and promoting new employment opportunities (EU contribution: 22.1 million).
- Quality of life/environment/culture: principally protecting and improving the natural environment, promoting cultural and recreational resources, and improving the quality of public health centres (EU contribution: 39.4 million)

Enlargement news in brief

Commission predicts a long haul to equality among the EU25

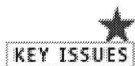
The EU General Affairs Council of February 18 heard a presentation by European Regional Affairs Commissioner Michel Barnier of a new report on economic and social cohesion, which includes, for the first time, a study of disparities in an enlarged EU of 25 member states, and review of options for EU cohesion policy after 2006. Among the report's conclusions are that it is necessary to measure in terms of decades rather than years the time it will take for some of the current candidate countries to catch up fully with the general level of prosperity of the current EU. In the case of candidates such as Bulgaria and Romania the process could take more than 30 years, it predicts. The Commission's update was broadly welcomed as a useful contribution to the debate on future cohesion policy, and the Council passed the subject on to senior officials for further study, for the Council to return to it at a future date.

Steel deal agreed for Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic

The double-checking system used by the EU to control steel imports from abroad should be extended for Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, the EU General Affairs Council of February 18 agreed - although the regulations to put the system into effect were agreed on by qualified majority, because Germany voted against them. The system requires exports of certain steel products to be notified by manufacturers to specified authorities, with full details of the destination and the nature of the goods.

Easier access for Romania to EU programmes

Romania will be able to take part more easily in EU programmes, following a decision by the EU General Affairs Council of February 18. A simplified and accelerated procedure has been established for the candidate countries, so that their participation in programmes on everything ranging from research to customs, and environment to education, no longer has to be agreed on a case-by-case basis. The system has already been put in place for some of the other candidate countries.



Commission expresses concern on Turkish leaks of EU emails

European Commission President Romano Prodi has expressed concern about publication in the Turkish media of e-mails which, he said, were stolen from the Commission delegation in Ankara. Prodi spoke to Turkish Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit on 20 February, and they both deplored the situation. Ecevit said that legal action had been taken, and that heightened security measures were being put in place. Prodi took note of these assurances and stressed the need for a political statement at the highest level to ensure that EU-Turkey relations are not harmed. The Commission says it will continue to follow developments closely.

EU aids Lithuania to open new border crossing office with Belarus

Lithuania has opened a new border service office in the Ignalina region on the Belarussian border. This new office of the Lithuanian state border guard service cost around 880,000 t build, with significant aid from the EU. The head of the European Commission delegation in Lithuania, Michael Graham, said at the opening ceremony that the new facility was "a fine example of EU investments to step up security along the future eastern border of the Union. The EU's Phare programme has financed a project to construct four such border offices in Lithuania along the Belarussian frontier located in the Ignalina and Varena regions.

Baltic discussions on energy

While the EU-Lithuania Association Council discussed the Ignalina nuclear power plant in Brussels on February 19 (see above), parallel talks are underway on energy in the Baltic region. The Lithuanian government has approved the new composition of a commission representing Lithuania in a joint working group with the European Commission for the energy sector, which will draft a parliamentary decision on the decommissioning of the second power unit of Ignalina and submit it to the government in the spring. Meanwhile, 118 Lithuanian scientists have been arguing publicly against eliminating nuclear energy in Lithuania. They say the EU demand for closure of both operating units at Ignalina is unfounded, and that nuclear energy should become the backbone of the Lithuanian economy, as a guarantee of stability in energy supplies in the eastern part of NATO (sic) and the EU. They say the EU should finance the building of Western type reactors if the present reactors have to be closed before the end of their useful life. And a meeting of Parliamentarians from the Baltic and Nordic states gathered in Vilnius to discuss energy industry issues and co-operation to discuss co-operation in the energy production and supply sector, reorganisation in the energy sector, the situation at Ignalina, and the environmental problems around the plant as Lithuania enters the EU.

Byrne notes strength of enlarged EU in health

"Here in Warsaw on the banks of the Vistula, in the heart of Europe, you can see just how important the weight of an enlarged EU will be in the international health arena", said European Consumer Affairs and Public Health Commissioner David Byrne. Speaking at the WHO European Ministerial Conference for a Tobacco-free Europe in Warsaw on February 19 he said: "Solidarity and consensus with our future member states is playing a crucial role in taking a progressive line" in attempts to stamp out tobacco addiction. "I look forward to deepening our relations on key health issues in the pre-accession period ahead", he said.

Agenda

Date	Event
February	
Monday 25th	European Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen meets

-  KEY ISSUES
-  WHAT'S NEW
-  FAQ
-  MAIL-BOX
-  INDEX
-  SEARCH
-  INFORMATION
-  FEEDBACK

	Danish prime minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Brussels
Monday 25th	European Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen receives Polish economic affairs minister Jacek Piechota, Brussels
Monday 25th	EU Council of Ministers working group on eastern Europe meets, Brussels
Monday 25th - Tuesday 26th	European Research Commissioner Philippe Busquin visits Budapest and meets Hungarian education minister József Pálincás, and gives a speech on candidate countries' integration in the European Research Area and participation in the present and future EU framework programmes on research and technological development.
Tuesday 26th	EU Council of Ministers working group on enlargement meets, Brussels
Tuesday 26th	European Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen meets the minister-president of the Land of North-Rhine-Westphalia, Wolfgang Clement, Brussels
Tuesday 26th	European Agriculture Commissioner Franz Fischler takes part in a discussion on the European agricultural model and enlargement, Paris
Tuesday 26th	European Parliament President Pat Cox meets George Vassiliou, chief negotiator of Cyprus
Tuesday 26th	European Parliament President Pat Cox meets Pavel Telicka, state secretary for European affairs and chief negotiator of the Czech Republic
Tuesday 26th	European Parliament foreign affairs committee holds debate with George Vassilion on Cyprus and Pavel Telicka on the Czech Republic
Tuesday 26th	European Parliament hearing on sexual and reproductive rights and reproductive health in the EU and in the candidate countries of central and eastern Europe, Brussels
Wednesday 27th	European Parliament plenary session holds debate on democratic rights in Turkey, with Council and Commission statements; Brussels
Wednesday 27th	EU Council of Ministers working group on enlargement meets, Brussels
Thursday 28th	European Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen visits Poland, and meets prime minister Leszek Miller and foreign affairs minister Wlodimierz Cimoszewicz
Thursday 28th	Inauguration ceremony of the Convention on the Future of Europe, Brussels
Thursday 28th - Saturday March 2nd	First conference of the central and eastern European employee ownership network, to promote employee ownership and participation in Europe, Budapest
March	
Details tbc	Malta local elections (renewal of one third of mandates)

 KEY ISSUES

 WHAT'S NEW

 FAQ

 MAIL-BOX

 INDEX

 SEARCH

 INFORMATION

 FEEDBACK

Monday 4th- Wednesday 6th	Maarten Engwirda, member of the European Court of Auditors, and a Court delegation visit the Turkish Court of Accounts and attend a training seminar for officials of Turkish internal financial control, Ankara
Thursday 7th - Friday 8th March	European Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen visits Cyprus
Thursday 7th- Friday 8th	European Regional Affairs Commissioner Michel Barnier visits Poland
Friday 8 th	EU Economic and Social Committee President Göke Frerichs, to Budapest
Friday 15th, Saturday 16th	Barcelona European Council - the Spanish Presidency has invited the heads of state, prime ministers, ministers of foreign affairs as well as ministers of economy of the candidate countries for the session on Friday 15th, and will organise a special working meeting on economic and social integration for the candidate countries.
Tuesday 19th	EU Agriculture Council with agriculture ministers of the candidate countries
Thursday 21st- Friday 22nd	Negotiating session at the level of deputies (EU ambassadors and candidates' negotiators), Brussels.
Thursday 21st- Friday 22nd	European Internal Market Commissioner Frits Bolkestein visits Hungary
April	
Details tbc	Meeting of the liaison officers of the supreme audit institutions of the candidate countries, Malta
Details tbc	European Commission organises a "BEST" Conference in Slovenia, to assist candidate countries in boosting enterprise culture.
Sunday 7 th	First round of Hungarian parliamentary elections
Tuesday 16th- Wednesday 17 th	Meeting of the EU-Bulgaria Joint Consultative Committee, Albena
Friday 19th and Monday 22nd	Negotiating session at the level of deputies (EU ambassadors and candidates' negotiators), Brussels.
Sunday 21st	Second round of Hungarian parliamentary elections
May	



Tuesday 7 th	Meeting of the EU-Hungary Joint Consultative Committee, Budapest,
Monday 13 th - Tuesday 14 th	Meeting of the EU-Poland Joint Consultative Committee, Poland.
Thursday 23 rd	Meeting of the EU-Romania Joint Consultative Committee, Alexandria
Thursday 23 rd	Meeting of the EU-Slovak Republic Joint Consultative Committee
Friday 31 st	Negotiating session at the level of deputies (EU ambassadors and candidates' negotiators), Brussels.
June	
Details tbc	EU/European Economic Area (EEA) consultative committee will discuss enlargement and the future of the EEA at its annual meeting, Iceland
Details tbc	Czech Republic parliamentary elections
Monday 3 rd	Negotiating session at the level of deputies (EU ambassadors and candidates' negotiators), Brussels.
Monday 10 th	General Affairs Council will review the state of the enlargement process, Luxembourg
Monday 10 th - Tuesday 11 th	Ministerial negotiating session with foreign ministers of the EU and of the candidate countries, Luxembourg
Friday 21 st , Saturday 22 nd	Seville European Council: European Commission reports on the implementation of the plan of action for strengthening the candidates' institutions.
Monday 24 th	Informal meeting of education ministers from the EU and the candidate countries, Bratislava
July	
Monday 1 st	Start of Danish Presidency of the EU: the aim is to close negotiations before the end of the year with those countries that are ready. The Laeken summit noted that, if progress is maintained in the negotiations and in the reforms, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Slovenia could be ready.
Autumn	
Details tbc	Estonian local elections
Details tbc	Slovak parliamentary elections (probably September)


KEY ISSUES


WHAT'S NEW


FAQ


MAIL-BOX


INDEX


SEARCH


INFORMATION


FEEDBACK

Details tbc	Slovenia presidential and local elections
October	
Details tbc	Hungary local elections
Details tbc	Latvia parliamentary elections
Details tbc	Poland regional elections
24th and 25th	Brussels European Council: enlargement will be on the agenda and the Commission's regular reports on the candidate countries may be available.
November	
Details tbc	Lithuania presidential elections
Details tbc	Meeting of the presidents of the supreme audit institutions of the member states and the candidate countries, Luxembourg
December	
Thursday 12th, Friday 13th	Copenhagen European Council - enlargement may be on the agenda again, taking account of the aim of concluding accession negotiations by the end of the year.

 KEY ISSUES

 WHAT'S NEW

 FAQ

 MAIL-BOX

 INDEX

 SEARCH

 INFORMATION

 FEEDBACK

Archives

ENLARGEMENT WEEKLY is prepared for the Information Unit of the Enlargement Directorate General of the European Commission. As part of its communication strategy on enlargement, the Commission makes this bulletin publicly available. Comments are welcome and should be addressed by e-mail toenlargement@cec.eu.int

[\[Enlargement Home\]](#) [\[European Commission's Directorates General\]](#)