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## Enlargement Weekly

14 May 2002

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

### Articles this week

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#### CANDIDATES WANT REAL SUPPORT FOR SMALLER FIRMS

Support services for smaller business are not enough on their own: if they are to be effective they need improved visibility and quality, and they have to be better coordinated and integrated. This was one of the conclusions reached by ministers from the candidate countries at their recent meeting in Slovenia, organised under the European Commission's BES programme for boosting business competitiveness. By signing up to the "Maribor Declaration" at the meeting, the thirteen candidates gave their formal backing to the European Union Charter for Small Enterprises - one of the elements aimed at contributing to the EU's Lisbon Strategy to create a prosperous Europe. But the Maribor meeting was focused closely on what they saw as the priorities for them of the Charter.

On access to finance for smaller firms, for instance, the discussion centred on how to increase bank lending and loan guarantee schemes, as well as to encourage venture capital: "Limite

access to finance is the most serious barrier to entrepreneurship and thus the most serious barrier to economic growth and prosperity", the meeting concluded. Smaller firms have been low among banks' priorities, and banks are still busy with their own reorganisation linked to restructuring and privatization. Many newly privatised banks are only slowly (if at all) increasing their exposure towards domestic corporate sector, because their new international owners are wary of "bad loan" experiences in the candidate countries. There is insufficient experience and skills for domestic smaller firms sector, because multinational bank dedicated credit programs have failed through inadequate adaptation to local conditions. Interest rates on loans for smaller firms are still higher than for larger companies, and collateral as high as 150 % of principal is often required.

Slow development of securities markets, slow settlement of disputes, lack of early-stage financing and the absence of an equity culture also impede the flow of finance. The proposed remedies included more responsible fiscal policy leading to interest rate cuts, which should drive banks to look for new profitable opportunities, more widespread loan guarantee schemes, based on the principles of insurance, co-operation with banks, counter guarantee and risk-sharing.

But there is also a lack of high quality projects that would be financially sustainable on the demand side, as well as a lack of information among entrepreneurs about credit programs and guarantee schemes. So smaller firms' organisations should be helped to provide targeted training on subjects such as business plans, and the availability of information should be increased. One of the meeting's workshops looked at introducing training for entrepreneurship in primary schools, ways to motivate teachers at all levels to bring the entrepreneurial spirit and values into the education process, and ways to widen the sources for financial support.

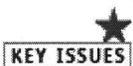
The meeting also identified an urgent need to prevent problems arising from a gap between the phasing-out of Phare assistance and introduction of new EU financial instruments such as structural funding. "Continuation of EU financial assistance and programmes without disruption" was the call from the meeting.

The need to change administrative culture towards transparency, accountability and service delivery was at the centre of discussions on public administration. The meeting looked at ways of improving interaction with the business community, in terms of regulatory impact assessment and use of the internet and the potential for e-government. Business representatives voiced their frustration at the slow pace of change and slow reaction time from government bureaucracies that were hampering their ability to take advantage of business opportunities. Training about business interests is needed for government officials. All the candidate countries have interactions with the business community, both collectively and at the level of individual enterprises, but the important ingredient in successful interaction is structured promotion and organisation of these contacts. Latvia, Bulgaria, Cyprus and Estonia already use business organisations as "mediators" between the government and smaller firms and "such partnerships should be encouraged and reinforced by the provision of professional information services, high quality training and effective communication."

## REGIONAL VIEW OF THE BALANCE TO BE ACHIEVED IN ENLARGEMENT

"In recent months attitudes towards EU membership in some of the candidate countries have begun to harden. There is a danger that in the run up to accession these attitudes could worsen if the negotiations with the candidate countries generate the perception that they are not entering the EU on fair terms", warns a draft opinion due to be discussed on May 15-16 by the EU's Committee of the Regions.

Discussing the proposed financial framework for enlargement set out by the European Commission in January, it "acknowledges the concerns that have been expressed in some candidate countries that the effect of these proposals will be to maintain fundamental disequilibria within the European Union that will benefit richer regions at the expense of poorer".



But the Committee's rapporteur, Lord Hanningfield, nonetheless comes out broadly in favour of the Commission's approach. His report recognises that simply extending current policies in full to the new member states, with no transitional period or phasing-in, "would impose a heavy financial burden on existing members in the current support period". And, he says, transition periods for full access to EU agricultural and structural funds are "also in the best interests of the candidate countries". The expenditure ceilings agreed in Berlin for the period until 2006 should be adhered to, he argues.

The Hanningfield paper supports the proposal to cushion semi-subsistence farms against the effects of the Single Market, by paying flat rate income support for a transitional period, and welcomes the proposal to simplify the access to funding in view of the high administrative costs of processing a large number of payments for small farms. It agrees with the Commission that capacity for absorption of structural funding needs to be taken into account and that more funding should be focused on cohesion fund expenditure, in order to boost absorption capacity. And it supports the establishment of transitional arrangements to ensure that no acceding member state has a worse net budgetary position than it had in the year before enlargement. However, the draft insists, "transition periods must go hand in hand with reforms of relevant EU policies".

The draft opinion also pays particular attention to the regional aspect of enlargement. "Enlargement to 25 would mean a widening of regional and territorial disparities unparalleled by any previous enlargement", it says. "A balance must be struck between the needs of the new member states and the needs of existing member states who have not yet achieved convergence with EU standards." So no region in the EU should see its structural fund support suddenly cut, it argues. And Hanningfield calls for any adjustments to the Berlin framework to avoid "disproportionately negative effects on regions either in the existing member states or in the new post-accession member states".

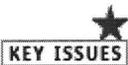
#### UNICE EMPHASISES CONDITIONS IN ITS SUPPORT FOR ENLARGEMENT

The European business federation, UNICE, has long been a strong supporter of enlargement and continues to be so. But its latest position paper on the subject, unveiled in Brussels on May 6, emphasises clearly that conditions must be met for enlargement to be successful. Particularly, it says, all EU legislation must be adopted, and candidates must have reached a satisfactory level of implementation and enforcement of EU rules by the time of accession.

"This requires sufficient administrative and judicial capacity, an area in which significant deficits still remain in many countries", according to Philippe de Buck, UNICE secretary general. The assessment of the readiness of a candidate country and the subsequent monitoring of commitments is crucial, says UNICE, and has to be transparent and efficient. UNICE is now finalising a series of its own candidate country reports, which will assess, from a business point of view, each of the candidate countries' progress towards accession. They will be released next month.

The UNICE approach is that each candidate country should be allowed to join the EU as soon as it is ready - because there is a cost to delaying enlargement for frontrunners. But those that are not ready should be kept outside until they are: there is a cost in "precipitating accession of those countries which are not fully ready", it says. With the right conditions, EU member states and their companies will benefit from increased trade and an enlarged Single Market, while accession countries will gain from more foreign direct investment, predicts UNICE.

"Joining the EU and taking part in the internal market will generate clear and tangible benefits for companies in the candidate countries, notably in the short run", says UNICE. A number of candidate countries may gain in those sectors they have already gradually expanded exports in, particularly labour-intensive production (textiles, clothing and footwear), basic and energy-intensive goods (chemicals, rubber, plastics) and goods where scale matters (iron, steel, shipbuilding). Current member states and some of the most advanced candidate countries may benefit more in knowledge-intensive products. But, it points out, companies in the candidate countries will have to bear the adjustment costs of complying with the EU acquis



particularly in labour law, health and safety regulations, environment and food-related issue. And smaller firms in particular may have difficulties in absorbing these costs, it warns.

UNICE's conditions for a successful enlargement also apply to the EU side too: it points to "the overdue and drastic reform of the Common Agricultural Policy and the required adaptations of the Cohesion Policies". UNICE backs the proposed phasing-in of structural funding and the 4% of GDP ceiling, as well as the high proportion of cohesion funding in the overall allocation envisaged for the candidates, "in the light of the need for substantial improvements of infrastructure in the candidate countries and the need for more efficient use of funding." But further reform of EU regional policy will still be needed, with a new result-oriented focus on increasing regional competitiveness. And since the original CAP objectives are "today largely irrelevant", direct payments do not promote reform and restructuring, and "more adequate instruments have to be found to support the agriculture sector in the candidate countries". EU failures here "would lead to exploding expenditures post enlargement", which UNICE warns "would not be economically sustainable and viable". In addition, UNICE wants a tight timetable for institutional reforms.

### POLAND'S WORRIES ON AGRICULTURE AND ENLARGEMENT

Poland is suggesting that the EU does not really understand the consequences of the way it is proposing that enlargement should deal with agriculture. "Understanding may represent a substantial challenge", according to a recent Polish assessment of the European Commission's thinking. It is urging an approach in which "dialogue and analyses precede the formulation of solutions".

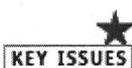
According to the Polish Foundation of Assistance Programmes for Agriculture, the methodology on which the Commission's approach is based "seems appropriate to analyse only some of the issues", and the results "are mixed with arbitrary assumptions". And because of "the recent proximity of Polish and EU prices", the importance of the assumptions is all the greater: the necessary sensitivity analysis "is missing and the robustness of the results cannot be inferred".

FAPA alleges that price gaps "have been overestimated" for major products such as grain and milk, "by arbitrarily choosing 1999 year as a base year/period". It is not clear, it says, why one single year has been used instead of an average for several years, nor why 1999 instead of a more recent year has been used, since 1999 "does not seem to represent well either the trends or the most recent situation". This failing replicates "the main mistake of some previous analyses" where long-term convergence of the price levels in Poland and the EU was "underrated or completely ignored". The choice of year and the disregarding of the accession impact on real exchange rates "lead to a significant overestimation of the price effects of the accession, including the impact on market surpluses in the enlarged EU as well as on farm incomes in candidate countries in central and eastern Europe. Consequently, the relative importance of direct payments as the income component in Polish farms after accession has been underestimated."

### Enlargement news in brief

#### The pharmaceutical dimension of enlargement

"The EU will shortly face the most significant expansion in membership in its history. This will have a massive impact across a number of areas including pharmaceuticals. Although it is difficult to predict the impact of enlargement in this area with any accuracy its impact needs to be taken into account when the Commission considers how to respond to the above recommendations", says the final report of the so-called G-10 group - the high-level group of EU officials, ministers and representatives of industry, patients and health insurance organizations. The G-10 presented its report in Brussels on May 7, with a range of proposals for balancing the interests of all parties in ensuring that innovative medicines are developed in Europe, and are accessible to European citizens. "To ensure that there is a level playing field



for the pharmaceutical industry within the expanded EU, the differences in marketing and economic conditions between member states and candidate countries need to be taken into account when considering rules governing parallel imports", the G-10 says, recognizing one of the underlying concerns the pharmaceutical industry has about potential downsides from enlargement, with cheaper products sweeping in from the new member states. The recommendation the group has come up with is that "rules should recognise the difference between public health, marketing and economic conditions between existing member states and the accession countries [and] to that extent, a derogation governing parallel imports should be included in the accession treaties."

### Latvia eases language law rules for election candidates

On 9 May the Latvian Parliament finally adopted amendments to election laws that will remove the state language requirements until now imposed on candidates for parliament. From now on Latvian language proficiency will no longer be a prerequisite for a person to become a member of the Parliament or local government. Latvia says this shows its "continued commitment to the high democratic standards that characterise the transatlantic community of nations". The vote has been welcomed by the High Commissioner on National Minorities of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Council of Europe Secretary General, and the UN Committee on NATO (which said "The Latvian parliament has made all citizens equal in the political life of their society"). Meanwhile, Latvia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has vigorously rejected criticisms from Russia that constitutional amendments adopted by the Latvian parliament in respect of ethnic minorities infringe human rights. "On this occasion again Russia's position radically differs from the view of the Council of Europe, OSCE and other international organisations". The criticisms are "unsubstantiated", it says, and all the more incomprehensible coming from a "a state which faces huge problems with the closure of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly human rights monitoring".

### Prodi spells out the role of the Convention

The EU has to adapt its decision-making methods and its goals if it is to be a success after enlargement, insisted European Commission President Romano Prodi in a message delivered on Europe Day. A half-century has been taken using the current "Community method", he said, but "the method was designed for a Community of six nations: it needs streamlining if it is to continue efficiently serving a Union of 27 member states." At the same time, he said, "our enlarging family of nations needs to agree together what common goals we want to pursue in the future, what common policies we will need to achieve them and who should be responsible for doing what." That is why, he went on, a Convention was set up this year. Its discussions will lead, in 2004, to an inter-governmental conference "that must deliver a new Union Treaty - or that answers the big questions clearly, in terms the citizens of Europe can understand."

### Enlargement challenges to EU consumer strategy

Accession of the candidate countries to the EU will pose particular challenges for consumer protection, according to the new Consumer Policy Strategy adopted by the European Commission on May 7. Enlargement will have a particularly important impact on the functioning of the internal market in the area of consumer protection, and "citizens, in their capacity as consumers, will directly experience the effects of an enlarged market", it says, in a section entitled "Preparing for enlargement". It predicts that the EU will be faced with new regulatory and enforcement structures and, more generally, with new attitudes towards consumer protection. At present, although many consumer protection rules are currently covered by national law rather than European legislation, and the detail of these provisions varies across the current member states, "their fundamentals are broadly similar", says the Commission. However, with the accession of the candidates, "the heterogeneity of national provisions will significantly increase", says the Commission. It points out the two basic deficiencies clearly: "Enforcement structures are not always as strong in the candidate countries and the experience and expectations of their consumers are also very different. The consumer movement of the candidate countries has still a long way to develop in order to play its full role of informing consumers, representing them and playing their full role in market



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surveillance." The challenge, says the Commission, will be "to meet the legitimate expectations of new members while safeguarding and improving the present level of consumer protection both in terms of safety and legal and economic rights of consumers". EU enlargement issues are taken into account throughout the new strategy, and the Commission promises it will "continue to make every effort to help consumers, their representatives and national authorities from the candidate countries prepare for accession."

### Managing business change for enlargement

A new report from McKinsey & Company ("Business consequences of EU enlargement: major change or non-event?") assesses how enlargement will influence different sectors in the European economy. For the candidate countries, it says efficiency improvements will be essential in the sectors most directly affected by enlargement - those that face regulatory change or liberalisation, and pressure for restructuring, and which will lose subsidies. Telecommunications, for instance, fixed-line incumbents should focus on managing the national regulatory agenda so that liberalisation is balanced in relation to interconnection tariffs and customer access to competitors, while cutting overheads to improve their competitive position. But mobile operators should become more cost-efficient (average revenues are still below EU levels, and decreasing) while developing clear growth strategies. At the same time, "the EU should ensure the impartiality of the various national regulatory authorities", it says.

### EP women's rights delegation visits Lithuania

A delegation from the European Parliament's women's rights and equal opportunities committee visited Lithuania in late April. Lithuania adopted a law on equal opportunity in 1998 and claims to be the only eastern European state with such a law so far. The delegation met the head of the Government's European Committee Petras Auštrevičius, the Gender Equality Ombudsman Aušrinė Burneikienė, officials from the Social Affairs and Labour Ministry, members of the Parliament's human rights committee and members of a Parliamentary women's group. It heard explanations of legislative modifications now in force under Lithuanian law governing municipal elections, which ban either sex from occupying more than six of the top ten positions on candidate lists.

### Enlargement in EP debates on 2003 budgets

The European Parliament will be debating the budgets at its plenary session in Strasbourg this week. On May 14, the European Commission will present the EU preliminary draft general budget for 2003 - just short of Euro 100 billion, up 1.4% on 2002, including almost Euro 10 billion in pre-accession aid for the candidate countries. And the same day the Parliament will discuss the report from MEP Per Stenmarck on the estimates of revenue and expenditure for the Parliament for 2003. The Parliament's budgets committee - for whom Stenmarck is the rapporteur on this issue - stressed the need to take fully into account the costs of enlargement for the Parliament. The Parliament's estimated total expenditure for the year are put at just over Euro 1 billion, and Euro 32.3 million concerns enlargement-related costs, including provision for 114 posts for the candidate countries. There is also to be a reserve of some 51 million on the understanding that if the first of the new countries are to join in January 2004, there will be a need to bring forward enlargement-related expenditure to 2003. Stenmarck's position reinforces the line taken by his political group, the EPP-ED, that Parliament must be ready for the seamless integration of the accession countries into the EU.

### Taking a positive view of migration

Rita Suessmuth, member - and past-President - of the German Bundestag, tackled head-on the EU fears about migration from and via eastern Europe when she spoke at a meeting on labour, employment and social policies in the EU enlargement process, organised in Brussels on 29 April by the World Bank, the Bertelsmann Foundation and the European Policy Centre. Governments need to acknowledge public fears and to manage them (even when they were generated from "non-proven" figures), she said, by linking migration policy with reform of the labour market and social systems. In her view, the EU would remain a migration destination for

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the whole world, and migration therefore needed to be properly and openly discussed. Although each member state deals differently with migration, there needed to be EU rules, she urged: integration takes place at the local level, but there is a need for a migration framework at the EU level. But instead of focusing on the burdens of migrants, there should be more attention paid to what they bring in terms of cultural enrichment and economic contribution, particularly in light of declining EU birth rates and shortages of qualified people. Migrants could bridge this gap, and refugee communities often contained highly skilled and experienced people. German experience had shown that when there had been frank and open discussion as to the value of migrant workers, the public had responded in a more understanding and tolerant way, she said. Migration needed to be viewed in a more differentiated manner, as not all migrants were unskilled workers from rural areas.

**Baltic plans for external EU borders**

The heads of the Estonian, Lithuanian and Latvian border services discussed plans for creating the future external border of the European Union at a meeting of the Baltic Council of Ministers' Senior Border Officials Committee in Vilnius in late April. The Baltic countries' border guard chiefs discussed the creation of a common information sharing system, sharing experience and talked about how to provide swifter and better service for travellers as well as about organisational issues. They also discussed a joint plan of work for 2002-2003 and coordination of border protection measures. The Committee's current priorities are to strengthen security along the eastern frontiers and to simplify and coordinate border crossing procedures along borders between the Baltic countries.

**Agenda**

Date	Event
<b>May</b>	
Tuesday 14th	EU Council of Ministers working group on enlargement meets, Brussels  Candidate country defence ministers meet EU defence ministers in the margins of the General Affairs Council, Brussels  European Parliament debates the EU and EP budget for 2003, with a heavy accent on the costs of enlargement, Strasbourg
Wednesday 15th	EU Council of Ministers working group on the drafting of the EU Treaty meets, Brussels
Thursday 16th <sup>th</sup>	EU Economic and Social Committee discusses the report by Lord Hanningfield on the common financial framework 2004-2006 for accession negotiations.
Thursday 16th-Friday 17th	European Institute of Public Administration conference on "A roadmap for candidate countries: how to steer eurozone integration economically", Maastricht
Friday 17th	EU Council of Ministers working group on enlargement meets, Brussels
Saturday 18th	Romanian Investment Forum, Bucharest

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Saturday 18th-Sunday 19th	European Economic and Monetary Affairs Commissioner Pedro Solbes visits Romania  European Bank for Restructuring and Development annual meeting, Bucharest
Tuesday 21st	European Parliament President Pat Cox visits Malta
Thursday 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Meeting of the EU-Slovak Republic Joint Consultative Committee
Thursday 23 <sup>rd</sup> -Saturday 25	European Commission Vice President for Transport and Energy Loyola de Palacio visits Poland
Wednesday 22 <sup>nd</sup> -Friday 24 <sup>th</sup>	Meeting of the EU-Romania Joint Consultative Committee, Alexandria
Thursday 30 <sup>th</sup> -Friday 31 <sup>st</sup>	European Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen visits Bulgaria
Friday 31 <sup>st</sup>	Negotiating session at the level of deputies (EU ambassadors and candidates' negotiators), Brussels.  European Trade Commissioner Pascal Lamy visits Malta
<b>June</b>	
Monday 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Possible negotiating session at the level of deputies (EU ambassadors and candidates' negotiators), Brussels.  European Enterprise Commissioner Erkki Liikanen visits Slovenia
Thursday 6 <sup>th</sup> -Friday 7 <sup>th</sup>	European Justice and Home Affairs Commissioner Antonio Vitorino visits Poland
Thursday 6 <sup>th</sup> -Saturday 8 <sup>th</sup>	EU-UNICE conference on entrepreneurship and sustainable development in an enlarged Europe, with sessions in which candidate countries present economic achievements and investment opportunities.
Monday 10 <sup>th</sup>	General Affairs Council will review the state of the enlargement process, Luxembourg
Monday 10 <sup>th</sup> - Tuesday 11 <sup>th</sup>	Ministerial negotiating session with foreign ministers of the EU and of the candidate countries, Luxembourg
Wednesday 11 <sup>th</sup> -Thursday 12 <sup>th</sup>	EU-Slovenia joint consultative committee with the EU Economic and Social Committee, Ljubljana.
Friday 14 <sup>th</sup> and Saturday 15 <sup>th</sup>	Czech Republic parliamentary elections
Sunday 16 <sup>th</sup> -Monday 17 <sup>th</sup>	European Competition Commissioner Mario Monti visits Lithuania


  
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Monday 17th- Tuesday 18th	European Culture Commissioner Viviane Reding visits Slovakia
Friday 21st, Saturday 22nd	Seville European Council: European Commission reports on the implementation of the plan of action for strengthening the candidates' institutions.
Monday 24th	Informal meeting of education ministers from the EU and the candidate countries, Bratislava
Wednesday 26th	EU/European Economic Area (EEA) consultative committee will discuss the implications of EU enlargement for the future of the EEA at its annual meeting, Egilsstadir, Iceland
Thursday 27th- Friday 28th	European Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen visits Iceland
<b>July</b>	
Monday 1st	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.
Friday 5th	European Commission conference on enlargement from a local and regional perspective, Brussels
Thursday 11th- Friday 12th	Economic and Social Committee Joint Consultative Committee with Turkey, Erzerum
<b>Autumn</b>	
Details tbc	Estonian local elections
Details tbc	Slovak parliamentary elections (probably September)
Details tbc	Slovenia presidential and local elections
<b>October</b>	
Details tbc	Hungary local elections
Details tbc	Latvia parliamentary elections
Details tbc	Poland regional elections

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Wednesday 2nd-Thursday 3rd	Meeting of liaison officers from supreme audit institutions of the candidate countries and the European Court of Auditors, Luxembourg
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.
<b>November</b>	
Details tbc	Ecofin Council discusses the report on economic dialogue with the candidate countries
Details tbc	Lithuania presidential elections
Thursday 28th and Friday 29th	Meeting of the presidents of the supreme audit institutions of the member states and the candidate countries, Luxembourg
<b>December</b>	
tbc	Meeting of heads of supreme audit institutions of the candidate countries and the European Court of Auditors, Bucharest
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.

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