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Enlargement Weekly

24 September 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 or candidate countries, and how the main challenges are being met. [[Previous issues](#)]

Articles this week

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FISCHLER BATTLES ON IN THE BALTICS

Franz Fischler, European Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries continued his tour of candidate countries last week carrying the same essential message: the EU accession terms for agriculture may not offer everything that candidate countries want, but they will make a major contribution to the transformation necessary in the candidates' rural economies - so candidates' farmers will be better off in the EU than outside it.

"It is short-sighted to judge the agriculture proposal only on direct payments", he said in Estonia. "Look at the package in its entirety - and the picture will change completely," he said, listing again the benefits, which range from generous funding for rural development to special payments for semi-subsistence farmers, from assistance in modernisation to job-creation in the countryside, from infrastructure to education.

Fischler complimented Estonia as "a pioneer" for the way it had implemented the EU pre-accession Sapard programme of aid for agriculture and rural development. Initiated in June 2001, now it "is running at cruising speed", with up to 12.3 million allocated for 2002. And he pointed to the success of recent agricultural trade liberalisation between Estonia and the EU: "EU imports of Estonia's most important export product - dairy - have exploded, with an increase of 135% during the first year of the implementation of the agreement".

And in Latvia, he said: "I understand the concerns of Latvian farmers about joining the EU. The more essential it is that they are fully informed that the cost of non-enlargement would be high simply because they would be worse off outside the EU. The Commission has set out a fair proposal, which is tailor made to support the restructuring process in Latvia. It is designed to guarantee an efficient and optimal integration of the farming sector into the CAP. As we approach the finishing line of the enlargement negotiations, we need facts, not myths about the effects of Latvia's accession. It is time to stop giving the impression that the whole financing offer of the Commission only consists of 25% direct payments. Let us start looking at the whole package, which includes many advantages for Latvian farmers".

SLOVAK ELECTION BOOSTS EU ENTRY PROSPECTS

The Slovak general election on September 20-21 has improved the prospects for the final stages of EU accession. The SDKU party of outgoing Prime Minister Mikulas Dzurinda, with strong pro-EU and pro-NATO orientation, did better than expected, and he may be able to form a coalition with three other centre-right parties of similar sympathies to pilot the country through the endgame of negotiations.

The new parliament contains only seven parties, compared to 10 in the outgoing one. Some of the current Government coalition members, the socialist SDL, the Greens, the Social Democratic party, the Democratic Party, the Democratic Union and the SOP all failed to re-enter Parliament, as did, on the opposition side, the extreme nationalist SNS.

HZDS, the party of Vladimir Meciar, who was prime minister during the period in the mid-1990s when Slovakia was kept out of accession negotiations because of EU concerns over democracy, still managed to win more votes than any other party in these elections. But its vote was heavily down on its 1998 showing, and most other parties have already ruled out working with HZDS.

About 70% of eligible voters turned out, and the provisional result is as follows (* indicates the parties in the outgoing Government coalition):

Party	Votes received (%)
Movement for Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	19.5
Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (SDKU)*	15.09
SMER (a new party created around the personality of Robert Fico, who has campaigned on a populist agenda)	13.46
Party of the Hungarian Coalition (SMK)*	11.6
Christian Democratic Movement (KDH)*	8.25
New Citizen's Alliance (ANO, a new party formed around media magnate Pavol Rusko)	8.01
Communist Party (KSS)	6.32
HZD (HZDS Break-away party, founded by Ivan Gasparovic)	Below 5% threshold

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EU officials in Slovakia and Brussels indicated general satisfaction with the outcome of the election, suggesting that the result was a vote for continuity and for integration into the EU and NATO. Calling the result "a clear choice for democracy and for Europe", EU enlargement Commission Gunter Verheugen said that he was "confident that Slovakia will be able to continue the reforms needed to fulfil all the accession criteria" on which its entry into the EU depends. European Parliament President Pat Cox described it as "a vote for early EU membership". The EU Presidency issued a declaration on September 22 saying, "the European Union looks forward to the formation of a new Slovak government that will be able to continue the Slovak Republic's important progress towards membership of the EU. The EU recalls its determination to conclude accession negotiations with those candidate countries that are ready by the end of 2002. The EU would welcome the Slovak Republic as a new member state." And Hungary's foreign minister, László Kovács, welcomed the outcome, particularly what he interpreted as the increasing marginalisation of extremist nationalist parties.

PRODI ON STATISTICS AND ENLARGEMENT

"The hour of the great decision on enlargement is drawing near. In December the Copenhagen European Council will, we hope, bring a final 'yes' to accession for ten new Member States in 2004," said European Commission President Romano Prodi at a European statistics conference in Palermo.

Enlargement means that the EU population will rise from 378 to 453 million, an increase of almost 20%, based on 2001 figures, said Prodi. But "the EU's GDP will rise by only 4.6% and agricultural production by 7.9%" - demonstrating that "the economies of the ten prospective new members are still small compared with ours, and agriculture still accounts for a big share of them".

If the opportunities - as well as the challenges - that enlargement presents are to be confronted satisfactorily, "Our policies need to be applied sensibly so economic and social life in the candidate countries converges with the current member states", said Prodi. "If it worked for Ireland, Spain and Portugal, why shouldn't it work now?"

He suggested that the most recent figures support his own optimism over the prospect. "Growth in GDP in the ten candidate countries was 4.1% in 2000 and 2.4% last year. The figures for the current fifteen member states were 3.4% and 1.5% respectively. The ten candidate countries are already growing faster than we are", he concluded. And "there will be no lack of human capital to support this rate of growth over the medium term. The ten candidates' population may only equal one fifth of the current EU's, but university degrees granted in those countries come to 25.1%".

The Commission President stressed the need for accurate, detailed knowledge of the basic data in policy formation - and the corresponding need for data to be both reliable and easily comparable at EU level, through harmonisation of survey methods, working tools and organisation. "I know the institutes in the current and prospective member states are working closely together", he said. "I am confident that together you will successfully meet the challenges facing you in the future."

FINDING A WAY OUT OF THE KALININGRAD IMPASSE?

After weeks of reflection, the European Commission last week came up with its ideas of how the EU could resolve the current debate with Russia over access to Kaliningrad after EU enlargement. The proposals aim to ease the overland transit of people and goods after EU accession of the states that stand between this Baltic coast enclave and the rest of Russia: Lithuania, Poland, Latvia and Estonia.

For people, the Commission is recommending the early introduction of a "facilitated trans

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document" for frequent travellers, and, over the longer term, examination of visa-free non-stop high-speed trains and even a completely visa-free travel regime between Russia and the EU. For goods, fuller use of international conventions for simplified transit of goods could provide an adequate solution, the Commission says.

What the Commission is urging is a balance between Russia's desire for easy transit, the EU need to protect the security and safety of current and future EU citizens through full control over the borders of an enlarged EU, and the territorial sovereignty of the EU and its future members.

The facilitated transit document would be issued - by candidate country consulates and at no cost - to Russian citizens who need to travel frequently to and from Kaliningrad, on the basis of lists provided by the Russian authorities. It would entitle individuals to short periods for transit by road or rail. Up to the end of 2004 it could be considered valid when accompanied by a Russian internal travel document; from then onwards, an internationally valid passport would be required.

Non-stop high-speed train operations through Lithuania and Belarus would require further examination: safe and secure operation of visa-free travel by trains is not at present possible, says the Commission. Trains and tracks would need to be upgraded and the Lithuanian authorities would need to be in a position to refuse entry and carry out controls during transit. But, and only once Lithuania is an EU member state, the EU is ready to examine the legal and technical feasibility.

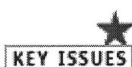
Discussions on the eventual establishment of a visa-free travel regime between Russia and the EU are equally part of a longer-term plan, says the Commission. Consideration would be needed of Russia's efforts to strengthen the rule of law, to intensify the fight against organised crime, to ensure border security and to guarantee that travel documents are secure and accurate. The EU also expects Russia to agree to the early conclusion of readmission agreements with the candidate countries and the EU itself.

For transit of goods, full use of the existing international conventions - TIR for road transport and COTIF for rail - could be part of the solution. These conventions already allow for relative little bureaucracy, and the parties to them may also adopt simplified procedures for transit by rail (so could, for example, accept existing Russian documentation).

At the same time, the Commission is urging that solutions to the problem of movement of people and goods proceed in parallel with broader co-operation over the future of the Kaliningrad region, covering the multiple problems that range from organised crime to border management, and from environment and human health to economic development. The EU has allocated some 40 million to Kaliningrad since 1991 through its Tacis technical assistance programme, and the European Investment Bank is currently considering a major loan to improve the operation of the Kaliningrad wastewater plant.

The package will be discussed by EU foreign ministers in late September, and at the 24-25 October European Council in Brussels. A separate EU study is underway on the question of cross-border traffic from Kaliningrad that does not involve onward travel to the Russian mainland - what is known as "small border traffic".

For more on this issue, including facts and figures (and a map), see http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/north_dim/kalin/index.htm



Enlargement news in brief

Ireland sets Nice referendum date

The Irish government has chosen October 19 as the date for its referendum on the Nice Treaty.

- just a week before the Brussels summit at which EU leaders are likely to name the country that could accede to the EU in 2004. This second referendum gives Irish voters another chance to back the changes to the EU's rules of operation, and ease the path towards EU enlargement. The new rules, agreed by heads of government at the Nice summit in December 2000, include important new elements for the functioning of an enlarged EU - notably the allocation of member states' voting rights in the Council of Ministers, and the number of Commissioners and Members of the European Parliament for each country. Irish voters failed to endorse the Treaty at a referendum last year, when a low turnout and lack of public awareness gave victory to vigorous opponents of the changes - who focused on aspects of the changes that they claimed could impinge on Irish neutrality. Since then the EU and Ireland have acted to provide reassurance that Nice will have no implications in terms of Ireland's stance on defence. In addition, Ireland has modified the way in which EU legislation is examined by the Irish Parliament.

More flood damage support for Czech and Slovak farmers?

The European Commission proposed last week to help the rural areas in the Czech Republic and Slovakia that were heavily affected by the floods in mid-August. It wants to see changes to the EU's pre-accession instrument for agriculture, Sapard: raising the ceiling of public aid from 50% to 75%, and raising the EU contribution to this public aid from 75% to 85% for relevant Sapard projects in the rural areas affected. "We stand by the farmers and rural communities severely hit by these floods. This proposal will also allow us to better respond to such exceptional natural disasters in the candidate countries in the future", said EU Farm Commissioner Franz Fischler. But the proposals will have to be backed by EU member states and the European Parliament. Under existing rules, Sapard has no specific provisions for responding to natural disasters, and the Commission believes that actions to help restore rural areas should be permitted.

A special summit for candidate countries

Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen has invited the heads of state or government of the thirteen candidate countries to a meeting with the Presidency of the European Union in Copenhagen on 28 October, to officially inform them about the results of the European Council meeting in Brussels on 24-25 October. The President of the Commission Romano Prodi, Commissioner for Enlargement Günter Verheugen and the Council Secretary-General Javier Solana are also invited. It will be a short meeting followed by a lunch, but its content will be of the highest significance: the candidates will be formally told which of them is considered eligible for closing negotiations at the end of 2002, and likely to join the EU in 2004 - and which of them are not. Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey already know that their accession processes will be slower. But the other ten candidates are all hopeful of a successful outcome to the membership bids. Enlargement will be the dominant item on the agenda for the European Council meeting in Brussels - and EU leaders must, as Rasmussen put it, "decide which will be the candidate countries with which negotiations can be concluded at the end of 2002", and find a common position on the unresolved questions of the enlargement negotiations concerning agriculture and budget. He said the meeting will "mark the beginning of the final phase of negotiations with the candidate countries", and "be the starting signal to the run-up to the finishing line in Copenhagen in December."

European Parliament favours 22 observers for the Czech Republic and Hungary

In its own pre-accession arrangements, the European Parliament has given tacit backing to the demand from the Czech Republic and Hungary for increased representation in the enlarged Parliament. The Czech Republic and Hungary are contesting the number of MEPs they will have in the next European Parliament: they want the number to be raised from 20 to 22 each, to match the representation of equivalent-sized current EU member states. MEPs decided in September to allow 147 observers from candidate countries to attend European Parliament sessions from April 1, 2003 onwards, to allow the candidates to prepare for sending their own MEPs to the assembly after their accession in 2004. The figure is calculated on the basis of the number of seats that the candidate countries wish to have in the



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Parliament, rather than on the allocation agreed as part of the Nice Treaty in 2000.

Enlargement roadmap for justice and home affairs


The informal Justice and Home Affairs Council in Copenhagen on September 13-14 agreed on the drafting of a roadmap for the candidate countries to implement the Schengen acquis on border controls. The draft roadmap should be presented to the EU Justice and Home Affairs Council in October. Meanwhile, it has already been accepted that internal border checks will not be lifted when the candidate countries initially accede: only when they can clearly show that they fully comply with Schengen will the Council adopt a Decision enabling such a move.

Czech check on EU water policy

The EU Phare programme is backing with 750,000 a Czech project to meet EU standards on water policy. A new Phare Twinning Project was launched last week, in which the Czech Ministry of Environment will be given assistance by experts from the United Kingdom, Austria, France and Germany in implementing the EU water framework directive between now and December 2003. The project will cover preparation of draft legislation, development of a draft river basin management plan for the Orlice river, designing enforcement procedures and environmental monitoring systems, and making arrangements for stakeholder consultation.

European Parliament Liberal leader backs right to withdraw from EU

Graham Watson MEP, Leader of the European Liberal Democrat Group in the European Parliament, wants countries to be given the right to withdraw from the European Union. He said on September 17: "I will be urging European Liberal Democrats to back proposals for a clause in the new constitutional Treaty which would allow an existing or future member state to withdraw from the European Union." The creation of such a secession clause would, he argued, challenge sceptics who believe that a country can be half-in the European Union and make a clear choice between full participation in the European Union or withdrawal. "A secession clause could also help us to make the case for enlargement of the European Union in some of the applicant countries, where opinion polls show increasing fears about joining," he added.

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Bratislava comes to Brussels

Bratislava House - an "office for contacts with the European Union", and a showcase for the region's culture, history, hospitality and potential - opened in Brussels on September 13. At the opening ceremony, Lubo Roman, chairman of the Bratislava region, pointed out that the region not only contains the country's capital city, with its concentration of central government institutions, but also holds a key position at the crossroads of major international routes on the Austrian and Hungarian border, and has a level of prosperity close to EU averages. The region's responsibilities cover economics, social welfare, healthcare, education, culture and tourism, and it has already set up co-operation agreements elsewhere - with Lower Austria and the Hungarian Győr-Moson-Sopron region, the South Moravian region in the Czech Republic, with Moscow, and in Spain and the UK. It is the first Slovak region to open an office abroad. Bratislava House is situated at Avenue Michel-Ange 75, 1000 Brussels, and will be run by Andrea Brettschneider.

Defeating drug dealers in the candidate countries

Another step in combating the drug trade in the EU candidate countries was taken in Prague last week as a 20-month 2 million Phare project reached completion. Representatives from the ten candidates from central and eastern Europe and from Turkey took part in the culminating conference of the project, during which the European Commission and the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction helped in setting up systems to fight drug dealers. Much of the work carried out has been aimed at getting the candidates ready to adopt and implement EU Union law, standards and best practices on generating drug-related

information in a comparable form. Co-operation in this area is a key item on the EU's agenda for the creation of an area of freedom, security and justice, the European Commission has emphasised.

Specifically, the project has boosted the relevant institutions in the candidate countries, and helped them develop the necessary networks. Nine regional training events were held on EMCDDA working methods, and 130 national experts received training. Another six national events providing training for another 60 staff. National focal points for information exchange were designated, and national action plans on drug information systems were prepared. The candidates have also been helped to prepare 2001 reports on their national drug situation, and to finalise their 2002 reports. One of the immediate results will be the launch in October of the first regional report on the state of the drugs problem in the candidate countries. At the closing conference, the candidate countries outlined their intentions on how and when they would implement the EMCDDA advice and recommendations, and how they will carry out further training of trainers that will take place after the end of the project.

EPP creates parliamentary partnership with candidates

The EPP-ED Group in the European Parliament has formed a "Parliamentary Partnership" to help integrate members of parliament from the applicant states into the European Parliament system. Under an agreement reached in Ljubljana last week, EPP-ED Group members, especially those belonging to the relevant joint parliamentary committees, will host visits to Strasbourg of parliamentarians from sister parties in the candidate countries from now until official observers are appointed. In addition, it will help to train and inform future parliamentary assistants - in conjunction with the EPP-ED Group office in Budapest. It could also have a role to assist in referenda in the applicant states and help sister parties during the June 2004 European election campaigns in the accession states.

Fisheries talks still need finalisation

Franz Fischler, European Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries said that although accession negotiations on fisheries had been concluded, there are still technical issues to be settled, such as the quota allocation for Estonia. The European Commission opposed to the setting of autonomous quotas which, says Fischler, might have a severe negative effect on the fish stocks and undermine the efforts of the International Baltic Sea Fisheries Commission towards achieving sustainable fisheries. Estonia needs to strengthen its administrative capacity to implement the rules of the Common Fisheries Policy, he added.

Agenda

See also the new "Enlargement events calendar" on the DG Enlargement web site: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/events/calendar.htm>. This gives a run-down of public events related to the enlargement of the EU taking place in all current and future member states.

Date	Event
September	
Monday 23th - Wednesday 25th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshop with the Supreme Audit Institutions of the Central and Eastern European Countries, Cyprus, Malta and Turkey on "Audit of Internal Control Systems" co-chaired by the ECA and SIGMA - Bratislava see http://www.eca.eu.int/EN/AGENDA/events.htm Workshop with the Supreme Audit Institutions of the candidate countries on audit of internal control systems, Bratislava

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Tuesday 24th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU Council of Ministers working group on enlargement meets, Brussels • European Parliament debates the 2003 draft budget, with a focus on enlargement-related issues in the pre-accession period, and with the involvement of European Commissioners, Strasbourg
Wednesday 25th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European affairs ministers of the "Laeken ten" candidate countries meet in Warsaw, to discuss the general perspective for the conclusion of accession negotiations, the EU proposals concerning the financial framework for enlargement, as well as further co-operation between the candidate countries. • European Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen addresses the French parliament.
Thursday 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU Council of Ministers working group on the Accession Treaty meets Brussels • European Commission President Romano Prodi meets Romanian prime minister Adrian Nastase
Friday 27	EU Council of Ministers working group on enlargement meets, Brussels
Thursday 26 - Friday 27th	Latvian and European Commission ministerial conference on "Safety and security of energy supplies in the Baltic Sea Region in the context of EU enlargement", Ventspils (www.energy-conference.gov.lv)
Thursday 26th - Friday 27st	Conference on energy safety and supply security in the Baltic Sea Region in the light of EU enlargement, Riga and Ventspils.
Thursday 26th - Friday 27st	The Baltic Sea Region 2010: Encountering the Past - Mapping the Future. Copenhagen.
Monday 30th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference annual meeting discusses the Northern Dimension, St. Petersburg • OECD publishes report on agriculture policies in transition economies 2002, covering Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Slovenia (and Russia).
Autumn	
Details tbc	Slovenia presidential and local elections
October	
Details tbc	European Court of Auditors workshop with the supreme audit institutions of the candidate countries on audit quality control, Warsaw
Wednesday 2nd-Thursday 3rd	Meeting of liaison officers from supreme audit institutions of the candidate countries and the European Court of Auditors, Luxembourg
Thursday 3th - Friday 4th	European Environment Commissioner Margot Wallström visits Hungary
Saturday 5th	Parliament elections, Latvia
Details tbc	Partial Senate elections, Czech Republic
Details tbc	Local governmental elections, Hungary
Monday 7th	Fifth European Commission seminar on consumer affairs for candidate countries, Brussels
Wednesday 9th	European Commission to approve the 2002 regular reports on the progress of the candidate countries towards the EU and the strategy paper Strategy


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	paper and recommendations
Saturday 12th - Sunday 13th	Baltic Sea conference on Baltic Metropolises, Copenhagen
Friday 18th	European Justice and Home Affairs Commissioner Antonio Vitorino visits Poland
Friday 18th - Sunday 20th	European External Relations Commissioner Chris Patten and Competition Commissioner Mario Monti visit the Czech Republic
Sunday 20	Estonian local elections
Monday 21	Ministerial Conference on the guidelines for a new action plan for the Northern Dimension, 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.
Sunday 27th	Polish regional elections
Monday 28th - Tuesday 29th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> European Budget Commissioner Michaela Schreyer visits Malta European Employment and Social Affairs Commissioner Anna Diamantopoulou visits Bulgaria and Romania.
November	
Monday 4th	Danish Energy Agency conference on energy supply and demand in the Kaliningrad Region, Kaliningrad
Details tbc	Local elections, Czech Republic (including first elections for the Prague region)
Details tbc	Local elections, Estonia
Details tbc	Presidential, Local, and National Council (Second Parliamentary Chamber elections, Slovenia
Details tbc	Ecofin Council discusses the report on economic dialogue with the candidate countries
Details tbc	Lithuania presidential elections
Tuesday 19th - Wednesday 20th	Baltic Sea Regional Energy Co-operation ministerial conference, Vilnius
Wednesday 27th and Thursday 28th	Meeting of the Presidents of the supreme audit institutions of the member states and the candidate countries in Luxembourg
Thursday 28th and Friday 29th	Meeting of the presidents of the supreme audit institutions of the member states and the candidate countries, Luxembourg
December	
Details tbc	Meeting of heads of supreme audit institutions of the candidate countries and the European Court of Auditors, Bucharest

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Thursday 12th, Friday 13th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • European Court of Auditors meeting with heads of the supreme audit institutions of the candidate countries, Bucharest • OECD conference on governance and partnerships in transition economies, Český Krumlov, Czech Republic
Sunday 22nd	Presidential elections, Lithuania (second round on January 5, 2003)
January 2003	
Details tbc	Presidential elections, Czech Republic
February 2003	
9th and 16th	Presidential, elections, Cyprus
March 2003	
Details tbc	Parliamentary elections, Estonia
July/August 2003	
Details tbc	Presidential elections (elected by the parliament), Latvia

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