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Enlargement

WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

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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.

EU SETS A DATE FOR FIFTH ENLARGEMENT

The European Union's General Affairs Council - the Council where the EU's foreign ministers come together - moved enlargement decisively ahead at its 18 November meeting. Most conspicuously, the EU gave - for the first time - a firm date for the accession of new member states: 1 May 2004. This date has been selected as the earliest feasible date after the ratification process of the Accession Treaty, scheduled for signature in April 2003, after negotiations are satisfactorily concluded with the leading candidate countries at the December Copenhagen summit. The new member states will thus be able to take part in the European Parliament elections of June 2004, and they will also be able to play a full part in the Inter-Governmental Conference at which a new EU Treaty is to be drafted. Each candidate country will also be entitled to one Commissioner - without portfolio - in the current Commission, which will remain in office until November 2004; at this point it is expected to hand over to a new Commission duly endorsed by the new European Parliament.

Foreign affairs ministers also agreed on a scenario for the Copenhagen summit on December 12-13, and for the preparations and negotiations between now and then. For the summit, it was agreed that the European Council should take all necessary decisions to conclude negotiations with the ten candidate countries identified at the Brussels summit in October (Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovak Republic, Slovenia), and decide on a detailed road map with timetables and increased pre-accession assistance for Bulgaria and Romania, as well as the next stage of Turkey's candidature. And the European Council will discuss initial reports from the Presidency on the reform of the Council Presidency and on the use of languages in the context of enlargement.

For the negotiations, the principal objective is to complete as much as possible before the Copenhagen summit. So the Presidency and the European Commission have been given responsibility for preparing individual packages for each of the candidates, which will be presented to them this week in bilateral sessions, in a bid to complete the talks at formal ministerial-level negotiating sessions in Brussels on December 9.

Ministers also agreed the precise maximum figure for direct payments to farmers for the EU 25 until 2013, in the light of the decision in principle at the

Brussels summit in October. At current prices, in € millions, the ceiling will be 42,979 in 2004, 44,474 in 2005, 45,306 in 2006, 45,759 in 2007, 46,217 in 2008, 46,679 in 2009, 47,146 in 2010, 47,617 in 2011, 48,093 in 2012, and 48,574 in 2013.

Among the main out-standing issues on which negotiations have to be completed with the candidates are agriculture (quotas, level and phasing in of direct payments, and national topping-up of EU payments), budget (cash-flow, costs linked to EU membership) and some leftovers from other chapters - including competition, transport, and institutions with one or another candidate. "Member states and candidates have the political will to try to solve the outstanding issues before Copenhagen", said Danish foreign affairs minister Per Stig Moller after the meeting. And European Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen said the discussions at ministerial level had cleared the way for the final step: there was still a long list of open questions but a result was still feasible if everyone was flexible and pragmatic.

And, on a more cautionary tone, EU foreign affairs minister agreed conclusions at the General Affairs Council on the protection of EU financial interests and the fight against fraud, which reiterated the importance the EU "attaches to the participation of third countries, and especially the candidate countries, in action to fight fraud, and to their co-operation with OLAF." Ministers invited the Commission to present a full summary of activities and actions undertaken in this field in its 2002 annual report on fighting fraud.

25 FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTERS GET TOGETHER IN BRUSSELS

Foreign affairs ministers from the candidate countries met their counterparts from the EU member states in the margins of the November 18 General Affairs and External Relations Council in Brussels. In what could be their last meeting before negotiations are concluded with many of them at the Copenhagen summit in December, ministers had a chance to discuss what each side wanted from a Copenhagen result - and what each side could reasonably hope to get.

On agriculture, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic want shorter transitional periods for direct payments, and many candidates want more EU flexibility on quotas (particularly on milk, beef and sugar), or rural development funding. Hungary, Slovenia, Cyprus, Estonia and Slovakia want national top-up possibilities for payments to farmers, since joining the common agricultural policy could cut farmers' revenues.

On financial questions, most candidate countries have expressed concern that they will not immediately benefit from EU policies - and they want a more realistic evaluation of financial flows in the first year of membership. Hungary, Slovenia and Estonia have expressed clear disappointment at the € 23 billion envisaged for structural actions in 2004-2006. Poland, Slovakia and Estonia have urged EU attention to the budgetary problems the new member states would face in meeting their commitments, and regretted the limited financial envelope decided on by the EU.

On other matters, Slovakia is concerned at the costs of meeting the Schengen acquis, and wants assurances of assistance after 2006 with decommissioning costs for units at its Bohunice nuclear power plant. Hungary wants better terms on the competition chapter and more seats in the European Parliament. Slovenia is insisting on generous rural development allocations and on EU aid for the cost of maintaining external EU borders. Cyprus wants border costs help too, as well as funding for northern Cyprus. Malta wants special treatment on VAT for food and medicines. The Czech Republic is insisting on a satisfactory deal on cabotage in the transport chapter of the negotiations; and, like Hungary, it wants more seats in the European Parliament.

Poland's foreign affairs minister Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz said: "I am not satisfied with the present EU offer on agriculture - we have to make a last effort to upgrade and increase direct payments and reduce transitional

periods and increase quotas". Slovakia's foreign affairs minister Eduard Kukan showed no readiness to withdraw his country's requests - particularly on agriculture quotas and on the costs of borders. Estonian Foreign Minister Kristiina Ojuland said the full financial framework agreed by EU leaders in Berlin in 1999 should be used: "Estonia is of the opinion that the overall EU financial offer can be improved at least by the margin left under the expenditure ceilings agreed in Berlin," she suggested, pointing out that Estonia's goal in the negotiations is overall improvement of the financial package on offer.

And Lithuania's foreign affairs minister Antonis Valionis said he was still insisting on adequate milk and sugar quotas for his country, and that on the Ignalina nuclear power plant, "we are close to a final agreement on figures and categories of costs for the period 2004-2006".

The EU side was not offering major concessions to the candidates or pretending the negotiations are yet settled. European Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen told the candidates that there was limited room for manoeuvre on the EU side, and that "the result of the Brussels European Council is not negotiable". Franz Fischler, European Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries insisted that the direct payments as agreed at Brussels were not negotiable, and that any calls for better quotas had to be based on recent data, and not lead to excessive costs. Danish Foreign Minister Per Stig Møller said afterwards the talks "gave a clear picture of all the outstanding issues which must be settled before the Copenhagen summit. Much remains to be done".

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT TELLS EU "GO AHEAD" WITH ENLARGEMENT

The European Parliament plenary session on November 20 strongly backed the current EU plans for enlargement - but issued clear warnings about the need for the candidate countries to update their legislation on the judiciary and administrative capacity, rights of minorities, corruption, and trafficking in human beings. And it urged the EU member states to be flexible in the final negotiations, in particular in the area of agriculture.

This plenary session took place in historic circumstances - with more than 200 representatives of the parliaments of the candidate countries in attendance in the Strasbourg hemisphere. European Parliament President Pat Cox welcomed parliamentarians from Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, and emphasised to them the challenge of giving leadership to win public consent in the member states and in the candidate countries for the post-Copenhagen phase of enlargement - making it work once negotiations had been completed.

The Parliament will now invite candidate countries to send observers to the European Parliament until they became full member states, with all rights of participation in political groups, committees and plenary, although they would not have the right to vote.

"Enlargement of the European Union cannot now be stopped," declared MEP Elmar Brok, following the Parliament's adoption of the report on enlargement that he had piloted through the Parliament's foreign affairs committee earlier this month. "We have been able to deal satisfactorily with such issues as Cyprus, Kaliningrad and the Benes decrees, and compromises on the outstanding issues can be found within the dates agreed," he proclaimed.

During the debate, Denmark's prime minister, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, described enlargement as "the biggest project of our age", and urged all parties to come together to find a solution to the outstanding problems. And European Commission President Romano Prodi paid tribute to the national parliaments of the applicant countries in processing all the necessary legislation to comply with EU membership.

But the speeches in the hemisphere were not all congratulatory. Among the numerous interventions from candidate countries' representatives - most of which were constructive and cautiously optimistic - there were also remarks from Andrzej Lepper, leader of one of Poland's most outspoken opposition parties. He lamented the cost of restructuring of Polish industry and agriculture, pointing to the 3.2 million unemployed, equivalent to 18% of the population. The EU was raking in millions of dollars at Poland's expense by exporting surpluses, and Poland was subsidising jobs in Europe, he claimed. And from the EU side too there were also some words: Jean-Marie Le Pen, runner-up in this year's French Presidential race, and still an independent French MEP, warned prospective new member states that the EU was not a brotherhood of nations but an "Empire under American protection" and that the candidate countries were at risk of becoming "slaves" in an enlarged Europe.

Replying to the debate, European Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen said he felt the meeting's lesson was that the new Europe could work, while at the same time it was necessary to take full account of the history of the new member states.

EP DEBATE CONFIRMS ENLARGEMENT AT HEAD OF COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME

The European Parliament debated the European Commission's work programme for 2003 at its plenary session last week - and the debate confirmed the significant place that the Commission plans to give to enlargement.

As European Commission President Romano Prodi said in introducing his programme to the Parliament, "Our main challenge for the coming year will be enlargement... So it is naturally our top priority for 2003." He stressed the Commission's commitment to ensure that all parties involved in the process are capable of meeting their responsibilities from day one of accession. This meant that the candidate countries must have carried over into national law and be actually implementing the body of EU legislation. And it meant that the final phase needs to be monitored with special care by the EU itself.

In addition, said Prodi: "I must stress how urgent it is to overhaul the EU's architecture so it can meet the challenges of 2004. There is a qualitative dimension to enlargement that must not be underestimated". The Commission's other priorities for 2003 also have a close link with enlargement, he pointed out. "The goal of ensuring stability and security throughout the EU is at the forefront of the Commission's concerns because the harmonious and peaceful coexistence of our people depends on this". And in the current economic climate, "people are rightly asking what the EU will do to help restore growth and create jobs. Let us not forget that we must meet our objectives of sustainable economic prosperity and social inclusion", said Prodi.

MEPs backed the broad thrust of Prodi's presentation and the focus on enlargement, and also expressed support for ensuring candidate countries fully met the EU rules, and for tightening up EU procedures so that enlargement ran more smoothly. For the EPP-ED group, Françoise Grossetête of France welcomed the closer co-operation between the Council, the Commission, and the European Parliament in drawing up the Commission's work programme, but said she was still concerned about the implementation of EU legislation in the candidate countries, particularly in the area of the environment. For the PES group, Enrique Barón Crespo of Spain criticised delays in implementation of the EU's Sapard programme of pre-accession aid for agriculture and rural redevelopment. Fellow-Socialist Gary Titley of the UK noted the challenge before the Commission over the next 12 months in order for enlargement to proceed smoothly, and he called for the Enlargement directorate general in the Commission not to be wound down but to maintain its current staff levels.

Enlargement news in brief

Another boost to enlarged data interchange

From next year administrations in eleven candidate countries will be able to exchange data with EU member states' administrations on application of EU law, enforcement of internal market rules, and supply of e-Government services across borders to citizens and enterprises. The European Commission decided last week that the system that allows interchange of data between administrations - which has already been extended to Slovenia and Poland, will be open to Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Slovakia on 1 January 2003. Stepping up data exchange will accelerate the candidates' take-up of EU legislation before they formally join the EU, and help safeguard security and freedom of movement in the enlarged Europe, the Commission said. Turkey and Malta are also expected to follow in a matter of months.

"Keep enlarged agriculture environment-friendly"

WWF and BirdLife are urging that the environmental aspects of enlargement should be kept at the top of the agenda in the closing stages of the accession negotiations. They fear infrastructure projects funded by pre-accession funds could severely damage environmentally sensitive areas such as the Biebrza marshes in Poland, and they insist there should be no transition periods for nature conservation legislation. Greater EU financial support for the extension of the Natura 2000 network of protected areas is needed in the candidate countries, and non-governmental organisations in the candidate countries should be given better access to documents and information about the accession process, they argue. Above all, rural development and agri-environment schemes must be given priority over the promotion of intensive farming. "The focus of the last period before accession should be agri-environment and measures for diversifying the rural economy", say WWF and Birdlife.

Candidates canvassed on Belarus ban

Following the decision by the Czech Government to deny him a visa to attend the NATO summit in Prague, the EU General Affairs and External Relations Council reached a decision that fourteen member states will prevent the entry into their territories of the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, as well as the Head of the Presidential Administration, the Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Defence, the Minister of Interior and the Chairman of the Committee of State Security. Candidate countries have been informed of the decision, and requested to inform member states about whether they contemplate taking similar measures. The decision is based on EU concerns over the continuing deterioration of democracy and rule of law in Belarus and the non-fulfilment of Belarus' international commitments. "Serious violations of human rights and recurrent restrictions on fundamental freedoms imposed by the government of Belarus are in clear contradiction with European democratic standards", said the Council.

Enlargement Mini-Briefs

- Growth in central and eastern Europe slowed in 2002 but continued to outpace the world economy, says the latest **Transition Report from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development**. Output in the region is set to expand by 3.5 per cent this year, and by 4 per cent in 2003, after growth of 4.2 per cent in 2001. The region's resilience reflects the strength of its reforms and a markedly better business environment. And entrepreneurs in 26 countries have told EBRD of improvements in finance, infrastructure, taxation, and fighting corruption and crime. But the region's agriculture sector and

rural economy are acting as a drag on the business environment, says the Bank.

- Turkey's newly appointed foreign minister, Yasar Yakis, said at the weekend that the UN Secretary General's plan for a comprehensive **settlement for Cyprus** "could be negotiated". He was speaking after a one-hour meeting with Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash, who is recovering from further surgery in New York. "Our assessment coincides with that of Denktash and we believe that we will work on it and we will achieve something concrete and constructive", Yakis is quoted as saying. "We do not reject the negotiations".
- In addition to its major debates on enlargement and on the Commission's work programme for 2003, the European Parliament also adopted last week two reports on more specialised aspects of enlargement - one on **media pluralism and enlargement** (which urges the Commission to draw up a paper by the end of 2003 on media pluralism both in member states and applicant countries), and the other on **scientific research in the candidate countries** (which focuses on measures needed to ensure their full participation in the EU's upcoming research framework programme 2003-2006).
- Denmark's minister for European affairs, Bertel Haarder, told the European Parliament last week that the recent EU-Russia summit and its outcome were "very satisfactory". The arrangements agreed on transit between **Kaliningrad** and the rest of Russia "strike a balance between the interests of candidate countries, Russia and the EU", he said, and the solution "bears out the strength of co-operation between the EU and Russia, while the EU has also confirmed the crucial importance it attaches to respecting candidate countries' sovereignty and to effective EU external borders". He said the agreement will now form the basis for further discussions with the candidate countries concerned and with Russia regarding implementation.
- A joint consultative committee between the EU Committee of the Regions and the **Bulgarian Liaison Committee** for Co-operation with the Committee of the Regions is to be set up, following the go-ahead from the EU's General Affairs Council on November 18. The Council also agreed on the participation of Bulgaria in the EU's Fiscalis programme, which aims to reinforce the functioning of indirect taxation systems in the internal market.
- **Romania closed two chapters** of its accession negotiations at talks in Brussels last week - customs union and telecommunication and information technology. And Romania's negotiator, Vasile Puscas, received assurances of support for Romania's negotiations during Greece's EU presidency from Ilias Plaskovitis, secretary general in the Greek foreign affairs ministry.

Agenda

See also the new "Enlargement events calendar" on the DG Enlargement web site at <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
November	
Monday 25th- Tuesday 26th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Meeting of the European Economic and Social Committee EU-Estonia joint co-operation committee, Brussels.
Tuesday 26th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ EU Council of Ministers working group on enlargement meets, Brussels. ■ European Parliament conference of parliamentary speakers of the enlargement countries, with the participation of European Commission President Romano Prodi and Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen, which will issue a statement on

- the December summit; Brussels.
 - European Parliament President Pat Cox speaks at European Parliament information office on "EU enlargement - Germany's expectations"; Berlin
- Wednesday 27th
- EU Council of Ministers working group on enlargement meets, Brussels
 - European Parliament foreign affairs committee discusses enlargement
 - European Parliament President Pat Cox receives Estonia's President, Arnold Rüütel; Brussels.
 - Viviane Reding, European Commissioner in charge of Education and Culture, receives the Polish minister of culture, Waldemar Dabrowski.
 - European Commission President Romano Prodi takes part in on-line debate on enlargement and the future of Europe.
- Wednesday 27th and Thursday 28th
- Meeting of the Presidents of the supreme audit institutions of the member states and the candidate countries in Luxembourg
 - Meeting of the European Economic and Social Committee EU-Turkey joint co-operation committee, Brussels.
- Thursday 28th
- EU Council of Ministers working group on enlargement meets, Brussels.
 - EU Council of Ministers working group on the Accession Treaty meets, Brussels.
 - EU-Malta joint parliamentary committee, Brussels.
 - European Commission President Romano Prodi and Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen receive Estonia's President, Arnold Rüütel, Brussels.
 - European Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen and Regional Affairs Commissioner Michel Barnier receive the Slovak deputy prime minister Pal Csaky, Brussels.
 - European Regional Affairs Commissioner Michel Barnier receives the Slovak regional development minister Laszlo Gyurovsky
- Friday 29th
- EU Council of Ministers working group on enlargement meets, Brussels.
- Thursday 28th and Friday 29th
- Meeting of the presidents of the supreme audit institutions of the member states and the candidate countries, Luxembourg
- December**
- Tbc
- Meeting of the European Economic and Social Committee EU-Lithuania joint co-operation committee, Brussels.
- Wednesday 4th-Thursday 5th
- Meeting of the European Economic and Social Committee EU-Hungary joint co-operation committee, Brussels.
- Thursday 5th-Friday 6th
- Meeting of the European Economic and Social Committee EU-Bulgaria joint co-operation committee, Brussels
- Monday 9th-Tuesday 10th
- Meeting of the European Economic and Social Committee EU-Romania joint co-operation committee, Brussels.
- Thursday 12th,
- Copenhagen European Council - enlargement may

Friday 13th 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
- European Budget Commissioner Michaela Schreyer visits Romania

Sunday 22nd ■ Presidential elections, Lithuania (second round on January 5, 2003)

January 2003

Details tbc ■ Presidential elections, Czech Republic

Sunday 5th ■ Lithuanian Presidential elections

February 2003

9th and 16th ■ Presidential, elections, Cyprus

March 2003

Sunday 2nd ■ Estonian national election

Wednesday 5th ■ Parliamentary elections, Estonia

April 2003

Wednesday 16th ■ signature of the Accession Treaty, Athens

May 2003

June 2003

Friday 6th and Saturday 7th ■ Referendum on the accession treaty, Slovakia

Sunday 15th and Monday 16th ■ Referendum on the accession treaty, Czech Republic

July/August 2003

Details tbc ■ Presidential elections (elected by the parliament), Latvia

2004

May 2004

Saturday 1st ■ Entry into force of the accession treaty (according to conclusions of General Affairs Council, 18.11.02)

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 to enlargement@cec.eu.int.

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