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Enlargement

WEEKLY NEWS
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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 FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTERS MARK FURTHER ENLARGEMENT STEPS

The first meeting of the European Union General Affairs Council under the Greek Presidency - in Brussels on 28 January endorsed the Presidency's plans for enlargement over the coming six months.

In formal terms, the programme includes the completion of the drafting of the Accession Treaty (based on the negotiations finalised at the Copenhagen summit last December), the formal opinion of the Commission on it (19th February), the assent of the European Parliament to it (9th April), its adoption by the Council, and its signature by the heads of state and government of the member states and of the acceding states on 16th April in Athens.

In practical terms, the Presidency is also aiming to ease the integration of the new member states into EU ways of working: from 16 April, the new member states will be entitled to take part in all EU meetings as active observers. And at the same time, the Union will be supervising the monitoring of how far and fast the candidate countries are living up to the commitments they made in the negotiations.

Encouraging and assisting Bulgaria, Romania, and Turkey in their continued efforts towards accession also feature prominently in the programme. The Presidency also plans to continue work on the "Wider Europe" - which, it stressed, includes the strengthening of relations with Russia as well as the enhancement of relations with Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus within the "New Neighbours Initiative", and with the southern Mediterranean countries.

European Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen reported during the meeting on the finalisation of the text of the Accession Treaty, and won expressions of satisfaction from the Council on the progress achieved - as well as backing for his insistence on keeping to the timetable and sticking to the results of the accession negotiations, "which are fully reflected in the draft Treaty texts", the Presidency emphasised. The necessary clarification process in finalising the text does not, in other words, offer any scope for re-negotiation, the EU made very clear.

Another outstanding question about the mechanics of the upcoming enlargement - the appointment of new member states' Commissioners - was resolved, too. After Presidency consultations with the European Parliament (which has the right to stage hearings of new Commissioners before they are appointed), agreement has been reached.

The ten new members of the Commission will be formally appointed on 1st May 2004, the date of the next enlargement and of the entry into force of the Accession Treaty - but the Council will give a list of nominees to the European Parliament by 1st March 2004, to allow for the customary parliamentary hearings to take place. And since the Commission, which the new member states will be joining will be in office for only seven months after entry into force of the Accession Treaty (it has already been agreed that the term of the new Commission will start two months earlier than scheduled, on 1 November 2004), the Council has agreed to facilitate matters by ensuring that the new President of that Commission be nominated in time for the European Parliament to give its approval in July 2004. In the same spirit, the Council will inform the Parliament of the nominees for the other Members of the Commission before the end of August 2004.

NICE ENTERS INTO FORCE

The Treaty of Nice, agreed after long and tough debates at the French Presidency summit in December 2000, and finally ratified by all member states only late last year, entered into force on 1 February. As the EU Presidency remarked in a formal declaration: "This amending Treaty opens the way for the greatest enlargement in the history of the European Union, and lays the institutional bases required to achieve this strategic goal of historical importance."

The Treaty is a contribution towards strengthening the democratic nature of the Union, by "preserving the fundamental balances between institutions and between states" and helping "the greater effectiveness of decision-taking mechanisms." In particular, it establishes the weighting of votes in the Council and the distribution of seats in the European Parliament of the enlarged EU, settling basic questions on which the realisation of enlargement depended.

It also adjusts the size of the Commission and strengthens the internal role of its President, provides for financing European political parties, and extends qualified majority voting, while strengthening the role of the European Parliament in decision-making.

"The ratification of the Treaty of Nice completes the institutional changes required for the accession of the new Member States", the Presidency said. Now, wider and more detailed talks on the future of Europe, currently being conducted in the European Convention, are already aiming at dealing "comprehensively and in the long term with the demands of enlargement, both from the point of view of institutions and as regards policies and the means to achieve them."

See also: [Summary of the treaty of Nice](#)

PRODI WOOS EU ISLANDS ON ENLARGEMENT PROSPECTS

Fears among current member states of losing EU funding after enlargement were confronted head-on by Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission, when he spoke in Sardinia last week about the impact of enlargement on island regions. "It is essential to look at this issue from the right perspective geographically and in terms of time", he said.

He was well aware, he said, of anxieties in some EU island regions of losing financial assistance under the Structural Funds and regional funding following

the entry of the new member states. But he insisted that "Enlargement can potentially enrich all EU member states, both current and new, and by that I do not mean only in terms of the economy. Local situations should be viewed against the broader background of the whole continent. (...) the entry of ten relatively poor countries into the Union clearly has a cost. But in the slightly longer term, the return will undoubtedly be greater".

The Commission President argued that the necessary adaptations were also "a question of consistency". After enlargement, he pointed out, the gap between the wealthiest ten per cent and the poorest ten per cent of the Union's population will more than double. While at present only 18% of the EU population has less than 75% of the average EU income, this proportion will rise to 25% after enlargement - and six out of every ten of these people will be living in the new member states. "We cannot fail to show solidarity towards our future fellow citizens, as we have done to date towards the least-favoured regions in the present member states", urged Prodi.

He also reassured his Sardinian hosts that they would not suffer any immediate shortfall after enlargement. Because the EU had decided that "the immediate cost of enlargement must be distributed fairly and gradually", regions currently enjoying the "Objective 1" classification that gives them first claim on structural funding - like Sardinia - will continue to enjoy that status until the end of 2006, which is more than two and a half years after the new countries actually join.

The debate about the future of EU cohesion funding will continue, Prodi said. He anticipated a "far-reaching review process that must take account of the needs of all" after the presentation at the end of 2003 of the third report on cohesion and the financial perspectives for 2007-13.

"But the main point is political, it is not about statistics. The Commission is perfectly aware that the transition needs to be managed so regions like Sardinia and Corsica are not let down with a bump. There is a need for flexibility so the beneficiaries of Community assistance can prepare for the new situation. We could think about widening the eligibility criteria for aid. The current criteria are based solely on regional income as compared with the EU average. In the future, other indicators could be included, such as the unemployment rate. Alternately, some sort of phasing-out support could be introduced for regions that cease to qualify under Objective 1 to avoid putting their economies under excessive strain and affecting living standards too abruptly," said Prodi.

· For details of the second cohesion report, see:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/reports/contentpdf_en.htm

NEW MEMBER STATES INTO SCHENGEN - BUT NOT YET

Some of the complexities of integrating the new member states into the Schengen area - the EU's area of freedom, security and justice - were spelled out by European Justice and Home Affairs Commissioner Antonio Vitorino in Brussels last week.

The Schengen acquis has to be accepted in full by all EU candidates, without derogation or exception - and this the ten states acceding next year have done in principle, and are now implementing in practice.

However, accession to the EU does not mean that new member states are automatically included in the Schengen area of free movement. After they join the EU, a special Schengen evaluation process in each of them will have to verify the ability to meet Schengen requirements.

These requirements cover the security-related mechanisms designed to compensate for the elimination of internal border controls for people moving around in the Schengen area: visa policy, harmonised external border control, rules on the free movement inside the Schengen territories, asylum policy,

police and judicial co-operation, provisions on extradition, drugs, firearms and ammunition. All this is backed up by the Schengen Information System, which contains data on persons or objects refused entry in the territory of the Schengen member states.

Each new member state will be admitted to Schengen only after satisfying all these requirements, and after a special decision of the EU Council of Ministers, which is needed for lifting of internal border controls.

In any case, said Vitorino, "Full implementation of the Schengen provisions immediately upon accession is not possible for technical and operational reasons". A functioning Schengen Information System is a key precondition, and the new version to technically link the new member states will not be operational until the end of 2005. So "it is not possible to take any decision concerning the lifting of internal border controls before that time". "In addition", said the Commissioner, "the Schengen evaluation process itself will take some time".

However, even if the new member states cannot immediately accede fully to Schengen, they will be required, as soon as they join the EU, to apply much of the Schengen acquis - for instance mutual co-operation in criminal matters and most of the provisions on police co-operation. It means, in effect, that they will have to meet all the provisions which are not directly linked to the lifting of internal border controls. "This is to ensure that new member states can participate as soon as possible in the enhanced co-operation of the Schengen acquis", explained the Commissioner.

Looking further ahead, Vitorino also signalled his desire to see Schengen function better in an enlarged EU. At present, most decisions needed for the creation of the area of freedom, security and justice are taken unanimously by the Council, after consulting the European Parliament. "This unanimity requirement has led to significant delays in decision-making", said the Commissioner, accusing individual member states of using their power "to postpone and block the adoption of measures, forcing last minute compromises and derogations to the detriment of the coherence and ambition of the measures concerned" - "even in cases where the political will to act has been clear at the highest levels". In the context of an enlarged Union, such a situation is "untenable", in Vitorino's view. "In the interest of efficiency, it is therefore essential to make a substantive move in favour of a greater use of qualified majority voting in this area", he insisted.

AFTER THE CURRENT ENLARGEMENT - THE WESTERN BALKANS

The Western Balkans was the subject of much debate last week as minds turned to the future of the region after this current enlargement.

The Copenhagen decisions on enlargement have raised the spectre of marginalisation and "enlargement fatigue" in the Balkans, and the EU must send a strong message confirming that the European vocation of the region is real, warned Javier Solana, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, addressing the European Parliament last week. "The European perspective remains our strongest tool to further consolidate stability and encourage sustainable and EU compatible reform through the Stabilisation and Association Process", he said. But he too acknowledged, like the EU Presidency at the General Affairs Council on January 28, that "eventual membership will require hard work and genuine commitment to reforms by the countries of the region. This is the double message we need to send during the coming months".

The General Affairs Council meeting on January 28 also focussed on the "European perspective of the countries in the Western Balkans". A public debate among ministers was directed partly towards the people who live in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Albania, to inform them about the priorities and commitments of the European Union. Giorgos Papandreu, Greek foreign affairs minister and current President of the EU Council of Ministers, stressed that the Union's relations with the Western Balkan region would constitute a

major priority under the Greek Presidency, and that the Presidency was keen to "capitalise on the positive results achieved so far in the implementation of the Stabilisation and Association Process" that provides the current legal framework for EU links with the countries of the region.

The aim was to ensure continuation of work on consolidating democratic institutions and the rule of law, protecting minorities, promoting economic reconstruction and development, and fostering regional co-operation. Papandreou expected that "a new impetus to the further rapprochement of these countries to the European Union" would be given by the summit scheduled for Thessaloniki on 21 June between the EU and the countries of the Western Balkans, the second such meeting within the so-called Zagreb Process, launched in Zagreb in November 2000.

During the debate, all ministers underlined the European perspective of the Western Balkan countries and their membership of the same European family. They welcomed the efforts already made by the countries in the region on the road towards the European Union. But they also highlighted the points which still need to be addressed. The conclusion of the debate was a clear message that the doors are open for welcoming the Western Balkan countries as future members of the European Union. This is not, however, an automatic process, the Presidency pointed out: there are prerequisites for membership, including respect for European values and principles, the adoption of the EU acquis, and the fulfilment of the Copenhagen criteria.

Enlargement news in brief

Malta will be first to hold an EU accession referendum

Maltese Prime Minister Eddie Fenech Adami has now set a date for his country's referendum on EU accession - and, in line with earlier speculation, it will be on March 8. So Malta will now be the first of the candidate countries to hold its popular vote. But the referendum outcome will not be legally binding on the government - an important factor, since the population is finely balanced between pro- and anti-EU sentiment. The principal opposition group, the Maltese Labour Party, is openly against EU membership, and has been arguing that there should be a general election before any referendum. The current government, which is strongly pro-membership, is entitled to remain in office until January 2004 before calling elections.

Less Hungarian support for accession, but more in the Czech Republic and Poland

More than 70% of the citizens of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic that say they would participate in a referendum on EU accession would vote "yes", according to a new poll from CEORG, the central European polling organisation. The support ranges from 55% in the Czech Republic, through 58% in Hungary, to 62.5% in Poland. But there are still nearly 20% of respondents among the overall population who do not know whether to vote for or against EU accession. Support for accession has grown steadily in the Czech Republic, and has started to rise again in Poland, says CEORG, after a sharp dip last year. But in Hungary it has decreased from 72.1% in May 2002. CEORG has also researched how the EU accession negotiations fulfilled the expectations of the respondents. In the Czech Republic, 37.4% of respondents think the outcome of the negotiations is worse than expected, and only 6.1% that it was better than expected. In Hungary, 16.8% sees the outcome as worse than expected, while 11.3% thinks it is better than expected. But in Poland, 32% respondents think the result were as expected, and 20.4% think they were even better than expected - with 17.5% considering the outcome worse than expected.

See : <http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/opinion/>

Stig Møller looks backwards and forwards

Danish foreign minister Per Stig Møller, who chaired the European Union's General Affairs and External Relations Council during the just-ended Danish Presidency, has been looking back at what was achieved, and forward at the work the Greek Presidency is taking on. For him, the major challenge for the EU now is "to harvest the benefits and face the challenges of the EU's biggest enlargement, while continuing our economic and institutional reform". And while that will demand serious "political willpower", there is no reason to doubt it will not be forthcoming: "The enlargement clearly demonstrated the EU's commitment to make a difference and take the necessary steps forward and face the coming challenges", he said. Meanwhile, he said, the enlargement process will continue, with Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey. And "New candidate countries will emerge and in accordance with the Treaty any European state which respects the principles of the European Union may apply to become a member of the Union".

Beyond that, "The enlarged EU must further strengthen its relations with Russia and the new neighbours to the east. We have a major interest in stability and economic development in these countries. Our relations must be based on common values including human rights and rule of law. There is great potential in further EU-Russia co-operation based on mutual interests and obligations. We should work for closer integration of Russia in the European economy. Russian membership in the World Trade Organisation would be an important step forward. We must seek concrete results from the work on the Common European Economic Space and the energy dialogue. Russian ratification of the Kyoto Protocol and the Energy Charter would be welcome. We must also pursue a dialogue with Russia on political issues including search for solutions to conflicts in the area of the Commonwealth of Independent States".

EU candidates get closer to EEA on trade

Some technical progress is being made towards "the other enlargement" - the European Economic Area, which the acceding states must join when they join the EU. Lithuania and Slovenia signed an agreement on conformity assessment of industrial products last week with Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. The agreement takes further the existing free trade agreements of these two candidate countries, by allowing a range of their industrial products (including electrical safety, electromagnetic compatibility, and machinery) to be placed on the territory of the three non-EU EEA States without having to undergo any further approval procedures - and vice-versa. The agreement is in line with the protocols on conformity assessment of industrial products that the candidates are gradually concluding with the EU.

Czech FDI rose sharply in 2002

The Czech National Bank says that the Czech Republic attracted more than \$7 billion of foreign direct investment for the first three quarters of 2002 - a record. And Martin Jahn, CEO of CzechInvest, the government's agency for attracting foreign direct investment, says the result is even better than it looks, because the investment is shifting to increasingly higher quality operations. Jahn cites examples of technology centres and strategic services being set up by companies such as Honeywell, Matsushita, Logica and Rieter. During 2003 CzechInvest is particularly targeting investments in microelectronics, biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, and aiming to widen the range in subsequent years to electronics, electrical engineering, aerospace, and medical technology. At present, the automotive sector accounts for the largest share of Czech FDI. To boost Czech attractions, the government has been providing training to local suppliers - with EU support - in management of quality, finance, and human and material resources. "The results of the pilot project which ended in 2002 showed that companies which made use of this assistance are much better accepted by multinational corporations as suppliers", said Jahn.

Enlargement Mini-Briefs

- "Enlargement will change everything. We are getting larger and gaining more influence, and this obviously gives us a new role internationally", said European Commission President Romano Prodi last week. And he highlighted the importance of the Mediterranean in the EU strategy of building "a ring of friendly countries around us, from Morocco to Russia through the Black Sea". A Euro-Mediterranean policy calls for imagination and courage, he said, but "Building a bridge to the countries on the Mediterranean's shores means planting the seeds of peace, stability and future growth." However, he made clear that building special relationships meant to "share everything short of membership with them".
- The Polish government has been under pressure from Polish bishops to ensure the addition of a clause to the Accession Treaty to provide guarantees for Poland on what they regard as fundamental values of the Polish constitution - including bans on abortion, euthanasia and same-sex marriages.
- After EU enlargement with ten new member states, Euro zone central bank staffing levels could reach 70,000 - three times the number of central bankers in the United States, which would still have a larger GDP than an enlarged Euro zone, according to the new edition of the Central Bank Directory. At present, the 12 countries in the euro area, together with the ECB, employ a total of 56,571 central bankers: this is 18.5 central bankers per 100,000 of the population; the corresponding US figure (and the global average) is 8.4 central bankers per 100,000.
- While the EU and Norway (and Iceland and Liechtenstein) battle it out over the terms for enlarging the European Economic Area, the European Commission and Norway agreed last week on a common wish to develop energy co-operation. Norway is a major exporter of oil and gas to the European Union and, through the EEA Agreement, an integral part of the internal energy market.
- Meanwhile, more than half Norwegian citizens say they want a referendum on EU membership now, according to the latest survey - and 75 per cent of those in favour of a referendum want to vote before the 2005 election.
- European Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen has urged Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktaş to listen to the voices of the Turkish Cypriots for a united Cyprus as a member of the European Union. Speaking on Turkish television during his visit to Ankara on January 31, the Commissioner suggested that playing for time would not win Denktaş any advantage. Instead, he urged Denktaş to listen to the views of the United Nations, the Turkish government leadership, and to Turkish Cypriots themselves.
- European Parliament President Pat Cox opened European Parliament information offices in Prague, Budapest and Bratislava last week. These are the first information offices the European Parliament has opened in the candidate countries. They are intended to operate both as information-providers to the public (particularly in the run-up to the European Parliament elections in June 2004, in which the new member states will be taking part) and as coordinating links between national institutions and the European Parliament.
- Latvia has delivered equipment to help Spain eliminate the environmental damage caused by the tanker "Prestige". A hydraulic cleaner, a power block, a mini-tractor and an oil storage container, destined to combat pollution on Spanish Cies islands - a national park off the coast of Galicia - was shipped to the port of Vigo, and is now in temporary storage in Pontevedra until the weather allows final delivery to the islands.
- The first high-profile foray by new member states into EU foreign affairs has received a response from Greek Prime Minister Costas Simitis, in his capacity as President of the European Council. In response to last week's public statement on Iraq that Poland, Hungary

and the Czech Republic signed along with five EU member states, Simitis said: "The way in which the 5 EU member states and the 3 candidate states' initiative on the Iraq issue was expressed does not contribute to a common stance towards this issue. The EU seeks to have a common foreign policy. Therefore, a common understanding is necessary on the Iraq issue, as was the case with the General Affairs Council on Monday the 27th January 2003. The Presidency will continue working for a common stance".

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 al current and future member states.

Date	Event
February 2003	
Tuesday 4th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Erkki Liikanen, European Commissioner for Enterprise and the Information Society visits Hungary ■ EU Council of Ministers working group on enlargement meets, Brussels ■ EU Council of Ministers working group on eastern Europe meets, Brussels
Wednesday 5th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ European Court of Justice hearing on case between the European Commission and the EU Council of Ministers over the EU agreement with Bulgaria and Hungary on carriage of goods by road and the promotion of combined transport
Wednesday 5-Thursday 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ European External Relations Commissioner Chris Patten visits Turkey
Thursday 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ European Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen meets Lithuanian foreign affairs minister Antanas Valionis, Brussels ■ European Justice and Home Affairs Commissioner Antonio Vitorino meets Polish minister of justice Grzegorz Kurczuk, Brussels ■ European Employment and Social Affairs Commissioner Anna Diamantopoulou signs the joint assessment on employment policy with Latvia, Brussels. ■ European Parliament President Pat Cox meets Arturas Paulauskas, speaker of the Lithuanian parliament, and Antanas Valionis, Lithuanian minister of foreign affairs ■ Candidate countries take part in discussions in the EU Council of Ministers working group on the Convention, Brussels ■ EU Council of Ministers working group on eastern Europe meets, Brussels ■ EU Council of Ministers working group on the Accession Treaty meets, Brussels
Thursday 6th-Friday 7th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Candidate countries representatives take part in plenary session of the Convention on the Future of Europe, European Parliament, Brussels
Friday 7th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ European Regional Affairs Commissioner Michel Barnier meets the Czech regional development minister Paval Nemeč ■ EU Council of Ministers working group on the Accession Treaty meets, Brussels

- 9th and 16th
 - Presidential, elections, Cyprus
- Monday 10th-
Tuesday 11th
 - EuroForum conference Polish Power 2003: new regulations, privatisation and liberalisation processes in the developing market; Warsaw
- Tuesday 18th
 - OECD Environment Directorate conference "Ten years experience with urban water sector reform in the CEEC", Geneva
- Thursday 20-
Friday 21
 - European Commission President Romano Prodi visits the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
 - European Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen visits Romania
 - European Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen visits Romania
- Monday 24th
 - Erkki Liikanen, European Commissioner for Enterprise and the Information Society visits Hungary
 - General Affairs and External Relations Council, Brussels.
 - Erkki Liikanen, European Commissioner for Enterprise and the Information Society, visits Hungary
- Thursday 27-
Friday 28th
 - Franz Fischler, European Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries, visits Malta
 - European Economic and Finance Commissioner Pedro Solbes visits Hungary.

March 2003

- Sunday 2nd
 - Estonian national Parliamentary election
- Saturday 8th
 - **Referendum** in Malta on EU accession
- Tuesday 18th
 - General Affairs and External Relations Council, Brussels
- Friday 21st
 - European Council, Brussels
- Sunday 23rd
 - **Referendum** in Slovenia on EU accession
- Sunday 30th
 - Referendum in Cyprus on the UN plan (to be confirmed)

April 2003

- Saturday 12th
 - **Referendum** in Hungary on EU accession
- Monday 14th
 - General Affairs and External Relations Council, Luxembourg
- Wednesday
16th
 - **Signature of the Accession Treaty, Athens**
 - European Conference, Athens

May 2003

- Friday 2nd
 - Informal foreign affairs ministers meeting, Greece
- Sunday 11th
 - **Referendum** in Lithuania on EU accession
- Friday 16 and
Saturday 17th
 - **Referendum** in Slovakia on EU accession
- Monday 19th
 - General Affairs and External Relations Council, Brussels
- Saturday 31st
 - EU-Russia summit, St Petersburg

June 2003

- Saturday 8th
 - **Referendum** in Poland on EU accession

- Sunday 15th and Monday 16th ■ **Referendum** in the Czech Republic on EU accession
- Tuesday 17th ■ General Affairs and External Relations Council, Luxembourg
- Friday 20th ■ European Council, Thessaloniki
■ Zagreb process summit, Thessaloniki
- Tuesday 24th ■ General Affairs and External Relations Council, Luxembourg
- July/August 2003**
- Details tbc ■ Presidential elections (elected by the parliament), Latvia
- September 2003**
- Sunday 14th ■ **Referendum** in Estonia on EU accession
- Saturday 20th ■ **Referendum** in Latvia on EU accession
- 2004**
- May 2004**
- Saturday 1st ■ Entry into force of the accession treaty (according to conclusions of General Affairs Council, 18.11.02)

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