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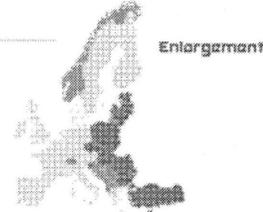
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PRESS CORNER

Enlargement Weekly - 25 March 2003



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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.

SLOVENIA VOTES STRONGLY FOR EU MEMBERSHIP

Some nine out of every ten voters said "yes" to the European Union in the referendum in Slovenia at the weekend - the first plebiscite on accession in central Europe. Provisional results of the legally-binding referendum showed 89.6% vote in favour of joining the EU - and 66% favour of joining NATO, too. See <http://www.rvk.si/referendum/eu-nato/eng/>

Slovene Prime Minister Anton Pop said he was delighted with the results, describing them as "the end of an era and the beginning of a new one. Dmitrij Rupel, Slovenia's foreign minister and long-time campaigner for independence, said the EU vote meant the transition is over for his country. And European Parliament President Pat Cox, who had gone to Slovenia for the referendum, congratulated Slovenian leaders with the observation: "You are back in Europe where you belong".

The European Commission welcomed "the overwhelming support the Slovenian people have expressed in favour of the accession of their country to the European Union". A Commission statement went on to note that "In these times of war, such a commitment to the European project, which is devoted to peace, stability and prosperity, has a special significance. Slovenia is going to join not only a strong economic community, but also a real Union based on the defence of the universal values of democracy and human rights.... We strongly hope that the States and the peoples of the United Europe will play together an even stronger role in defending and promoting such fundamental values."

The next referenda are in Cyprus on March 30 and in Hungary, on April 12. See http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/negotiations/accession_process.htm

EU SUMMIT LOOKS AHEAD TO ACCESSION TREATY SIGNATURE

European Union leaders at their Brussels summit last week found time amid

the discussions of Iraq to agree a statement on EU enlargement, too. "Following the successful conclusion of the accession negotiations with Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia in Copenhagen in December 2002, the European Council welcomes the considerable efforts by all involved to finalise the Treaty and Act of Accession with a view to signing in Athens on 16 April 2003. This will be a momentous occasion, sealing the determination of both the present and future Member States to come together in pursuit of the European project", the European Council conclusions ran.

In a veiled reference to the continuing inter-institutional differences on financing enlargement, EU leaders added: "The European Council therefore underlines the importance of timely decisions by both the Parliament and the Council to ensure that the established timetable is met." But chairman of the EPP-ED Group in the European Parliament, Hans-Gert Poettering, regretted after the meeting that the summit Conclusions make no reference to resolving the dispute. "Enlargement is not jeopardised because of this dispute", stressed Poettering. "But there will be serious consequences in the relationship between Council and Parliament if a solution satisfactory to the two institutions cannot be found".

The summit of the EU15 also noted "the positive result of the recent referendum in Malta on accession to the European Union", and described it as "an important first step on the path towards a wider Europe of peace, democracy, stability and prosperity". And EU leaders called on "the peoples of the other acceding States to seize the opportunity to reap the benefits of membership and make enlargement a reality from 1 May 2004."

On Cyprus, the European Council regretted that failure of the UN-sponsored efforts to find a comprehensive settlement. Once again, EU leaders reiterated their support for the continuation of the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's mission and of negotiations on the basis of his proposals. It urged all parties "to spare no effort towards a just, viable and functional settlement and, in particular, the Turkish Cypriot leadership to reconsider its position".

European Parliament President Pat Cox told the EU leaders at the start of their summit: "The first item on this agenda is enlargement. I recall that, at our meeting in Copenhagen 12 weeks ago, we stood together with a sense of real achievement, under the banner of 'One Europe'. We must not forget the 'Spirit of Copenhagen'. Enlargement constitutes a crowning political achievement of this generation of Europeans. There must be no hesitation on the enlargement timetable. There must be no new division of Europe into a two-speed process. Division is a word which must belong to Europe's past."

And alongside their counterparts from the thirteen acceding and candidate countries, the EU heads of state or government and their foreign and finance ministers discussed the Lisbon Strategy to boost Europe's competitiveness. The Council conclusions make repeated references to the significance of Lisbon in the context of enlargement.

"Enlargement increases the potential for economic growth and for achieving the Lisbon goals. The future member states have been covered for the first time in the Commission's Spring Report. They are adopting reform measures and are starting to take part in the open method of co-ordination. The Lisbon Strategy offers common solutions to common problems and is an essential tool to be used to support the process of enlargement and share best practice and experience across the Union", agreed EU leaders. "A dynamic and well-functioning internal market is essential for productivity and growth, and even more so in an enlarged Union", and "the integration and greater connectivity in network industries such as energy, transport and telecoms must be pursued, while completing and extending networks, especially in view of enlargement." Dynamic and competitive industry and services "are needed to sustain growth and prosperity in an enlarged Europe", they said.

Specifically on the trans-European networks, the European Council invited EU ministers "to spell out conditions and directions needed" - especially in view of enlargement - to make better use of and improve existing infrastructure, and to complete missing links.

A joint declaration from the 28 heads of state or government issued at the

end of the meeting stated that they had reviewed developments in the enlargement process, and had welcomed the choice of the Maltese people. It also noted that they had discussed the Iraqi crisis and developments in the Middle East and the Western Balkans - and that "the 13" had aligned themselves with the related Council conclusions.

Much of the discussion among the 28 focused on Iraq and its aftermath. Polish Prime Minister Leszek Miller said after the meeting that current events, and particularly the Iraq war, must not be allowed to disrupt the EU enlargement process. Hungarian Prime Minister Peter Medgyessy urged against dramatising the current disagreements on Iraq: "A European Union of 25 member states offers ample opportunity for dialogue", he told his counterparts during the meeting.

For the full conclusions, see the Greek Presidency web site at <http://www.eu2003.gr/en/articles/2003/3/21/2316/>

PARLIAMENT GIVES FURTHER SUPPORT FOR ENLARGEMENT

The European Parliament's foreign affairs committee last week strongly backed the accession of ten new member states in May 2004. In its vote in Brussels on March 19th it noted that some continuing problems remained to be tackled on corruption, democracy and human rights, and that it would pay special attention to these issues under the monitoring procedure that will take place between now and accession. But overall the committee gave its support to the enlargement process.

If an agreement is reached with the EU Council of Ministers on the Parliament's continuing dispute of the budget figures in the Accession Treaty, the committee's recommendation will be debated by the full plenary session of the Parliament in Strasbourg on April 9th. This is the date initially scheduled for the Parliament to give its formal assent: accession of any new country to the EU requires an absolute majority of all members of the Parliament - currently 314 out of 626 votes.

But Parliament still claims it has been sidelined by the Copenhagen deal on funding enlargement. So the foreign affairs committee also approved a recommendation drawn up jointly with the Parliament's budget committee, insisting that the EU heads of state or government either withdraw the fixed budgetary figures in the Accession Treaty or agree to raise the budgetary ceiling for internal policies. The full Parliament is scheduled to vote on this recommendation on 27th March - although it is possible that by then a compromise will have been reached with the Council.

The foreign affairs committee overwhelmingly endorsed the overall report on enlargement by its chairman, Elmar Brok, which gives the all clear to the Copenhagen deal. 55 members voted for, with two against, and one abstention. The decision "marks a significant step on the road to completing the union of the European continent. If the Parliament as a whole takes the Committee's lead on April 9th, then nothing would stand in the way of the ceremony marking the signing of the EU Accession Treaty under the Acropolis in Athens a week later, on April 16th," with the ten new member states, Brok said after the vote in Brussels.

The committee predicted that the arrival of ten new member states would help in "building an even stronger and more effective European Union, consolidating democracy and peace, strengthening its economy and sustainable development, based upon the shared values of liberty, respect for fundamental rights, good governance and the rule of law".

Certain MEPs had called for the Czech Republic to make a political gesture concerning the Czechoslovak Presidential Decrees of 1945. However, a declaration last week by newly-elected Czech president Vaclav Klaus, in which he stated that the post-war treatment of the Sudeten Germans was

unacceptable by today's standards and the crimes committed against them, was seen by Brok as "enough ... the political gesture we expected". As a result, the report on the Czech Republic went through, by 54 to 2 against. The text reads: "...we assume that following the entry of the new Member States, as per the treaty, all European Union citizens in all countries have the same rights, and cannot be discriminated against by any laws, judicial decisions, or official measures."

The results of the committee's votes on the reports were as follows:

1. Cyprus: 57 in favour, 1 against, 2 abstentions
2. Czech Republic: 54 in favour, 2 against
3. Estonia: 56 in favour, 2 against, 0 abstentions
4. Hungary: 58 in favour, 1 against, 0 abstentions
5. Latvia: 55 in favour, 1 against, 2 abstentions
6. Lithuania: 57 in favour, 1 against, 2 abstentions
7. Malta: 58 in favour, 0 against, 2 abstentions
8. Poland: 53 in favour, 4 against, 3 abstentions
9. Slovakia: 56 in favour, 1 against, 2 abstentions
10. Slovenia: 56 in favour, 1 against, 1 abstention

MEPs also insisted that an enlarged EU should speak with a common voice on the international stage. The EU's new geo-political position as a result of the accession of ten new countries should not weaken its internal cohesion, they argued - and the committee urged current and future member states to cooperate actively right now in formulating a common foreign and security policy.

EURO-SCEPTICS' WARNINGS ON AGRICULTURE FUNDING FOR CANDIDATES

"Farmers in Slovenia and other accession countries will pay the price for the EU's unfair agriculture deal", according to Gorazd Drevensek, former presidential candidate for the Nova Stranka party in Slovenia, and a member of the Euro-sceptic TEAM grouping. Speaking on the eve of the referendum in Slovenia, he claimed that the Accession Treaty amounts to an opt-out for the Council and the Commission. "It means that they can change or withdraw CAP-funds to the accession states, if they find it necessary. This is a threat to the agriculture deal made at the Summit in Copenhagen", he said.

Article 23 of the Treaty states: "The Council, acting unanimously on a proposal from the Commission and after consulting the European Parliament, may take the adaptations to the provisions of this Act relating to the common agriculture policy which may prove necessary as a result of a modification in Community rules. Such adaptations may be made before the date of accession".

In Drevensek's view, the reasons for this "opt-out clause" include reluctance to reform the CAP, and the lack of control over how CAP costs will grow - especially with further enlargement to Bulgaria and Romania in prospect. This is why, he alleges, the EU has not made any definite financial commitments on agriculture to the new member states. "This shows that the EU15 are more interested in protecting their benefits from the current CAP system, than reforming it and giving the accession countries a fair agriculture deal", he argued.

Enlargement news in brief

More welcomes for Malta's "yes" vote

"I extend the wishes of France to welcome you into the European family", said French president Jacques Chirac, in response to Malta's favourable vote on EU accession. "Your victory, the clear victory of the Yes vote in these troubled times, has enormous meaning not only for Malta, as it will certainly

bring a new impetus in the EU project of peace, prosperity and solidarity that we share", said José Manuel Durão Barroso, prime minister of Portugal. "Sincere congratulations on behalf of both the Government of Luxembourg and myself. I am pleased to see that the Maltese people have manifested a strong will to join Europe and I am convinced that the Maltese vote is an important signal for the referenda to be held in the other acceding countries", said Jean-Claude Juncker, prime minister of Luxembourg. "Sincere congratulations for the choice that your country has made for the greater enlarged Europe. We are happy to welcome you within", said Dominique de Villepin, French minister of foreign affairs. And it was "a great victory for Malta and for the whole EU", according to Jari Vilen, Finnish minister for foreign trade and EU affairs. Franco Frattini, Italian foreign affairs minister, described the vote as "particularly positive and encouraging". And Hans-Gert Poettering, Chairman of the Group of the European People's Party and European Democrats in the European Parliament, greeted the vote with "appreciation and relief".

Concerns over Turkish political freedom

The EU has expressed deep concern about the decision of the Turkish authorities to ban the HADEP party. The Presidency has also taken note of the request from the chief prosecutor to initiate similar proceedings against the DEHAP party. The EU said in a formal statement that it would examine both developments in depth. And it insisted again on "the fundamental importance it attaches to democratic pluralism and to the freedoms of expression and political opinion."

Polish farmers' worries feed into referendum campaign

More than 20,000 Polish farmers protested this month at Jasna Góra in southern Poland against what they termed "the complete failure of government, farmers unions or local authorities to represent their needs and defend their struggling industry". They complained of accelerating erosion of their markets by cheap imports, the enforced closure of local abattoirs and meat and milk processing plants, and "the imposition of a bewildering list of rules and regulations that nobody understands the need for". They are also worried by the arrival of supermarket chains that "undermine and ultimately destroy the small shops, quality foods and time honoured village community trading patterns". The "International Coalition to Protect the Polish Countryside" is trying to channel these anxieties and resentments into a "no" vote in Poland's forthcoming referendum on EU accession. It claims that accession will mean that more than a million small Polish farmers "will get no subsidies but will nevertheless have to conform to the same crippling rules and regulations that have killed off so many small farms throughout Europe".

EBRD backing for enlargement

More money was ploughed last year into the EU enlargement process from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Altogether, the EBRD - which provides funding for the whole of the former Soviet bloc - signed a record €3.9 billion of new business in 2002, a 7 % increase over 2001. €1.27 billion was committed to "advanced transition countries" - in essence, the EU's central and Eastern Europe acceding states and candidates. Combined with funds from outside investors, the Bank has mobilised financing commitments with a total project value of €69 billion since it was set up 12 years ago. Steven Kaempfer, finance vice president, said the Bank's business last year had remained strong largely because of the region's resilient economic performance despite the global slowdown, along with continuing reforms. One of the biggest deals last year was financing for the restructuring of Poland's railways. Donors, led by the EU, US, Japan, Netherlands and Canada, also contributed €100 million for technical co-operation activities. Country by country, EBRD funding in 2002 (and the cumulative total over the last 12 years) was as follows for the EU candidates and acceding states:

COUNTRY	2002			CUMULATIVE		
	Number of Project	€ million	% of EBRD total	Number of projects	€ Million	% of EBRD total
POLAND	9	463	11.9	118	2,688	12.4
ROMANIA	6	447	11.5	62	2,251	10.4
HUNGARY	1	27	0.7	60	1,326	6.1
SLOVAKIA	4	121	3.1	37	952	4.4
CZECH REPUBLIC	2	69	1.8	37	902	4.2
BULGARIA	6	182	4.7	39	667	3.1
SLOVENIA	1	181	4.6	24	588	2.7
ESTONIA	4	73	1.9	42	446	2.1
LITHUANIA	1	5	0.1	25	407	1.9
LATVIA	0	9	0.2	24	321	1.5

MEPs call for accession strategy for Western Balkans

The European Union should change its policy on the Western Balkans and adopt an approach similar to the enlargement process if it wants to prevent the efforts made to create stability and prosperity in the region going to waste, according to some MEPs on the European Parliament's foreign affairs committee. Last week they urged EU heads of state or government to go beyond the present stability and association policy for the Balkan countries and work out an accession strategy at their upcoming summit in Thessaloniki - without, however, creating undue expectations of early EU membership.

Enlargement Mini-Briefs

- "Do you accept that Hungary is to become a member of the European Union?" is the question that the Hungarians will be asked to answer in their referendum on 12 April.
- Bulgaria plans to repair 340 km of its main roads over the next five years. The roads all form part of the pan-European transport corridors, and the European Investment Bank is expected to lend €60 million of the total €81 million costs.
- Poland has modified its election law to allow for a two-day referendum on EU membership. But according to the terms of the amended law, such a poll would have to take place on a Saturday and Sunday. The underlying intention of the government in changing the law is to ensure an adequate voter turnout.
- Far-reaching changes will be needed to training of international lorry drivers in the candidate countries if recommendations made last week by the European Parliament transport committee are taken on board. The committee urged that new EU rules for training of goods vehicle drivers should also cover crime prevention.
- After the Accession Treaty is signed, the Hungarian Socialist Party will send 10 observers to the European Parliament, and the Fidesz opposition will send nine.
- Discussion continues of a new role for the European Economic Area as a form of "waiting room" for potential EU candidate countries. CDU

- deputy Jürgen Schröder suggested again last week that options other than full EU membership should be made available to countries - including states in the western Balkans - which would not immediately join the European Union. One possibility was privileged partnership on the model of a "European Economic Area plus", he suggested.
- The task force on trafficking in human beings of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe will meet in Portorož, Slovenia, on March 28.
 - According to Bulgarian finance minister Milen Velchev, a short conflict in Iraq will have only limited impact on his country's macroeconomic framework for the country. But if it drags on for more than six months, GDP growth could be halved, inflation will grow by 50%, and investment will drop. Bulgaria also hopes for some positive consequences from the war: it is owed \$1.5 million, which it hopes to recover.
 - The European Parliament foreign affairs committee welcomed the European Council decision in Copenhagen to offer more help to Turkey to encourage it in its determination to push through the reforms needed to fulfil the political criteria. But it insisted in its debate last week that the political criteria remained the basic precondition for starting negotiations for EU membership. "Turkey must also reflect on whether joining the EEA Plus was an option for itself", added committee chairman Elmar Brok.
 - According to Estonian minister of foreign affairs Kristiina Ojuland, Estonian people will have the opportunity to express freely their opinion about joining the EU. "The European Union and the Soviet Union are not comparable. If Estonian citizens, in their own referendum later this year, in September, say 'no', then we will not join the European Union. This is the free choice of the Estonian citizen," Ojuland promised.
 - French MEP Genevieve Fraisse organised a debate in the European Parliament last week on women's reproductive and sexual rights in central and eastern European countries, with members of family planning organisations from Poland, Croatia, Latvia, Hungary, Russia, Lithuania, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Albania, Belarus, Slovakia and Romania. Some participants complained of the influence of conservative policies in Poland, and claimed that barriers to contraception and sexual rights had received "a low priority" in the enlargement process.
 - Pupils from more than 5 000 schools from 32 European countries discussed the future of Europe on March 21 - known as "Spring Day in Europe", developed by the EU ministries of education and supported by the European Commission's Secretariat General. Political figures - including Lech Walesa, Vaclav Havel, and Ion Iliescu - went back to school to take part in the debates. At the same time, Eurostat, the EU's statistical office, published tables on demography, economy, education, culture, and leisure related to 15-24 year olds in many of the countries concerned - including the fact that only in Hungary do less than 60% of pupils in secondary education learn English, compared with more than 80% in most other candidate countries and acceding states. See <http://futurum.eun.org>
 - In parallel to the inter-institutional dispute over funding enlargement, the European Parliament's committee on budgets has launched a broad-ranging consultation of other EP committees to evaluate the financial needs for enlargement, in particular for the financial years 2005-2006. This week the environment committee will assess the needs related to the budget lines falling under its competence.
 - The UK's government representative at the Convention on the Future of Europe, Peter Hain, told the UK House of Commons last week that the upcoming Inter-Governmental Conference "must debate the issues fully. I would not want it simply to rubber-stamp the Convention's work. It is also imperative that the accession countries are fully involved in the IGC. After all, the forum will decide the kind of Union to which the accession countries will be full members".
 - The Polish Prime Minister nominated on 19th March Mr Jerzy Miller, deputy Finance Minister in the previous Government Finance as new President of the Agency for restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture, the Paying Agency for SAPARD funds, and the institution in charge of IACS implementation all over the country.
 - In the Czech Republic the Christian churches have printed 200,000

brochures to persuade the three million faithful in the country to vote in the upcoming referendum on EU accession. Czech churches have been strong supporters of EU membership.

- A new European Commission database related to education and training is now providing information on candidate countries and acceding states - as well as on member states - with information on addresses, grants, and opportunities. See <http://www.ploteus.net>

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
March 2003	
Tuesday 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The European Parliament budgets committee discusses the financial aspects of enlargement ■ European Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen meets Bulgarian foreign affairs minister Solomon Passy, Brussels. ■ European Parliament foreign affairs committee discusses Turkey's application for membership to the EU ■ EU Council of Ministers working group on enlargement meets, Brussels ■ European Parliament information seminar for members of parliament from the candidate countries, on national constitutions of new member states after accession; Brussels
Wednesday 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ NATO member states will sign the NATO enlargement protocol for Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia; Brussels
Wednesday 26-Thursday 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The European Parliament discusses enlargement and the budget
Thursday 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ OECD releases its Economic Survey of the Czech Republic, Paris ■ Les Journées européennes de Lille-Nord Pas de Calais discuss the challenges of agreeing policy in an enlarged Europe, with speakers including former Polish foreign affairs minister Bronislaw Geremek, Christian Danielsson - the deputy head of cabinet of European Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen, Lithuania's representative on the Convention, Rytis Martikonis; Lille
Friday 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ European Budget Commissioner Michael Schreyer speaks on opportunities and risks in EU enlargement, Berlin ■ EU Council of Ministers working group on enlargement meets, Brussels
Saturday 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ European Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen visits the Czech Republic
Sunday 30th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Referendum in Cyprus on the UN plan (to be confirmed)
Monday 31-Tuesday 1 April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ European Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen visits Hungary.
April 2003	

- Thursday 3
 - European Budget Commissioner Michaele Schreyer visits Slovakia
 - Franz Fischler, European Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries visits Hungary
 - European Budget Commissioner Michaele Schreyer visits Slovakia
- Thursday 3 - Friday 4
 - Franz Fischler, European Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries visits Hungary
- Monday 7
 - European Commission President Romano Prodi visits Poland
- 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
- Saturday 20th - Sunday 21th
 - European Employment and Social Affairs Commissioner Anna Diamantopoulou visits Cyprus
- Saturday 20th to Monday 22nd
 - European Employment and Social Affairs Commissioner Anna Diamantopoulou visits Cyprus
 - European Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen visits Poland
- Monday 22nd - Tuesday 23th
 - European Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen visits Poland
- Thursday 24th, Friday 25th
 - European Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen visits Lithuania

May 2003

- Friday 2nd
 - Informal foreign affairs ministers meeting, Greece
- Saturday 10th - 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

June 2003

- Sunday 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
- 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)

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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