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Enlargement

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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.

LITHUANIA SAYS "YES"

Voters in Lithuania gave their overwhelming support to joining the EU in the national referendum on May 10-11. 91% of voters said "yes" to the EU, according to early figures. And after a slow turn-out on Saturday, by the time polling stations closed more than 64% of eligible voters had cast their ballot - comfortably more than the 50% needed to make the vote valid.

The vote was a vindication of the strong pro-EU line taken by the country's political leaders. Fireworks burst over Vilnius on Sunday night, and rock bands played on the steps of the President's palace. The celebrations went on into Monday morning.

President Rolandas Paksas thanked his countrymen and said the Baltic state had entered "a new stage of its history" after the results were announced. European Parliament President Pat Cox told Lithuania's parliamentary speaker, Arturus Paulauskas, "It is a great night to celebrate," and Paulauskas insisted "Lithuania will be the winner". "I congratulate the Lithuanian people who made a very important decision," said Estonia's President Arnold Ruutel.

European Commission President Romano Prodi sent a message on May 12 conveying "sincere and heartfelt congratulations" to the people of Lithuania. He said, "the good turnout is a clear demonstration of the European commitment of the Lithuanian electorate. This overwhelming result will reinforce the legitimacy of Lithuania's presence in the European Union and in the institutions of the EU. As a result, there will be a strong voice for Lithuania inside the EU. This will be good for Lithuania, and I am convinced it will also be good for the EU".

And European Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen added his own welcome to Lithuania. He described the result as "a resounding endorsement of the key foreign policy objective of Lithuania over the last 10 years, and the result of the country's ability over many years to maintain a strong consensus in the society on the benefits of EU enlargement". He also noted how "amazing and encouraging" it was to "see how far and how fast Lithuania has changed. After all, it was only 12 years ago that defensive barricades were still standing outside the Parliament in front of Soviet tanks", he observed.

The vote was also watched with interest in neighbouring Poland, which will hold its accession referendum in June. "I am happy. It is a good encouragement for Polish citizens for them to follow the example of their neighbours," Polish prime minister Leszek Miller said on TV on hearing the news.

This is the first of the former Soviet Union countries to put EU accession to the vote - Latvia and Estonia have scheduled their referendums for September.

The next acceding state to hold a referendum is Slovakia, this coming Friday and Saturday. European Commissioner Günter Verheugen called on Slovaks to participate in the referendum when he met Slovak prime minister Mikuláš Dzurinda last week. "It is, of course, the most important decision about the future of the country since independence, not only for the current generation, but also for the children of their children," said the Commissioner.

According to a Slovak Statistics Office survey published on May 2, 49 % of Slovaks feel they do not know enough about the possible effects of EU membership. Deputy prime minister for European integration Pál Csáky admitted recently that there was a risk that the referendum would suffer from low voter turnout: 50% of eligible voters must go to the polls if the referendum is to be valid. But recent opinion polls show a strong pro-EU stance, with 66.8 % of respondents in the most recent survey stating that they would participate in the referendum, and 77.2 % of those saying they would vote yes.

INTERNAL MARKET STRATEGY FOR AN ENLARGED EUROPE

The European Commission last week published its Internal Market Strategy 2003-2006, a ten-point plan to make the Internal Market work better in the enlarged Europe. The aim is to keep Europe on course to become the world's most competitive economy by 2010. Particular priorities include improving the implementation and enforcement of Internal Market law, making the free movement of services into a practical reality, removing remaining obstacles to trade in goods and building genuinely European public procurement markets.

As the Commission says, "In a Union of 25, the onus will increasingly be on the member states to make the Internal Market work on a day to day basis. The Strategy calls on them to implement Internal Market laws promptly and correctly, inform their citizens and businesses of their rights, solve problems when they arise and refrain from adopting national laws which conflict with Internal Market principles. The Strategy proposes strengthening enforcement through closer co-operation between the Commission and member states, so that quick and effective solutions can be obtained without systematic recourse to infringement procedures."

The Commission also frankly acknowledges that after enlargement, enforcement of EU law may be even more difficult than at present. But that, it says, is why the Strategy suggests new ways of tackling the problem. For example, it calls on the member states to commit themselves to setting ambitious new targets at each Spring European Council. In addition, the Commission will issue a recommendation setting out best practices which should be applied consistently throughout the Union to ensure better and faster implementation (such as through the development of timetables for converting Directives into national law and regular discussions of implementation performance with national and regional parliaments).

The **Strategy** also suggests a new target for a reduction in the number of Internal Market infringements (covering cases where laws are implemented incorrectly or are not applied in practice) by 50% by 2006. At present, the Commission is dealing with nearly 2,000 Internal Market infringement cases. "Given that the increase in the number of member states after enlargement is likely to result in a heavier case load if the current trend is maintained, the Commission is also keen to develop alternatives to infringement procedures", the Commission says. So it is focusing increasingly on prevention rather than

cure, co-operation rather than confrontation, and problem solving rather than litigation, it claims.

The Internal Market has already created 2.5 million jobs and €877 billion of wealth since Europe's frontiers were dismantled at the end of 1992.

· For further information on the development of the Internal Market, see http://europa.eu.int/comm/internal_market/10years/index_en.htm

MIXED AFFILIATIONS FOR EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT OBSERVERS

The complex make-up of governing coalitions in most of the acceding states is reflected in the choices their nominated observers have made about which political group to sit with in the European Parliament. The same is true of opposition party nominees - and the complexity is further demonstrated by the fact that some nominees from government parties will be sitting in the same political group in the Parliament as their compatriots from opposition parties.

Overall, most observers have opted to go to the European People's Party-European Democrats (EPP-ED), the centre-right grouping which constitutes the largest group in the Parliament. The second-largest group, the Party of European Socialists, will host the second-largest contingent. And the third-largest grouping, the European Liberal and Democrat Reform group (ELDR), will receive the third-largest contingent. The European United Left and Nordic Green Left (EUL/NGL), the Union for a Europe of Nations group (EUN) and the Greens/European Free Alliance have picked up most of the rest - but there are also nine who have chosen to sit as independents. So far, the Group for a Europe of Democracies and Diversities has not picked up any observers.

By country, the breakdown of how the observers have chosen to align themselves is as follows:

- Among Cyprus' six observers, the two from the governing party have joined EPP-ED, while from the opposition observers, one has joined PES, one ELDR, and two EUL/NGL
- From the 24 Czech observers, seven of the twelve from governing parties will join PES, with the other five going to EPP-ED. Nine of the observers from opposition parties will also go to EPP-ED, with three joining EUL/NLG.
- Among Estonia's six observers, each of the three from the governing parties has joined a different group (one to EPP-ED, one to ELDR, and one to UEN), and each of the three from opposition parties has also joined a different group (one to EPP-ED, one to ELDR, and one to PES).
- Among Hungary's 24 observers, ten from the principal governing party have joined PES, and two from the coalition partner have joined ELDR. All twelve opposition party observers have joined the EPP-ED.
- Of Latvia's nine observers, three from governing parties have joined EPP-ED, one has joined UEN and one the Greens. Of the four from opposition parties, two have joined EPP-ED, one PES and one EUL/NGL.
- From among Lithuania's 13 observers, seven are from governing parties - and five have joined PES and two ELDR; four from opposition parties have joined EPP-ED, and two ELDR.
- Malta will not nominate its five observers to the EP until after May 24, when the Maltese Parliament is inaugurated after the elections of April 12.
- Among Poland's 54 observers, 27 from governing parties are joining PES. From among the opposition parties' observers, 17 are joining EPP-ED, seven are to sit as independents, and the Liga Polskich Rodzin (the League of Polish Families) has not yet provided the names - or intended affiliations - of the three observers it is entitled to.
- Slovakia's 14 observers include eight from governing parties, and seven of these will go to EPP-ED, with the other going to ELDR. Of

- the six from opposition parties, two will go to PES, two will sit as independents, and there will be one in EUL/NLG and one in UEN.
- Slovenia, with seven observers, will see three from governing parties going to ELDR, one to EPP-ED, and one to PES. The two opposition observers will both go to EPP-ED.

The full list of names and national parties can be seen on the EP website, at <http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade2?PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+PRESS+BI-20030506-1+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&LEVEL=2&NAV=S>

FIRST COUNCIL FOR ACCEDING STATES' MINISTERS

Ministers from the ten acceding states took part in their first formal Council meeting last week, in their new role as active observers, (which means they can speak but not vote). The occasion was the Education, Youth and Culture Council on May 5-6 in Brussels - the first Council meeting since the signature of the Accession Treaty last month.

The acceding states were represented as follows: Czech Republic: Petra Buzková, minister for education, youth and sport, and Petra Smolíková, deputy minister for culture; Estonia: Margus Rahuoja, deputy head of mission; Cyprus: Pefkios Georgiades, minister for education and culture; Latvia: Karlis Sadurskis, minister for education and science, and Daniels Pavluts, state secretary, ministry of culture; Lithuania: Algirdas Monkevicius, minister for education and science, and Roma Dovydeniene, minister for culture; Hungary: Bálint Magyar, minister for education; Malta: Louis Galea, minister for education; Poland: Tomasz Goban-Klas, state secretary, ministry of national education and sport; Slovakia: Martin Fronc, minister for education, and Rudolf Chmel, minister for culture; and Slovenia: Slavko Gaber, minister for education, science and sport, and Andreja Rihter, minister for culture.

Since the Accession Treaty was signed, the acceding states are being automatically informed of proposals, recommendations, communications or other initiatives within the Council of Ministers or its working parties.

Acceding states' ambassadors also took part for the first time last week in their first meeting of Coreper - the powerful committee of the EU15's permanent representatives to the EU, and which prepares EU Council meetings. For the coming two months, under the Greek EU Presidency, the acceding states will be represented in more than 30 meetings held either at ministerial or permanent representative level.

Enlargement news in brief

EU dialogue on trade with future member states

European **Trade Commissioner** Pascal Lamy met trade ministers from the thirteen acceding and candidate countries in Bucharest on May 9-10 to boost dialogue on trade, and to promote their co-operation on World Trade Organisation issues. This meeting has been an annual feature over recent years, and this was the last to take place before the accession to the EU of ten of these countries. Ministers reviewed progress in ongoing WTO negotiations under the Doha Development Agenda, in preparation for the Ministerial Meeting next September in Cancun, Mexico. Commissioner Lamy said: "We know that speaking with one voice on trade matters makes us stronger in the world trade scene. This meeting provides an excellent opportunity to send a strong signal of our determination to a successful outcome of the Doha Development Agenda." In their regular co-ordination meetings, the EU candidate countries have already expressed their conviction that the way to a successful outcome in Cancun and of the Round is for WTO members to ensure that progress is made on all issues under the

Doha Development Agenda. Ministers reiterated their commitment to seeing decisions taken in Cancun, in particular on improved market access for agricultural and non-agricultural goods, as well as on the methods for negotiating key rule-making issues. Ministers also reviewed the main developments in EU trade policy since they last met in Malta in May 2002, as well as trade aspects of EU enlargement - including areas where efforts still need to be made to ensure adequate alignment to EU legislation.

Prices are lower in new member states

The latest Internal Market Scoreboard, released by the European Commission on May 5, shows that prices in the ten acceding countries are on average almost 50% below the EU average. Most of the countries which are due to join the EU on May 1, 2004 have a very low price level compared to current member states: Malta comes the closest, at 87% of the EU average, followed by Cyprus, at 82%. Services are in general much less expensive, while consumer electronics prices are closer to the EU average. The countries of central and eastern Europe trail behind, with Slovenia at 66%, Poland at 55%, Latvia at 54%, Lithuania at 47%, Estonia, the Czech Republic and Hungary at 46%, and Slovakia at 41%. But the Commission expects that the enlargement will gradually lead to price convergence for many goods and service, as incomes increase. However, enlargement may also lead to some lower prices where more efficient economic structures in the new member states - for instance in telecommunications.

For full text, see

http://europa.eu.int/comm/internal_market/en/update/score/index.htm

"Solidarity in enlarged Europe" call from Committee of the Regions

The EU Committee of the Regions demanded "solidarity for the enlarged European Union" at the end of its conference in Leipzig on May 5-6. 500 representatives of cities and regions from across the present and future EU member states discussed the future of cohesion policy in the enlarged EU with political figures including Polish economy minister Jerzy Hausner, and the President of the German Bundesrat, Wolfgang Böhmer. European Regional Affairs Commissioner Michel Barnier told the meeting: "Before we can go further in developing a political Europe, we have to meet the underestimated challenge of making our institutions work with 25 member countries, and preserving the existing acquis. Our political project is essential and we must put the concept of solidarity right at the heart of it". German economy minister Wolfgang Clement insisted that cohesion policy - a vital complement to national policy - needs reform to meet the challenges of enlargement and the financing of structural policy. The concluding declaration from the meeting will be supported by local and regional leaders from the enlarged European Union before being formally handed to the Commission in July.

For background documents and speeches, see

http://europa.eu.int/comm/internal_market/en/update/score/

Romanian rural education gets new loan funding

The World Bank last week approved a \$60 million loan for a rural education project in Romania, aimed at helping rural students benefit from improved access to quality education. The plan is focused on boosting professional development of teachers in rural schools, and ensuring there are adequate facilities and basic teaching-learning materials. The project is a follow-up to earlier World Bank work in Romania. It will "increase the students' chances to continue their education at colleges or universities," according to Ana Maria Sandi, World Bank team leader for the project. The project will also help schools and local authorities develop their own school improvement plans and to improve school management, so as to encourage democratic school governance. According to the World Bank, Romania has attained better

access to basic education than countries in other regions at similar levels of income. Gross enrolment rates are high: in 2001, 95.8% of 7-14 year-olds had enrolled. However, public expenditure for education is low, averaging 3.2-3.7% of GDP during the second half of the 1990s, compared to 5.2% for the countries in the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development in 2000. So despite universal access to schooling, a significant fraction of children are not successfully completing basic education. High dropout rates are a serious concern, since children need a minimum of 5-6 years of schooling to obtain even modest benefits from education. As a result, Romania has performed poorly in international assessments. In 1995, it ranked 25th out of 38 countries participating in the Third International Mathematics and Science Study. And the scores were lower in rural areas.

Enlargement Mini-Briefs

- "The Council must function and succeed in expressing itself and in sharing, despite the enlargement, a European vision and European political strategies", said Giuliano Amato, vice-president of the Praesidium on the Convention of the Future of Europe, last week, reflecting on the changes needed to make the EU work effectively. But, he also insisted, the right balance must be found with the Commission - which is, he said, "the Union's motor - like it or not".
- The government of Latvia - a country with a fanatical interest in ice hockey - has reached a deal with ice hockey fans to show the symbols of the government's EU information campaign on their shirts. The aim is to gain more "Yes" votes in the EU accession referendum to be held on 20 September. For information on the Latvian government's EU information campaign, see <http://www.eib.gov.lv/en/birojs.php?docid=17>
- On 9 May - Europe Day - European bishops and the archbishop of Santiago de Compostela launched a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela to mark the unification of Europe next year. The pilgrimage will begin on 17 April, and will conclude in Santiago on 21 April. The initiative, supported by the heads of the three main EU institutions (Pat Cox, President of the European Parliament; Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission; and Bertie Ahern, the Irish Prime Minister, who will be in the rotating Presidency of the European Council in the first half of 2004), is intended to the accession to the EU of the ten new member states.
- Speaking at a conference on European-Baltic relations in Paris last week, Kristiina Ojuland, foreign minister of Estonia, said the role of national parliaments in the European Union must increase. She insisted on the need for institutional balance in the enlarged Europe: "Equal opportunities must be ensured for both large and small, both new and old member states," Ojuland said.
- The Vienna-based **South East Europe Media Organisation** wrote to Turkish-Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash to condemn the arrest of the Turkish-Cypriot journalist Shener Levent, publisher of the Avrupa-Afrika newspaper, who was stopped on May 4 when he tried to cross into Nicosia to meet journalists in the southern part of the island.
- Internal Market Commissioner Frits Bolkestein said last week that member states which do not implement Directives on time are "damaging the prospects of a smooth enlargement process".
- The Estonian ministry of foreign affairs is offering a give-day trip to Estonia for two as the prize in a quiz - in English - about Estonia. See <http://quiz.mfa.ee/>
- Bulgaria's deputy prime minister and economy minister Nikolay Vassilev said last week that the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development plans to invest €360 million in his country in 2003. The money will go into telecommunications, the energy and financial sectors, and credit lines for Bulgarian banks, he said. EBRD invested €180 million in Bulgaria last year, and Vassilev said that EBRD was satisfied with the results achieved by Bulgaria.

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.

(note: now that acceding states take part in Council meetings and EP and ESC plenaries, these will from now on be listed in this calendar)

Date	Event
May 2003	
Monday 12- Tuesday 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ EU Presidency Conference on quality and competitiveness in an enlarged Europe, Alexandroupolis
Monday 12- Thursday 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ European Parliament plenary session, with participation for the first time of observers from the acceding states, Strasbourg
Tuesday 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Seminar on Turkey's strategic future, CEPS, Brussels ■ EU Competitiveness (internal market, industry and research) Council will examine industrial policy and innovation in an enlarged Europe; Brussels ■ EU Council of Ministers working group on enlargement meets, Brussels ■ EU Council of Ministers working group on central Europe meets, Brussels
Thursday 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Franz Fischler, European Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries, meets the Czech agriculture minister, Jaroslav Palas. ■ Candidate countries take part in discussions in the EU Council of Ministers working group on the Convention, Brussels
Thursday 15 - Friday 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ International Road Transport Union conference on "EU enlargement - the next steps in the pan-European context", Budapest ■ Conference on foresight in the enlarged European Research and Innovation Area, Ioannina, Greece ■ Greek Presidency conference on "Building together the future knowledge based societies of an enlarged Europe", Ioannina
Friday 16 and Saturday 17th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Referendum in Slovakia on EU accession
Monday 19th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ General Affairs and External Relations Council, Brussels ■ European Economic and Monetary Affairs Commissioner Pedro Solbes visits the Czech Republic ■ EU Competitiveness (internal market, industry and research) Council, Brussels ■ European Commission President Romano Prodi visits Poland ■ European Economic and Monetary Affairs Commissioner Pedro Solbes visits the Czech Republic
Monday 19- Tuesday 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ EU General Affairs and External Relations Council, Brussels
Wednesday 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ European Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen meets Estonian Prime Minister Juhan Parts, Brussels
Thursday 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ European Commission President Romano Prodi meets Estonian Prime Minister Juhan Parts, Brussels

- Thursday 22th
- Friday 23th

 - European Budget Commissioner Michael Schreyer visits the Czech Republic
 - European Employment and Social Affairs Commissioner Anna Diamantopoulou visits Cyprus
 - European Research Commissioner Philippe Busquin visits Poland
 - Fabra Vallés, President of the European Court of Auditors, and Hervé, Secretary General, meet the Presidents of the Supreme Audit Institutions of the EU applicant states on administrative and organisational aspects of EU enlargement - with input from Slovenia on new solutions and developments on audit methodology and organisation, the Czech Republic on human resources, and Latvia on changes in the scope of audit and the way the EU funds need to be audited after accession; Cracow
- Friday 23th -
Saturday 24th

 - Franz Fischler, European Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries visits Slovenia
- Saturday 24th

 - Informal Culture Council, Thessaloniki
- Monday 26th -
Tuesday 27th

 - European Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen visits Poland
 - EU Agriculture and Fish Council
- Thursday 29th
- Friday 30th

 - European Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen visits the Czech Republic

June 2003

- Monday, 2nd
and Tuesday
3rd

 - EU Employment, Social Affairs, Health and Consumers Council, Luxembourg
- Tuesday 3rd

 - Informal EU Co-operation and Development Council, Alexandroupolis
 - Ecofin, Luxembourg
- Thursday, 5th
and Friday 6th

 - EU Justice and Home Affairs Council, Luxembourg
 - EU Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council, Luxembourg
- Friday 6th

 - Informal EU Public Administration Council, Rhodes
 - European Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen visits the Czech Republic
- Friday 6th and
Saturday 7th

 - Euroconstruct conference on the outlook for the European construction sector, focusing on the benefits of EU enlargement for the construction market across Europe and beyond; Budapest
- Saturday 7th -
Sunday 8th

 - **Referendum** in Poland on EU accession
- Wednesday
11th and
Thursday 12th

 - EU Agriculture and Fish Council, Luxembourg
- Thursday 12th
- Friday 13th

 - European Employment and Social Affairs Commissioner Anna Diamantopoulou visits Romania
- Friday 13th

 - EU Environment Council, Luxembourg
 - Erkki Liikanen, European Commissioner for Enterprise and the Information Society visits Slovenia
- Friday 13th -
Saturday 14th

 - **Referendum** in the Czech Republic on EU accession
- Tuesday 17th

 - General Affairs and External Relations Council, Luxembourg

- Erkki Liikanen, European Commissioner for Enterprise and the Information Society visits the Czech Republic
 - Tuesday 17th - Wednesday 18th ■ General Affairs and External Relations Council, Luxembourg
 - Friday 20th ■ European Council, Thessaloniki
 - Friday 20th - Saturday 21th ■ European Council, Thessalonika
 - Monday 23th ■ European Economic and Monetary Affairs Commissioner Pedro Solbes visits Slovakia
 - Monday 23th - Tuesday 24th ■ European Employment and Social Affairs Commissioner Anna Diamantopoulou visits Bulgaria
 - Tuesday 24th ■ General Affairs and External Relations Council, Luxembourg
 - Monday 30th ■ European Employment and Social Affairs Commissioner Anna Diamantopoulou visits Hungary
- July/August 2003**
- Presidential elections (elected by the parliament), Latvia
- September 2003**
- **Referendum** in Estonia on EU accession
 - **Referendum** in Latvia on EU accession
- 2004**
- May 2004**
- 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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