

IMPORTANT LEGAL NOTICE: The information on this site is subject to a [disclaimer](#) and a [copyright notice](#).

English ▾

EUROPA > European Commission > Enlargement > Library > Enlargement Weekly

Contact | Search

What's new? | Site map | Index | FAQ

<< HOME

ALL ABOUT...

Enlargement

Candidate countries

Negotiations

Financial assistance

Communication strategy

USEFUL INFORMATION

Who does what?

Public opinion

Events

Library

Research Bulletin

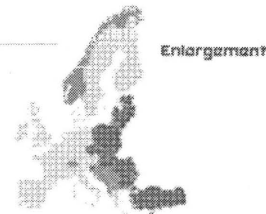
Links

>> [E.U in the world](#)

PRESS CORNER

Enlargement Weekly - 15 July 2003

- ▣ [Commission moves ahead with "wider Europe" policy](#)
- ▣ [Naples ministerial backs drive for enlarged transport networks](#)
- ▣ [Estonian doubts met by leaders' conviction](#)
- ▣ [Prodi encourages Croatia on its "journey towards EU membership"](#)
- ▣ [Enlargement news in brief](#)
- ▣ [Enlargement Mini-Briefs](#)
- ▣ [Enlargement agenda](#)



WEEKLY NEWS
Newsletter archive
[Subscribe](#)

441.215 A

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.

COMMISSION MOVES AHEAD WITH "WIDER EUROPE" POLICY

Following the Thessaloniki summit's backing for strengthened relations with the new neighbours of the enlarged EU, the Commission last week gave European Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen additional responsibilities, in charge of a "Wider Europe task force". This is to develop the political concept of a new neighbourhood policy.

The Commission's Communication on **Wider Europe** has already set out an ambitious vision for upgrading political and economic relations with the eastern and southern neighbours of the enlarged EU. In return for concrete progress that demonstrates shared values and put political, economic and institutional reforms into effect, all these neighbouring countries should be offered the prospect of a stake in the EU's internal market, as well as other forms of co-operation, the Commission recommended.

To keep up the momentum of this initiative, the new task force has a very specific agenda. It is to draw up action plans covering the countries and regions in eastern Europe and around the southern Mediterranean and make proposals for a new so-called "neighbourhood instrument" which will finance projects jointly involving the enlarged EU and neighbouring countries. And it will draw up plans for handling "Wider Europe" policy in the next Commission - from the end of next year.

Commissioner Verheugen will provide political guidance, keep the Commission informed of progress, and represent the Commission in discussions on Wider Europe in Council. He will also co-chair the EU High Level Group with Russia on the Common European Economic Space, while he and European External Relations Commissioner Chris Patten will assume joint responsibility for the Commission's Opinion on Croatia's application for membership.

The task force will be headed by Michael Leigh, Deputy Director General in DG External Relations - and until last year a Director in the Enlargement Directorate General - and the deputy head of the task force will be a Director from DG Enlargement. It will be composed of officials from both Directorate Generals.

NAPLES MINISTERIAL BACKS DRIVE FOR ENLARGED TRANSPORT NETWORKS

Following the van Miert recommendations on transport networks in the enlarged European Union (see previous issue of ENLARGEMENT WEEKLY), ministers from the 15 member states and the 13 future member states gave their backing to the concept at an informal Transport Council in Naples on July 4-5.

The meeting endorsed a "Naples charter", aimed at developing the European dimension of key transport infrastructure in an enlarged European union. It didn't answer all the outstanding questions on funding such a network, but it did recall "the importance of the trans-European transport network to interconnect the national networks, facilitate trade exchanges, link peripheral areas, overcome natural barriers, fill missing links and thus improve competitiveness and cohesion in the enlarged European Union."

Ministers also "noted with great interest" the recent Commission on the development of the Euro-Mediterranean transport network. "With the enlargement of the European Union, the Mediterranean Sea acquires a new role", they said.

Loyola de Palacio, European Commission vice-president in charge of transport, immediately welcomed the results of the informal Council: "This charter highlights the need of an important commitment in favour of the development of the Transeuropean transport network, which is a major condition of European competitiveness: it is high time we take the crucial decisions which will commit our future for the next twenty years", she said.

The Commission will now conduct a detailed impact assessment of the recommended programme and in the autumn it will propose revised guidelines for the development of the Transeuropean network.

ESTONIAN DOUBTS MET BY LEADERS' CONVICTION

Estonian enthusiasm for EU accession is finely balanced against scepticism, according to the latest polls there. With just two months to go until Estonia's EU binding accession referendum on September 14, 65% of Estonian citizens are decided to vote, 55% of whom would "Yes" and 45% against membership. The resistance to the EU is mainly among rural, lower-income, less educated sections of the population.

In a bid to muster support for accession, Estonian President Arnold Rüütel, chairman of the parliament (the Riigikogu) Ene Ergma, and prime minister Juhan Parts have issued a joint statement making clear their intention to vote "yes" in the referendum. And they "recommend all Estonian citizens do it."

To explain their conviction, the three leaders say that Estonia has been, is, and will always remain a part of Europe. To counter fears of cultural absorption, they state: "Working together with the European countries that share similar values with us, we will be able to protect and secure our independence, develop our language and culture. The Estonian language will become an official European Union language and this will secure the future of our mother tongue."

They also claim that joining the EU "will give new impetus to our economy thereby guaranteeing the increase in the wellbeing of every Estonian person and helping the Estonians' living standards reach the level of the wealthy European Union nations." And, as a European Union member state, "we will be able to protect the interests of Estonia both in Europe and in the world."

If Estonia does not join the EU, there will be negative consequences, the leaders urge. Remaining outside the EU means "a serious backlash for the economy", "a security vacuum", "narrowing the prospects for Estonian

language and culture", and "an end to the opportunity for Estonia to voice its opinions in Europe."

- For the latest poll analysis, see <http://www.gallup-europe.be/epm>
- For more on Estonia, see <http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/estonia/index.htm>

PRODI ENCOURAGES CROATIA ON ITS "JOURNEY TOWARDS EU MEMBERSHIP"

"A European Union that is enlarging and growing stronger" will, "in some years' time", be joined by Croatia, said **European Commission President Romano Prodi**, addressing the Croatian Parliament in Zagreb last week. The EU membership application that Croatia submitted in February year "reaffirmed Croatia's European vocation", and amounted to a declaration that "the long and trying period of war, division and nationalism is well and truly over", said Prodi.

"The journey will not always be easy", Prodi warned. "It means bringing legislation and implementation of new rules into line with the Union's standards. No sector of administrative life will remain unaffected by this process of adaptation to EU rules." He highlighted areas such as the reform of the judicial system, freedom of the media, respect for minority rights, the return of refugees, and co-operation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. But it will be worth it, he insisted: "All the countries that have gone through this strenuous and at times painful process have come out stronger, with a hugely enhanced capacity to meet the challenges of international life. This is true of all countries in the Union, from the founding members to those that are still to become full members". It is, said the Commission President, "a process of continual growth and constant adaptation."

And the preparations for accession will be a learning process for both sides, Prodi suggested. "We will discover more about each other... about each other's systems... Our fellow citizens will get to know each other better, to understand where we come from -- our different histories, cultures and traditions -- and how we have got where we are today." This is how, he said, member states "learn to live side by side in a Union of diversity and minorities, because no member state of the Union is large enough to take decisions alone without coordinating them with the others."

Europe's unification can never be regarded as complete until all the countries in the Balkan region are full members of the Union, Prodi insisted: "No wall, no barrier must divide the Balkans. That would be unthinkable". And although Croatia has an important role as the leader, "the process of enlargement for the Balkan countries is one and indivisible. And ultimately the region as a whole must be fully integrated into the Union."

Now Croatia will have to start responding to a comprehensive, wide-ranging Commission questionnaire containing over 2,500 questions on the political, economic and administrative situation in the country. The answers will form the basis for the Commission's opinion on the starting of accession negotiations.

- The Commission's opinions on the existing candidate countries were published in 1997. See http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/intro/ag2000_opinions.htm

Enlargement news in brief

Regions' key role in cohesion in an enlarged EU

When representatives from all of Europe's regions, including the current and acceding member states, met in Brussels last week, it was greeted as "highly meaningful" by European Commission President Romano Prodi, "because it makes enlargement so much more real and tangible". In his remarks to the Commission's conference on the regional role in cohesion and the Constitution, Prodi said enlargement is "the great achievement of this Commission, in particular because of the widespread diffidence and difficulties it involved." The regions contribute crucially to enriching the diversity of experience, languages and cultures that is the EU's great asset, he went on. "Diversity is one of Europe's distinctive features of which I am proudest." But the other challenge is to ensure institutional reform is in line with the needs of an enlarged EU. And within that framework, "We need to put more stress on the policy of citizenship that binds together all Europe's peoples, over and above their differences. This is becoming critical as 25 plus countries come together and seek to even out their differences within the enlarged Union."

Prodi urged attention to the goal of sustainable development based on growth, solidarity and the conservation of the EU's natural resources. And, he said, "The regions play a vital role in achieving that goal today. Regional and cohesion policy is very important, because we cannot have lasting, balanced growth unless all regions share in it." He told the representatives of the regions: "You have a big responsibility in this area because experience shows that the regions with the highest growth are those that have developed their administrative and management capacity to take full advantage of the resources available."

Opportunities and responsibilities in the enlarged EU

The opportunities and benefits an enlarged EU will bring are clear, but not enough people are aware of what EU enlargement means or the significant new opportunities it will soon create for the UK and the regions, the UK European affairs minister Denis MacShane said last week at a conference in Sheffield. "Economic benefits will come as we create more prosperous consumers, wanting more British goods and services", he predicted. And environmental benefits will increase as the candidates are all improving the cleanliness of their beaches, waterways and industrial plants in order to meet EU targets. There will also be benefits to security, as candidates will have to meet EU standards on border controls and work with existing member states on tackling illegal immigration, drug smuggling and people trafficking from further east. "None of this would be possible without their accession to the EU", he insisted. But, he went on, what we should be aiming to create in this new enlarged Europe is a society in which every individual, of whatever racial or ethnic origin, is able to fulfil his or her potential through enjoying equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities. All the new member states will have to enforce EU equal treatment standards - and "This is good news for minority communities and for people Europe-wide". MacShane emphasised: "We need to create a Europe in which all citizens, regardless of race or ethnic origin, will have equal access to the single market, including all goods and services and freedom of movement throughout Europe."

Landaburu moves on to external relations, Barbaso takes over

Eneko Landaburu, head of the European Commission's Enlargement Director General since it was set up in January 2000, is to become Director General for External Relations on September 1. Landaburu, who has been the chief negotiator in the accession talks - and a key figure in nailing down the agreement with the ten acceding states at the Copenhagen summit in December last year - is to be replaced by Fabrizio Barbaso, who becomes acting Director General for Enlargement. Barbaso, a 53-year-old official of Italian nationality. He worked as a lawyer and in business before he joined the Commission in 1976. He has been responsible for industrial affairs and for international relations, and was a member of the Cabinets of

Commissioners Giolitti and Ripa di Meana. He is currently Deputy Director General for Agriculture.

Who's going to be who in the new member states, too

There are changes underway at senior level in the new member states too: a number of new diplomats have arrived to take over at the head of their country's mission to the EU, and to stay on as permanent representative once their country becomes a full member states in May next year. The new Slovak ambassador is Miroslav Adamis, who took over last week from Juraj Migas. Already the Czech Republic has brought in Pavel Telicka - who was his country's chief accession negotiator and deputy foreign affairs minister - as its head of mission. Hungary has put Péter Balázs in as ambassador in Brussels since mid-April, when he took over from Endre Juhasz (who has returned to Budapest to become deputy foreign affairs minister, after years of playing his key dual role as head of mission in Brussels and chief negotiator for his country). However, Poland's current ambassador, Marek Grela, will stay on to become his country's permanent representative, as will Estonia's Väino Reinart and Cyprus' Theophilos V. Theophilou.

EBRD opens Kaliningrad office

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development has opened a business advisory service in Kaliningrad, the Russian enclave on the Baltic coast, bordering Lithuania and Poland. With technical co-operation funding of €500,000 from Finland, Luxembourg and Sweden, the programme will work with about 75 Kaliningrad entrepreneurs on self-improvement projects. It is part of a drive to develop the local economy by stimulating the growth of local small and medium-sized enterprises. Using local consultants and working directly with individual SMEs, the programme provides practical business advice on how to remove barriers to growth and development, as well as on how to make firms more efficient and competitive. The assistance will normally focus on short-term projects such as upgrading IT systems to improve financial controls, carrying out market research, and the introduction of systems for quality management and enterprise reorganisation. It will also offer local consultants a chance to prove their worth, further develop their skills, and position themselves to meet the future needs of Kaliningrad' business community, according to Natalia Makova, who will be heading the office.

Enlargement Mini-Briefs

- An informal ministerial meeting in Rome on July 11-12 brought together for the first time the ministries of internal market, industry and research from the EU member states, acceding countries and candidate countries. The aim was to re-launch European competitiveness, and the focus was on the main policies contributing to EU competitiveness, in particular the 2003-2006 agenda for internal market, industry, innovation and enterprise and the goal of devoting 3% of GDP to research by 2010.
- The German Bundestag ratified at the second and final reading the EU Accession Protocols. 580 Bundestag members participated in voting, of which 575 voted "for", 1 "against", and 4 abstained. The vote was subsequently confirmed on Friday 11th July by the Bundesrat.
- A delegation of the European Parliament's committee on agriculture and rural development visit Romania and Bulgaria on July 13-18. This will be a fact-finding mission to examine the readiness of these countries for accession to the EU. The MEPs taking part include committee chairman Joseph Daul, Lutz Goepel, Neil Parish, Hedwig Keppelhoff-Wiechert and Astrid Lulling.
- A declaration proposing concrete measures to accelerate the move to eGovernment was agreed by the EU and acceding countries last

- week. Ministers attending the second European conference on eGovernment from 30 countries - including also the European Free Trade Association - signed up to declaration, prepared by Lucio Stanca, Italian minister for innovation and technology.
- The European Investment Bank is to provide a loan of €40 million to Volksbank Hungary in Budapest, to support local small- and medium-scale projects in energy, environmental protection, health, education, urban renewal and social housing, industry, services and tourism. The final beneficiaries will typically be selected SMEs and private or public promoters. The loan, to the Hungarian subsidiary of Österreichische Volksbanken Group, will also help the development of term finance in Hungary, which is seen as an important element for progress of the country's financial system. The local bank will on-lend the funds at its own risk and terms to small and medium-scale investment projects meeting EIB's lending criteria. Since 1990, the EIB has lent some €2.7 billion in Hungary.
 - Access to affordable medical care in EU accession countries is being jeopardised by the European Commission's insistence on pushing through - before accession - EU legislation on pharmaceuticals, which will delay the availability of competitively priced generic medicines, according to Greg Perry, directorate general of the **European Generic Medicines Association**. He said last week: "It must be recognised that Eastern Europe has a major health gap with the current EU-15. Real spending per capita on healthcare in these countries is less than €400 per annum compared to over €1,600 in the EU-15." Access to affordable generic medicines, which represent up to 70% of all medicines dispensed to patients at only 30% of the total budget spend on medicines, are absolutely critical to healthcare delivery in the region, he went on, while discussing last month's decision by the EU Council of Ministers to extend current periods of data exclusivity for new medicines.
 - The Latvian parliament has confirmed the EU referendum date as 20 September. According to the resolution adopted by the Parliament, the referendum question will be phrased as follows: "Are you in favour of Latvia's membership in the European Union?" Meanwhile, the latest polls show that 57.1% of citizens support Latvia's accession to EU. If the referendum on Latvia's accession to the European Union had been held in June, 57.1% of citizens would have voted for accession, according to a survey conducted by the centre for public opinion surveys "Latvijas Fakti", with almost 24.5% voting against, and 18.4% remaining undecided.
 - It is difficult to find strong, independent, specialised agricultural organisations in Romania, and there is still no established relationship or agreement between the European umbrella group for agriculture, COPA-COGECA, and the Romanian agricultural sector. This is "a great problem, since it means that Romanian farmers miss out on information, exchanges and contacts with EU farmers", according to Staffan Nilsson, who has just prepared a report on Romanian agriculture for the European Economic and Social Committee.
 - It would be helpful for the EU to include a large Muslim country like Turkey, European Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen last week told the German newspaper Die Welt. The accession of Turkey to the EU would also make Europe more of a "middle-eastern power". And he called for "fairness" in dealing with Turkey.
 - The International Monetary Fund has given the go-ahead to a further tranche of \$26 million to be given to Bulgaria, following its third review of the implementation of the country's economic programme. The IMF has a two-year stand by agreement with Bulgaria, in which payments are conditional on meeting reform targets. The positive IMF decision is, said the Bulgarian government, a result of the achieved stable macroeconomic indicators, of the wise and flexible fiscal policy and the creation of the necessary prerequisites for a higher economic growth. But the IMF also made recommendations to Bulgaria bring pace back into structural reform and to further improve the business climate in order to promote investments and maintain competitiveness.

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
July 2003	
Monday 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Special session of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Cyprus to ratify the Accession Treaty
Tuesday 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Franz Fischler, European Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries meets the Romanian minister of agriculture Ilie Sarbu, Brussels ■ European Economic and Monetary Affairs Commissioner Pedro Solbes meets Slovenia's finance minister Dusan Mramór, Brussels ■ EU Council of Ministers working group on enlargement meets, Brussels ■ EU Council of Ministers working group on European Free Trade Association meets, Brussels
15-16 July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ecofin Council, Brussels
Wednesday 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ EU Council of Ministers working group on central and south east Europe meets, Brussels
Wednesday 16-Thursday 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ European Economic and Social Committee discusses industrial policy in the enlarged EU, and pan-European environmental cooperation; Brussels
July 17th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ David Byrne, European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection, visits Poland and meets agriculture minister Wojciech Olejniczak, health minister Leszek Sikorski, and the minister responsible for EU accession preparations, Danuta Hübner
Thursday 17-Friday 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ European Justice and Home Affairs Commissioner Antonio Vitorino takes part in a forum on enlargement and justice and home affairs, Salzburg
July 18th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ David Byrne, European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection, visits Hungary and meets agriculture minister Imre Németh, and the secretary of state for EU integration, Péter Gottfried. ■ EU Council of Ministers working group on enlargement meets, Brussels
18-20 July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Informal environment and energy Council, Montecatini
July 22th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ European Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen visits Hungary ■ General Affairs and External Relations Council, Brussels
22-23 July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Agriculture Council, Brussels
August 2003	
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.

TOP ↗