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Enlargement Weekly

25 March 2002

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.

Articles this week


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This Enlargement Weekly contains the updated version of the State of Play for the accession negotiations. To facilitate printing this table we provide the weekly in PDF format as weekly250302.pdf (66 Kb).

A WEEK OF AGRICULTURE

Agriculture - one of the most contentious of the EU enlargement topics, because of its political sensitivity and the volume of current EU spending on the sector - has been in the spotlight repeatedly over recent days. On March 18 EU agriculture ministers had their first in-depth exchange on the Commission's basic thinking on agriculture - and also discussed the question of food safety in the context of enlargement. The same day, the European Commission unveiled a new study, which suggested that candidates' farmers would be better off inside the EU, even if they did not receive 100% of direct payments immediately on accession. And on March 19, candidate country agriculture ministers joined their EU counterparts and the European Commission for a joint discussion on the subject, while the responsible EU Commissioners also faced questions in the European Parliament on how agriculture was to be financed. Non-governmental organisations have also been making the

voices heard on the way that agriculture should feature in the enlargement debate.

The discussion at the March 18 Agriculture Council in Brussels covered a questionnaire, which the Presidency had sent out to all the candidate countries, seeking views on how best to handle direct payments, rural development, and supply management, while respecting basic principles like the *acquis communautaire*, the efficient integration of up to 10 new member states into the CAP, compatibility of expenditure with the maximum levels set in Berlin, neutrality with respect to future financial expenditure and the CAP, a single CAP for all member states following transition, and compliance with the work plan. Ministers also discussed matters relating to direct payments, the simplified payment system, provisions relating to rural development, sales aspects and price reactions in agricultural products, and supply management and the safety of food products.

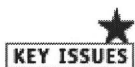
When European Agriculture Commissioner Franz Fischler addressed EU agriculture ministers at their Council, he made it clear that the Commission considered its January information note (with its focus on rural economy restructuring and a phased approach to direct farm aids) was a good basis, both for the draft common positions (DCPs) that the Commission is now preparing for the upcoming negotiations, and for the negotiations themselves. European Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen repeated to them his earlier-expressed view that the Commission's proposal is "the best possible offer for the candidate countries. And it is a good proposal when you consider that direct payments were not even calculated in the Berlin agreement and if you add the very substantial support foreseen for rural development which is the top priority for the modernisation of agriculture in the future member states. The Commission will now proceed with the draft common positions in the coming weeks".

Fischler also presented ministers with a new study suggesting that prospects for farmers in the candidate countries can be "significantly improved" without creating major market imbalance for an enlarged Union. Farmers - and the candidate countries themselves - will gain more by accepting the Commission's phased-in approach to EU aids than they will by staying out of the EU, or by demanding full EU agricultural assistance from the first day of accession, the study claims. "Being in is better than being out", commented Fischler. The study focuses particularly on the need for restructuring as a precondition, and says that EU aid should be directed towards that aim, rather than towards merely boosting farmers' incomes.

According to the Commission's report, even without any direct payments at all, the application of EU market measures - such as intervention - would itself be sufficient to generate a significant increase in farm income in 2007 for the candidate countries. The increase would be equal to 60% in the Czech Republic and 59% in Latvia. Others likely to see big rises are Estonia (+55%), Slovakia (+45%) and Poland (+35%). And for the eight central and eastern European candidate countries that are likely to join in 2004, the overall increase would be around 30%. Accession without direct payments would bring an increase in the income of a 20-hectare farm by 50% (from an amount worth roughly 1.2 wages to 1.8 wages after accession).

"Even under the most pessimistic restructuring scenarios, EU accession will have positive effects on the income of farmers in the candidate countries", says the Commission. This study shows, says the Commission, that a certain amount of direct payments is necessary to stabilise incomes. But a low level of direct aid support is enough. The Commission maintains that it is right to have proposed direct payments of 25%-30%-35% in 2004-2005-2006, rising to 100% by 2013. Immediately paying 100% of direct payments is not an option, the Commission insisted. In the short term it could more than double farmers' income in the candidate countries, but would create significant social distortions and inequalities and impede the restructuring that will have to be carried out sooner or later.

If they were not EU members in 2007, output (value of production) in the eight would increase only slightly in the crops sector (the highest growth would be in Slovakia (+6%), and Lithuania output would contract by 3%), and would continue to contract in the livestock sector in which all countries except for Slovenia and the Czech Republic would experience contraction in output, with the Baltic countries and Hungary particularly hard hit. Income would



contract by 4% on average against 2002 levels - although Slovenia the Czech Republic might escape an actual fall. Restructuring would remain inevitable, but would be far more painful outside the EU, without access to targeted rural development programmes and structural funds programmes.

In his remarks to the European Parliament on March 19, Fischler warned that there was danger that agricultural production "which had no future" might be set in stone by excessive direct subsidies. Emphasis should therefore be placed on rural development measures in order to help with restructuring.

Poland's deputy prime minister and minister of agriculture and rural development, Jarosław Kalinowski, was one of the most outspoken critics of the EU approach when the candidate countries were given an opportunity to express their views, at the ministerial meeting on March 19. "As presented on 30 January, the proposals concerning the conditions of Polish accession in the area of agriculture are very distant from those resulting from the acquis. They include primarily the income support measures for Polish agriculture, which are designed at much lower level than in the current EU 15 member states over a long 10 year transitional period. Furthermore they are in clear contradiction to the expectation that, right from the first year of accession Poland should fulfil almost all of the obligations resulting from the Common Agricultural Policy and Single Market participation". At the same time, he went on: "They assume the complete exposure to competition in the Single European Market, adoption of restrictive production quota limits combined with high cost of building the institutional capacity necessary to implement and manage the CAP".

Kalinowski, who is also the leading figure in the strongly rural-based Polish Peasants' Party, the junior coalition partner in the Polish government, said there was a need to avoid "distortion of competition on the single market from the very first day of accession", and more money: "An approach that would guarantee full utilisation of funds envisaged for the candidate countries under Agenda 2000 with the enlargement planned for ten candidates, and not six". He also demanded respect for the cohesion principle when setting the production quota limits and reference yields. "What the Commission was suggesting would mean that during the transitional period, farmers in the current EU member states would receive more public aid than farmers in the new member states: It would mean pushing Polish farmers out of the market not because of their lower efficiency, but because of higher financial support the competitors would receive from the EU budget."

"Equal terms of competing with the agricultural sector of the current EU 15 member states are of vital importance to Polish farmers. Accession without direct payments, or with payments set at a low level, but applicable in both Poland and the EU 15, and combined with the removal of production quota limits, which would be possible in such a case, would be, for Polish agriculture, a much better solution than the current proposals", said Kalinowski.

The Slovak position also emphasised competitiveness. Its goal, say Slovak officials, is to achieve a combination of factors - production quotas, direct payments, budget contribution and other compensations - that will secure the competitiveness of its agricultural sector, with an acceptable impact on the consumer and the budgetary position of Slovakia after accession.

Before the ministerial meetings, the European Environmental Bureau issued a call for EU and candidate country agriculture ministers to ensure that sustainability is protected in the future agricultural policy of an enlarged EU. In a letter to ministers, EEB said policy should promote a substantial shift to organic farming; minimise the harmful effects of intensive agriculture on the environment; and ensure that marginal land continues to be managed in a traditional way, in order to protect bio-diversity and the landscape. It urged a substantial increase in the budget share for rural development in the candidates, with the largest share earmarked for agriculture, environment, and aimed at promoting - and monitoring - environmentally effective practices. EEB also wants to see the EU support capacity building in local communities: "Sustainable rural development programmes cannot be realised without a 'bottom-up' approach, with the strong involvement of local players", it said. On direct payments, EEB argues they should be made available to the farmers in candidate countries, but with obligatory environmental conditions for



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all direct payments both for new and old member states.

At the March 18 Agriculture Council, EU ministers also stressed the importance of food safety being an element of the enlargement process where the EU should not take risks that might lead to lower food safety standards or to any risks for consumers. Candidate countries must therefore recognise that compliance with the Union's acquis on food safety is essential, they concluded. During the Agriculture Council, Commissioner David Byrne, responsible for Health and Consumer Protection, emphasised that "it is vitally important to ensure that the acquis is fully transposed into the national legislation of each candidate country and that administrative structures and procedures are strengthened and reformed in good time prior to accession".

CANDIDATES GIVE THEIR VIEWS AT BARCELONA

The Barcelona summit on March 15-16 won considerable applause because of the historic participation of so many candidate country ministers - never before had heads of state or government and foreign affairs ministers been invited to a working session of an EU summit and never before had economic affairs ministers been invited at all.

There were numerous expressions of satisfaction from the candidate countries at having been invited. "It was an excellent opportunity for us to present our views and I think we made the most of it", Slovak foreign minister Eduard Kukan said after the meeting. "Our colleagues from the current member states are de facto saying that they already consider us future members - this is definitely a psychological boost for us and perhaps a certain obligation for the EU to count us in". Slovak chief accession negotiator Jan Figel commented after the meeting: "We see that the Presidency is well under way in advancing the progress of EU deepening and enlarging and at the same time realising important tasks that EU is facing at present. [...] I can only welcome the fact that the Spanish Presidency invited the candidate countries too, so that we could actively participate in shaping the EU policy in the economic and social area."

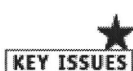
"The very fact that Bulgaria and the rest of the candidate countries were invited to this meeting and were given an opportunity to express their views on the Lisbon strategy is of special importance ... I think it would be positive if an exact day, week, month and year be fixed for the accession of the countries which will not be admitted in the first wave and that they be provided with appropriate economic assistance to catch up on their lag," said Bulgarian prime minister Simeon Saxe-Coburg Gotha.

Czech prime minister Milos Zeman said he was glad that representatives from EU candidate countries could this time "say more than in similar cases, or at least influence something that is close to the decision-making process". Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban said he was honoured and surprised to be asked to make the first contribution to the summit since it was being held on Hungary's national holiday. "The Spanish Prime Minister congratulated the citizens of Hungary on behalf of all the Prime ministers", he added.

"The Barcelona European Council was an important landmark in the process of European integration. In Lithuania's view, the involvement and direct participation of the candidate countries in the deliberations on key decisions and policies, which will have an important impact on the future shape of the Union, is a highly positive development", commented Lithuania's negotiator, Petras Austrevicius, after the meeting.

But participants from the candidate countries also took advantage of the opportunity to express their own views on concrete themes. Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus stressed during his intervention the importance of the work being done by Lithuania and Poland - along with other Baltic countries - in developing international transport corridors which will connect two formerly separated regions of northern and central Europe. He also confirmed that Lithuania would meet the commitments it had made on closing the Ignalina nuclear power plant, but insisted that Lithuania expects the EU to pledge long-term financial support for the closure.

Latvia's state secretary of the ministry of foreign affairs Maris Riekstins told the meeting



foreign ministers - on the external dimension of the Lisbon strategy - that the integration of developing and less developed countries into the international trade system needed to be addressed, and confirmed Latvia's active support for the decisions taken at the 2001 WTO Ministerial Conference in Doha by providing free access to Latvia's market for 49 less developed countries. He also predicted that involving EU candidate states in the discussion on the external dimension of the Lisbon strategy would contribute to the EU achievements facilitating peace and stability in the world.

ANOTHER ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS

The first round of accession negotiations under the Spanish Presidency took place in Brussels on March 21st, at the level of chief negotiators from the candidates and EU ambassadors. A table summarising the status of the candidates' negotiations appears below, based on the outcome of this meeting.

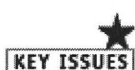
One of the highlights was that Poland closed the chapter on free movement of capital, as well as the chapter on taxation. European Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen greeted the news with satisfaction: "The provisional closure of the negotiations with Poland on free movement of capital represents a breakthrough. This chapter, which includes sensitive questions such as purchase of land and secondary residences, has been the most difficult politically and psychologically - in the negotiations with Poland so far. The European Union made great efforts to accommodate Poland's particular needs. This proves that the Union takes the sensitivities and particular concerns of the different candidate countries seriously."

Lithuania provisionally closed the taxation chapter, which means it has now closed 24 of the 29 chapters so far opened. Lithuania recently reviewed its position in the taxation chapter, reducing its requested transition period for application of the recently adopted EU regulation on excise duties for cigarettes by one year - from 31 December 2010 to 31 December 2009. "We are satisfied with the compromise solution. The arguments put forward by Lithuania concerning negative political, social and economic repercussions of radical alignment have been taken into the due account by the EU side. Lithuania will certainly implement the acquis in this particular area in accordance with the alignment plan presented to the EU", said Lithuania's negotiator, Petras Austrevicius. It has also undertaken to ensure that its exemption on the value added tax registration threshold for small and medium enterprises with an annual turnover below 100,000 Litass has no adverse impact on the EU own resources from VAT: the new Lithuanian law on value added tax, transposing relevant provisions of the EU acquis, was adopted on 5 March 2002. For excise duties, Lithuania retains a possibility to apply total or partial reductions of excise duty rate on mineral oils.

On the energy chapter, Lithuania has won agreement on everything except the nuclear energy issue. A transitional period for accumulation of compulsory oil stocks by 31 December 2002 was agreed, on the basis of a detailed implementation plan by which Lithuania will reach 45 days of oil stocks by 31 December 2002. Austrevicius also said he was confident that the justice and home affairs chapter would be ready for closure at the next round of negotiation in April. And "regional policy or institutions could be other immediate targets, depending on relevant EU decisions. We also hope to achieve maximum progress on the remaining chapters, including Energy, during the current Presidency".

Slovakia also closed taxation, bringing its total to 23. It obtained a five-year transitional period for cigarettes. Ján Figel, Slovakia's negotiator, said his main priority for this semester is to provisionally close all the left-overs from the Belgian Presidency, notably transport and justice and home affairs. He added that successful closure of the chapter on competition policy "will require special attention and efforts from both sides", particularly in relation to state aids and investment incentives, because "solutions should reflect the possible impact on the Slovak economy in terms of the position of main investors already established in Slovakia as well as our interest to increase the flow of FDI in the Slovak economy".

THE STATE OF PLAY OF ACCESSION NEGOTIATIONS



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Corrections introduced on 26 March after publishing the weekly are marked in RED.

Chapter / Country	BU	CY	CR	EE	HU	LT	LV	MT	PL	RO	SL	SK
1. Free movement of goods	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	X
2. Free movement for persons	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	X
3. Freedom to provide services	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	-	X	X
4. Free movement of capital	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	X
5. Company law	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
6. Competition policy	O	O	O	X	O	X	X	O	O	O	X	O
7. Agriculture	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	-	O	O
8. Fisheries	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	O	X	X	X
9. Transport policy	O	X	O	X	X	X	X	X	O	O	X	O
10. Taxation	O	O	X	O	X	X	O	O	X	O	X	X
11. Economic & monetary union	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	-	X	X
12. Statistics	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
13. Social	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	X
14. Energy	O	X	X	O	X	O	X	X	X	O	X	X
15. Industrial policy	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	-	X	X
16. Small & medium-sized undertakings	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
17. Science and research	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
18. Education &	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

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19. Telecomm & IT	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	X	O	X	X
20. Culture & audio-visual policy	X	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	X	O	X	X
21. Regional policy & co-ordination of structural instruments	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
22. Environment	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	O	X	X
23. Consumers and health protection	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
24. Cooperation in justice & home affairs	O	X	X	X	X	O	O	X	O	-	X	O
25. Customs union	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	O	X	X
26. External relations	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
27. Common foreign and security policy	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
28. Financial control	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	-	X	X
29. Financial and budgetary provisions	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	-	O	O
30. Institutions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
31. Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Closed (X)	14	24	24	24	24	24	23	21	22	9	26	23

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1. Chapters opened, but still subject to negotiation are marked (O). Chapters closed are marked (X). Chapters highlighted (X) were provisionally closed at the level of Deputies on 21st March - these provisional results will be confirmed at the Ministerial Conferences in June

Enlargement news in brief

Bolkestein's challenge to the candidates

"Taking forward the European project with more than 25 countries will not be an easy task said Frits Bolkestein, European Commissioner for the Internal Market and Taxation, in a address on "The Internal Market: facing the challenge of an enlarged EU", at Budapest Economics University on 22 March. "In order to make enlargement sustainable, all member states, both old and new, will be required to make compromises to ensure that EU policies are not diluted. EU integration should not be a damage limitation exercise: lowest common denominator solutions will not do." There had been good progress already, he went on to note. "In economic terms enlargement is already largely achieved. Economic integration with the candidate countries has advanced greatly under the Association Agreements. Free trade is a reality for all imports of manufactured goods, which enter free of customs duty without any quantitative restriction. Furthermore, companies from both sides already enjoy right of establishment and the same treatment as national companies." He was also gratified that "the whole candidate countries have indicated in the negotiations that they will be able to take over the full body of customs, tax and Internal Market law by the time of accession to the EU including the required administrative measures." And a good number of Internal Market-related chapters have been provisionally closed in negotiations with most candidate countries. "But be aware that this is not the end of the road", he warned. "It is the beginning. Commitments made in the context of closing chapters, for example to deliver legislation, have to be respected during the course of this year." And he asked bluntly: "Will candidates be ready to invest the necessary resources to get the shocking level of intellectual property piracy down? Are they committed to liberalising their public procurement markets and renouncing any kind of economic 'patriotism'? Will your authorities take the necessary measures to ensure full application of transparency and non-discrimination principles in public contracts for motorway construction for instance? Are candidate countries prepared to accept the consequences derived from the application of the 'single passport' and 'home country control' principles in the financial services sector?"

Baltic premiers discuss agriculture, Kaliningrad and NATO with Blair

The agriculture dimension of enlargement was high on the agenda when the Prime ministers of the three Baltic States met UK Prime Minister Tony Blair in London on March 14. Estonian Prime Minister Siim Kallas, speaking on behalf of his two colleagues, expressed concern over the European Commission's proposal for limited quotas and for a transition period before farmers receive full direct payments in 2013. He insisted that the priority for Baltic farmers was not direct payments or subsidies, but rather that they want to enjoy equal and fair competition with the EU member states' farmers as soon as possible. Lithuanian prime minister Algirdas Brazauskas, fresh from a meeting with Russian prime minister Mikhail Kasyanov and Polish prime minister Leszek Miller in Kaliningrad, pointed out that bringing the Schengen visa system into effect would mean Lithuania having to prepare about 1 million visas each year for Russian citizens crossing its territory to and from Kaliningrad, which, he said "could be problematic, expensive and ineffective". Blair agreed that solutions to the problems posed by Kaliningrad should be found before EU enlargement. Andris Berzins, the Latvian prime minister, also invited Blair to the "Vilnius 10" summit of NATO candidates on 5-7 July emphasising the importance of UK participation there, in view of London's support for boosting transatlantic ties.

Polish premier calls for broad support of integration with EU

Polish Prime Minister Leszek Miller said last week that if Poland fails to enter the European Union with the first group of newly admitted countries in 2004, it may never join. Speaking in Warsaw at the National Centre of European Education, he said that concluding negotiations this year was "ambitious but feasible" - but he insisted that the integration idea needs more advocates. This is not just a role for government, he said. "There is a need for the participation of all people who are aware of the fact that if Poland fails to make use of this opportunity it may miss it for good, because nobody knows when and whether the next round of negotiations will be held".



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Latvian foreign affairs minister at EU information event

On 18 March, Latvian minister of foreign affairs Indulis Berzins took part in an informative event on EU-Latvia relations in the run-up to closure of the accession negotiations and afterwards, with the heads of Latvia's local governments and senior Latvian business figures. The meeting covered integration in the EU and public attitudes to accession, as well as other Latvian foreign policy objectives, including accession to NATO, co-operation with Russia, and Latvia's WTO membership.

Candidates' capital cities want closer co-operation

Candidate countries should co-operate more closely with their capital cities in providing information about the EU, said city leaders taking part in the conference on capital cities and enlargement, in Prague in mid-March. Cities have a key role in this process, they said. The governments of the candidate countries ought to be passing more information about EU accession on to capital cities, and providing financial and methodological support for the work of informing citizens. Without adequate co-operation between governments, public and non-governmental organisations, mass media and educational institutions, the EU will not be accurately perceived, they said.

Boosting the generic drugs industry in the candidate countries

A new organisation to help the integration of drug firms from the candidate countries is to be launched on 28 March in Brussels. A meeting of senior representatives of EU institutions and chief executive officers of pharmaceutical companies will discuss the legislative and practical challenges facing central and eastern European pharmaceutical companies when the countries join the EU. The meeting will include John Bowis, the Euro-MP who is drafting a report on enlargement and health for the Parliament's environment, public health and consumer affairs committee, and Graham Lewis, senior vice president of IMS Health. Douglas B. Andrews, the CEO of the new organisation, known as Consilient Health, said "Pharmaceutical companies from central and eastern Europe will have considerable obstacles to overcome on joining the EU but, with help, could achieve an enormous and exciting potential in providing the newly-enlarged EU with cheaper generic pharmaceutical products. The organisation is aiming to "steer the companies through the complicated licensing and standardisation processes whilst negotiating at political level to pave the way for new business opportunities on their behalf."

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The Latvian case proves differentiation works, says Kesteris

"Latvia is a good example that the principles of differentiation and catch-up have actually worked in practice", Latvia's chief accession negotiator Andris Kesteris told the European Parliament's foreign affairs committee in Brussels on 20 March. He said that during the Spanish presidency he expects to conclude negotiations on the chapters on justice and home affairs, telecommunications and information technologies, taxation and regional policy and structural instruments, and to close discussions in the agriculture chapter on veterinary and phyto-sanitary matters and common market organisations. But he went on to underline that the Commission's planned approach to agriculture "does not provide a clear answer to the question of ensuring the proper functioning of the common market for agricultural products: the current and new member states are entitled to different sets and intensities of agricultural support instruments. Moreover, the Commission's proposal does not answer the question of whether the agricultural producers in the current and new member states will have an equal basis for competition and development opportunities as far as the direct payments and the volume of production quotas are concerned."

Prodi tells Maltese to believe in themselves

The President of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, called on the Maltese to believe in themselves and to understand that small countries are not considered to be on the periphery.

of Europe, and that their authority does not spring from their size but from their wisdom and knowledge. In a television interview Prodi explained that "Europe is a union of minorities because within the EU there is no one who dictates, there is no country that dominates and the regulations we are constructing are all intended to strengthen this line of thought". He said that loyalty towards Europe, loyalty towards country and loyalty towards a region are not contradictory. The road of the EU, said Prodi, "will radically change the concept of nation, not in a way that the nation would be violated, because the EU is built on the principle of nation state, but because an evolution will be taking place in which the modern citizen develops more than one loyalty".

Austria "will win from enlargement"

Austria will be better off by € 200 million a year if EU enlargement goes ahead in 2003, according to a new study from the Economic Research Institute (WIFO) in Vienna. But, the study says, if enlargement is delayed, Austria could be the biggest loser, with an annual cost of lost opportunities of more than € 700 million - including 1,300 jobs and a rise in inflation of 0.33% a year, because 33% of Austria's external trade is with its EU candidate neighbours.

Ignalina still a hot issue

Lithuania's Ignalina nuclear power plant remains an outstanding issue in the energy chapter of negotiations, Petras Austrevicius, Lithuania's chief negotiator, told the European Parliament committee on foreign affairs on 21 March. He evoked the need for "solidarity" in the discussions: Lithuania wants support for the closure costs in return for early closure. "Additional budgetary allocations by a separate line in the European Union's budget should be established for the purpose of covering long-term closure costs in order to avoid spending an essential part of EU structural fund assistance on the closure of the Ignalina nuclear power plant alone", he urged. The European Commission's suggestion - in its January informative note on financing enlargement - of additional aid was welcome, but needed to be defined and put into concrete form, insisted Austrevicius.

Commission needs staff for enlargement

Enlargement is the first of the three priorities that the European Commission has identified for next year, Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission, told the plenary session of the European Parliament in Brussels on 20 March, in a debate on plans for 2003. "From the time it took up office this Commission has not spared its efforts to make enlargement a success. Enlargement remains a fundamental priority for the second half of my mandate and from this point of view 2003 will be a pivotal year. We must be ready to welcome into the Commission our colleagues from the new Member States and tackle the fresh challenge awaiting us", he said. But he went on to remind Parliament that "this Commission will not undertake anything without having the necessary resources", and "at this point we cannot properly prepare for enlargement without more staff." So the Commission has included in its annual policy strategy for 2003 a request for 500 non-permanent staff - "a rock-bottom figure still well below what we need to carry out enlargement-related tasks". The current ceiling for administrative expenses "does not allow sufficient resources to prepare for enlargement. So the Commission considers it essential to use the flexibility instrument for this purpose. It is not enough, but it is all we have", he said.

First EuroBarometer report on candidate countries now public

The full results of the first EuroBarometer opinion survey carried out in the 13 candidate countries for EU membership have been published by the European Commission. The survey conducted in October 2001, covered issues such as satisfaction with life, economic prospects, national pride and European identity, language skills, media habits and lifestyle issues as well as the EU enlargement process itself. The full report is available on the web site of Directorate General for Enlargement at <http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/opinion/index.htm>. Commenting on the results, EU Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen said: "The full report confirms our initial assessment of the results we received in December: the citizens of the candidate



countries, in their overwhelming majority, are looking forward to their country joining the E and to enjoying the benefits membership can bring to their daily lives. As the negotiations c accession proceed, the Commission will step up its efforts, via our communication strategy c enlargement, to provide answers to the many questions they still have. This is being matche by an increasing effort to explain to the citizens of our existing member states wh enlargement means for them and for their countries and regions."

Agenda

Date	Event
March	
Monday 25th	EU Economic and Financial Committee meets with candidate countries' representatives, Brussels EU Council of Ministers working group on central Europe meets, Brussels European Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen receives the Turkish foreign affairs minister Ismail Cem, Brussels
Tuesday 26th	European Commission Delegation to the Czech Republic: seminar on EU communication strategy and the transfer of integration know-how to the Czech business community, Prague European Parliament committee on foreign affairs, human rights, common security and defence policy holds discussion with Jan Trzuszczynski, chief negotiator of Poland, on Poland's accession to the EU
Tuesday 26th-Wednesday 27th	Economic and Social Committee delegation visits Cyprus
Wednesday 27th	EU Council of Ministers working group on enlargement meets, Brussels
April	
Details tbc	European Commission organises a "BEST" Conference in Slovenia, to assist candidate countries in boosting enterprise culture.
Sunday 7 th	First round of Hungarian parliamentary elections
Tuesday 9th-Wednesday 10th	Economic and Social Committee delegation visits Latvia and Lithuania
Wednesday 10th	Mr Volonik, President of the Supreme Audit Institution of the Czech Republic visits the European Court of Auditors, Luxembourg
Thursday 11 th	European Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen visits the

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Friday 12 th	Czech Republic
Friday 12 th - Sunday 14 th	European Commission Vice President for Transport and Energy Loyola de Palacio visits Bulgaria
Tuesday 16 th	European Research Commissioner Philippe Busquin visits Slovakia
Thursday 18 th and Friday 19 th	European Internal Market Commissioner Frits Bolkestein visits Poland
Friday 19 th and Monday 22 nd	Negotiating session at the level of deputies (EU ambassadors and candidates' negotiators), Brussels.
Sunday 21 st	Second round of Hungarian parliamentary elections
Monday 22 nd	European Research Commissioner Philippe Busquin visits Slovenia
Thursday 25 th - Friday 26 th	European Internal Market Commissioner Frits Bolkestein visits the Czech Republic Meeting of the liaison officers of the supreme audit institutions of the candidate countries, Malta
May	
Tuesday 7 th	Meeting of the EU-Hungary Joint Consultative Committee, Budapest,
Monday 13 th - Tuesday 14 th	Meeting of the EU-Poland Joint Consultative Committee, Poland.
Wednesday 22 nd -Friday 24 th	Meeting of the EU-Romania Joint Consultative Committee, Alexandria
Thursday 23 rd	Meeting of the EU-Slovak Republic Joint Consultative Committee
Friday 31 st	Negotiating session at the level of deputies (EU ambassadors and candidates' negotiators), Brussels.
June	
Monday 3 rd	Possible negotiating session at the level of deputies (EU ambassadors and candidates' negotiators), Brussels.
Monday 10 th	General Affairs Council will review the state of the enlargement process, Luxembourg

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Monday 10th - Tuesday 11th	Ministerial negotiating session with foreign ministers of the EU and of the candidate countries, Luxembourg
Friday 14th and Saturday 15th	Czech Republic parliamentary elections
Friday 21st, Saturday 22nd	Seville European Council: European Commission reports on the implementation of the plan of action for strengthening the candidates' institutions.
Monday 24th	Informal meeting of education ministers from the EU and the candidate countries, Bratislava
Wednesday 26th	EU/European Economic Area (EEA) consultative committee will discuss the implications of EU enlargement for the future of the EEA at its annual meeting, Egilsstadir, Iceland
July	
Monday 1st	Start of Danish Presidency of the EU: the aim is to close negotiations before the end of the year with those countries that are ready. The Laeken summit noted that, if progress is maintained in the negotiations and in the reforms, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Slovenia could be ready.
Thursday 11th- Friday 12th	Economic and Social Committee Joint Consultative Committee with Turkey, Erzerum
Autumn	
Details tbc	Estonian local elections
Details tbc	Slovak parliamentary elections (probably September)
Details tbc	Slovenia presidential and local elections
October	
Details tbc	Hungary local elections
Details tbc	Latvia parliamentary elections
Details tbc	Poland regional elections
24th and 25th	Brussels European Council: enlargement will be on the agenda and the Commission's regular reports on the candidate countries may be available.
November	
Details tbc	Ecofin Council discusses the report on economic dialogue with the candidate countries



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Details tbc	Lithuania presidential elections
Thursday 28th and Friday 29th	Meeting of the presidents of the supreme audit institutions of the member states and the candidate countries, Luxembourg
December	
Thursday 12th, Friday 13th	Copenhagen European Council - enlargement may be on the agenda again, taking account of the aim of concluding accession negotiations by the end of the year.

Archives

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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