

More unity and more diversity

The European Union's biggest enlargement



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A historic event

By its very nature, the European Union is destined to grow. It is open to all democratic European states that are able to take on the economic challenges of membership and to implement its rules. The enlargement of 2004, which brings in eight countries from central and eastern Europe and the Mediterranean islands of Malta and Cyprus, is the biggest and most ambitious in the EU's history. The arrival of the newcomers raises the number of members from 15 to 25, with a total population of over 450 million. This is more than the combined population of the United States and Russia.

All 10 newcomers are joining because they see their natural place within the EU and they share its goals of freedom, democracy and prosperity. Enlargement finally heals the rift in Europe opened up by World War II, the East-West confrontation and the Cold War.

The 10 – Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia – are poorer than the EU average, and one of the first priorities of the enlarged Union is to raise their living standards as fast as possible towards those of the other EU countries.

Immediately after the collapse of communism around 1990, the European Union supported the democratisation process in the former communist countries and provided technical and financial assistance as they introduced market economies. By the mid-1990s, trade agreements were in place, giving cen-

tral and eastern Europeans preferential access to EU markets for most of their exports. Similar agreements with Cyprus and Malta date from the 1970s. The actual entry negotiations to agree the terms whereby the new EU countries assume the rights and responsibilities of membership took place between 1998 and 2002. The entry date was set for 1 May 2004.

It is already clear that this enlargement will change the way the Union is run as the newcomers take their places alongside existing member states in the EU's key institutions. Enlargement on this scale will also bring about changes in the EU's external relations, particularly with the countries to the east and south who are its new neighbours.

Czech glass competes in EU markets. Even before joining, the new member countries could export their products to the EU under privileged conditions.



© EPA Photo/CTK/Julius Fejlsk

The dynamics of enlargement

Deepening European integration and widening EU membership have gone hand-in-hand since the foundation of the Union. Each successive enlargement – this is the fifth since 1973 – has brought benefits to Europe's citizens and new opportunities for its businesses. In between times, the EU has created a customs union, a single market and a single currency. As a result, people, goods, services and money move around within the EU as freely as within one country. These freedoms are being extended to the 10 newcomers. The inclusion of 25 countries in the EU's zone of peace, prosperity and stability will enhance the security of all its citizens.

Two other countries – Bulgaria and Romania – who applied for membership along with the 10 have not yet completed their preparations for accession and are still negotiating with the EU. The target date for them to join the EU is 2007. Negotiations with the third candidate, Turkey, can begin if it meets the so-called 'political criteria' regarding human rights, democracy, rule of law as well as respect for and protection of minorities.

The process of integrating the new members takes place at several levels. First, they take part from day one in the institutional structures which run the Union. Their ministers take decisions along with their peers in the Council of the European Union. They send their elected representatives to the European Parliament, and each nominates a member of the European Commission. Their languages become official languages of the Union.

At a second level, their integration is driven by access to EU programmes and funds whereby the Union's limited resources are shared out in a way that gives priority to the most needy. In the past, this has enabled the EU to provide special support to its poorest countries and regions. For the period from entry in May 2004 to the end of 2006, a total of €21.75 billion from the EU's structural funds and cohesion fund has been set aside for the new members. They also benefit from support for their farmers under the Common Agricultural Policy, but on a gradual basis.

EU membership includes obligations and duties as well as rights. During their entry negotiations, each new member adopted the EU's existing legislation (the '*acquis communautaire*'). But it is not enough to adopt EU rules; they must also be implemented. The European Commission has been closely monitoring this process so far and will continue to do so.

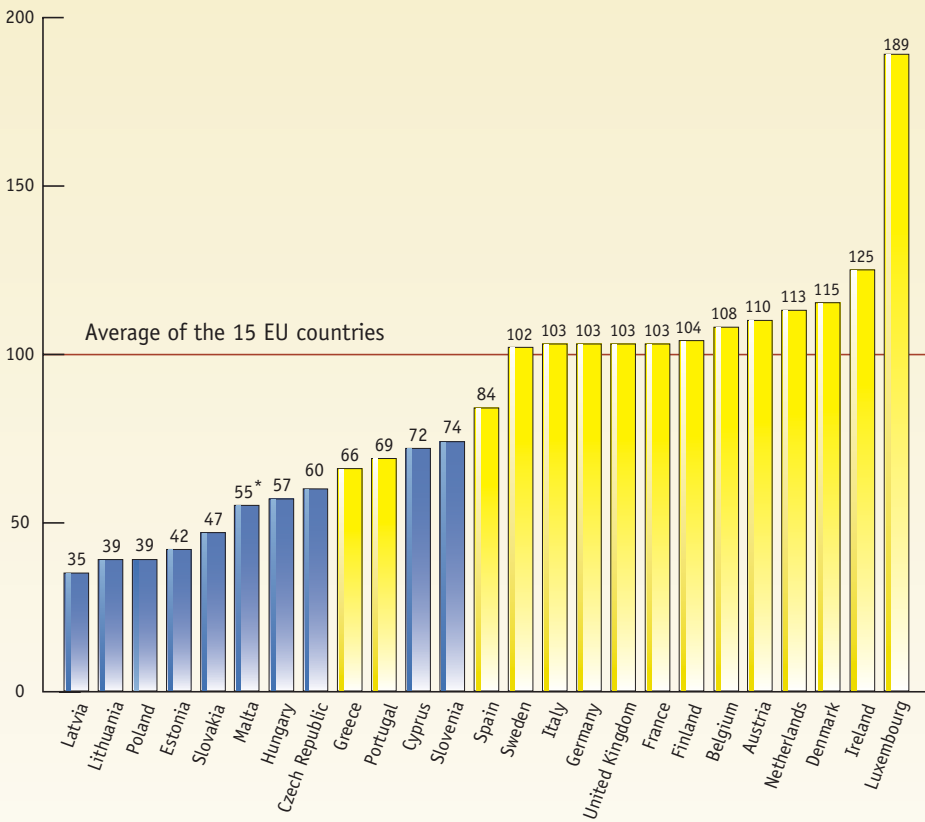
The newcomers have a particularly important part to play in protecting EU citizens' rights to free movement and personal security.

Internal mobility and security within the EU are ensured in part by effective controls at the Union's external frontiers. Because of their geographic position, newcomers are taking over responsibility for controlling large stretches of these borders. To support them in this task, the EU has provided considerable funding for modern equipment and personnel training and will continue to do so until 2006.

As with previous enlargements, a safeguard mechanism protects individual member states against unforeseen dif-

ferences arising as a result of enlargement. The mechanism runs out three years after the new members join.

GDP per inhabitant: The spread of wealth



The level of Gross Domestic Product for the new EU members varies from 35% of the EU average for Latvia to 74% for Slovenia.

Index for Gross Domestic Product per inhabitant, measured in Purchasing Power Standards, 2002.

Source: Eurostat. *1999

Poland

Capital: Warsaw

Population: 38.2 million

Area: 313 000 sq. kms

Poland is by far the largest of the new member countries. The Polish state reaches back more than 1 000 years and has been in the mainstream of Europe's cultural and political development since the Middle Ages. In the 16th century, it was one of the most powerful countries in Europe.

Famous names from Poland include the astronomer Copernicus, the composer Chopin, the scientist Maria Curie-Sklodowska and Pope John Paul II.

Poland has one of Europe's largest farming populations. It is rich in mineral resources, including coal, several metals and rock salt. The Wieliczka salt mine, which dates from the 13th century, is among the world's oldest industrial enterprises still in continuous operation. Cracow, the country's third largest city, is home to one of the oldest universities in Europe, founded in 1364.



More than one quarter of farmers in the enlarged EU are Polish.

The economics of enlargement

The impact of enlargement on the EU's economy will be significant, as a bigger and more integrated market boosts economic growth both for newcomers and the current member states.

The European Commission estimates that joining the Union will add up to one per cent extra growth each year for the newcomers during the first 10 years of membership. The amount of extra growth in the other members, though lower, is still significant. The enlarged single market will provide competitive EU firms with greater business opportunities, create jobs and raise tax revenues for governments to spend on priority programmes. The experience of Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain shows how membership can boost growth in previously weaker economies.

The integration of the new member states is already well under way. The trade agreements designed to pave the way for accession removed most restrictions such as tariffs and quotas on their exports to the Union, which has become by far their biggest trading partner. Two-way trade has expanded, with the EU posting an €18 billion surplus in 2002. The newcomers have benefited from a wave of investment by EU companies in the automotive, retail, banking, energy and telecommunications sectors.

For example, Volkswagen of Germany has taken over the Skoda vehicle group in the Czech Republic; France Telecom is a shareholder in the Polish operator

TPSA; retail chains based mainly in France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Belgium and the Netherlands have set up supermarkets all across central and eastern Europe.

The new member states will remain important clients for investment from the other EU countries as well as for their exports of capital and consumer goods. Some of these investments and exports will be used to improve the infrastructure of the new member states, and to develop east-west trunk routes in addition to the existing north-south ones. The combined injection of new technologies, know-how and financial investment has already boosted productivity as old industries restructure and new ones gain ground.

Business in the enlarged EU will also benefit from improvements in the legal and regulatory environment in the new member states as they adapt their laws to those of the Union and apply its standards of patent and design protection. The removal of these 'non-tariff barriers' to trade between old and new members will increase the size of the single market by more than 75 million consumers. The resulting economies of scale will stimulate trade and further improve the competitive position of EU firms. The enlarged EU will also create bigger opportunities for its manufacturers and exporters in the global market.

The Baltic states

Estonia

Capital: Tallinn

Population: 1.4 million

Area: 45 000 sq. kms

Estonia is the most northerly of the Baltic states. The country is mostly flat with 1 400 lakes and 1 521 islands. Much of the land is farmed or forested. Tallinn is one of the best-preserved medieval cities in Europe, and tourism accounts for 15% of Estonian GDP. Like Latvia, Estonia has an important Russian minority. Estonia has one of the highest rates of internet connections of any country in the world.

Latvia

Capital: Riga

Population: 2.3 million

Area: 65 000 sq. kms

Latvia is a low-lying country with large forests that supply timber for the construction and paper industries. Latvia also produces many consumer goods, textiles and machine tools. The environment is rich in wildlife, and fishing is a major activity. Ethnically, the population is 56% Latvian and 30% Russian. More than one third of the population lives in Riga. Founded in 1201, Riga is the largest city in the Baltic states with a population of more than 800 000.

Lithuania

Capital: Vilnius

Population: 3.5 million

Area: 65 000 sq. kms

Lithuania, the largest of the Baltic states, has dozens of lakes, rivers and forests and 99 kilometres of sandy seashore. About 80% of the population are Lithuanians, 11% Polish and 7% Russian. Vilnius is a picturesque city on the banks of the River Neris. Lithuania was once the centre of an empire that ran from the Baltic to the Black Sea. The Lithuanian village of Bernotai is the geographic centre of Europe.

The enlargement process

It is not surprising that the journey from the overthrow of communism in 1989 to Union membership took 15 years. The adjustment process to meet the entry conditions can be tough and long.

It took the United Kingdom two attempts before it joined in 1973, along with Denmark and Ireland. Greece became a member in 1981, within six years of applying, whereas Spain and Portugal joined in 1986 after 10 years of effort. The entry of Austria, Finland and Sweden in 1995 was a relatively rapid affair.

The new member states from central and eastern Europe had a long way to travel. They lacked the established political, economic and legal structures that would allow them rapidly to join the Union. It was therefore clear that the accession process would take time, although EU leaders began sending positive political signals encouraging their membership shortly after the

Berlin Wall fell in 1989. But helping the candidates move to a market economy and a stable pluralist democracy were the first priorities. The actual entry negotiations began later, in March 1998.

Support for economic and democratic reform in the candidate countries in preparation for EU entry began in 1989 when the Union created the so-called Phare programme initially for the benefit of Poland and Hungary, the first countries to free themselves from communism. Phare was subsequently joined by two other programmes: ISPA, which supports the development of infrastructure, and Sapard, which helps the newcomers modernise their agriculture. Together these programmes provide €3 billion a year to help adapt to European Union membership. Under a separate deal for pre-accession assistance, Cyprus and Malta were jointly allocated €95 million for the 2000-2004 period.



© EPA Photo/NIPA, Timur Nisametdinov

You are never far from an internet café in Estonia.

A process known as 'twinning' was launched in 1998 to help candidate countries to develop modern and efficient administrations on a par with those of member states. It identified and supported projects whereby administrations and semi-public bodies could learn how to manage key sectors of EU policy (agriculture, the environment, regional development, justice and home affairs). Part of the process involved seconding an expert from an existing EU country to each project for a period of at least 12 months as adviser and mentor to the local officials in charge. A total of 683 twinning projects were carried out between 1998 and 2002.

As a condition of membership, new members must adopt all the existing EU rules and regulations. How was this to be done? What exceptional or transitional measures, if any, would be allowed? This was decided in detail

during entry negotiations between the EU and each individual candidate. The negotiations, which ran from 1998 until the end of 2002, also settled the difficult question of the newcomers' access to EU funds. It is clear that they will receive more money from the EU budget than they pay into it.

The *acquis communautaire*, containing more than 80 000 pages of EU law, was divided into 31 chapters to facilitate the negotiations. These were no mere formality. Although by 2002 it was clear that 10 candidates would pass the test, another two – Bulgaria and Romania – were judged to be not yet ready for membership, and a fresh target date of 2007 was set for their entry.

Membership criteria

As early as June 1993, a summit of EU leaders set a very succinct list of criteria for the newcomers to meet. By the time they join, new members must have:

- stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the protection of minorities;
- a functioning market economy that can cope with competitive pressures and market forces within the Union;
- the ability to take on the obligations of membership, including support for the aims of the Union. The new members must have a public administration capable of applying and managing EU laws in practice.

Meeting the challenges

Member states both old and new will benefit significantly from the EU's expansion from 15 to 25. Nevertheless, major change is always a cause for concern and the enlargement of the European Union is no exception. The experience of previous EU enlargements has shown that old and new integrate smoothly and that (if they arise) short-term strains are soon offset by long-term gains.

Because of its sheer size, this enlargement raised extra questions for people on both sides about the impact on their lives and jobs. Not surprisingly, worries on one side sometimes mirrored those on the other.

Thus some people in the west worried that their jobs would be threatened, if new EU citizens, willing to work for relatively low wages, moved westwards in large numbers. Or what if firms transferred production to cheaper plants in the new member states? Others were

concerned about environmental standards or the possibility of more illegal immigrants entering the EU via the new member states.

In the new EU countries, people sometimes questioned whether their economies could withstand competition from western firms or whether their farmers could survive against counterparts bolstered by years of support from the EU's agricultural policy. Others worried that richer EU citizens would push up the price of property.

On a political level, some asked whether such a big enlargement might slow European integration or dilute current achievements. Others in the new member countries wondered whether they might be surrendering sovereignty to 'Brussels' so soon after shaking off the Soviet yoke.

These questions were all addressed, and answered, during the accession negotiations and in practical action taken during that period. Moreover, enlargement in itself will create further economic growth and prosperity, and will thus sustain the positive trends. And for the short term, transitional measures have been agreed to deal with any unexpected negative effects on the economy of any member state.

Despite their pollution problems, new member states have been able to maintain delicate ecosystems.



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Countries that were already members before 2004 can, for a period of up to seven years, freely decide when workers from the new member states can enter their job markets. Experience with previous enlargements has shown that, in any event, relatively few workers emigrate.

Efforts are in hand to reinforce border controls by new entrants along the Union's new eastern frontier. It is in their own interests to apply them strictly as they themselves become end-destinations for illegal immigration, or criminals, from outside – not just transit points to other EU countries. In addition, internal frontiers between the newcomers and other Union members will only be removed once external frontier protection is deemed to be adequate, based on a unanimous decision of the member states.

Matching EU environmental standards can be a long task. But already the ISPA programme devotes one billion euro a year to transport and environmental projects in the new member states.

Although their farmers will receive full-scale EU support only after a ten-year transitional period, they will stand to receive Union funding worth about €10 billion in the period 2004-2006 and will therefore be the first direct beneficiaries of accession.

The new member countries who feared a massive sell-off of their agricultural land and property will for several years be free to decide whether or not to allow sales to citizens from other EU

countries. Generally the period agreed is seven years, while for Poland it was extended to 12 years.

The experience of small countries within the EU suggests that the concern of newcomers about losing sovereignty and independence to Brussels is misplaced. Each of them, starting with tiny Luxembourg, has a greater influence in European (and world) affairs than it would on its own, thanks

The Danube, seen here in Budapest, is a vital artery for the enlarged EU.

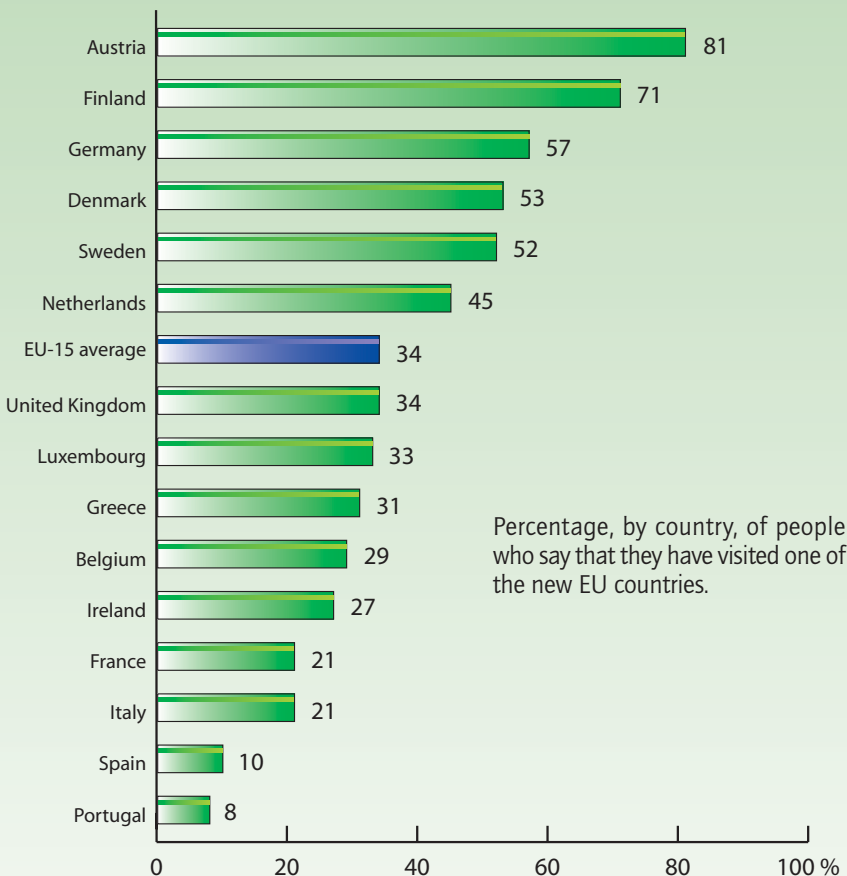


© EPA Photo/Alain Kishenack

to the institutional framework of the EU, which is specifically designed to give each country, and its citizens, their say. The EU treaties also allow a certain number of member states to move

ahead as a group in a particular policy area, leaving the other countries to catch up later, in a process known as 'enhanced cooperation'.

Get to know your neighbours



On the eve of enlargement, only a third of EU citizens had ever visited one of the new member states. The unknown is often a source of concern. Meeting the neighbours will show they are more like us than we imagined – with similar hopes and aspirations.

Source: Eurobarometer – EB Flash 140 of March 2003.

Adopting the euro

The membership terms agreed by the new entrant states include a commitment to adopt the euro and accept the disciplines of economic and monetary union (EMU). But the process of joining the euro area is not automatic and no timetable has been set. As was the case with the older member states, each will join according to its own timetable. None has an 'opt-out' from the euro as obtained by the United Kingdom and Denmark.

Before being able to adopt the single currency, new members will have to meet normal EMU requirements on budget deficits, debt, inflation, long-term interest rates and exchange rate stability. This means that, in practice, the first of them cannot adopt the euro before 2006 at the earliest. A number of newcomers have signalled their intention to adopt the euro as rapidly as possible.

There are considerable pros and cons to be weighed up by the newcomers before they adopt the euro and individual strategies may differ according to perceived national interests.

On the one hand, early membership will ensure monetary stability, encourage inward investment and probably lead to lower interest rates for businesses and consumers. On the other hand, keeping a currency out for a while will provide enough flexibility to manage exchange rates, deficits and inflation in a way which may deliver faster growth than might be possible under the disciplines of EMU (in particular the Stability and Growth Pact).



© EPA Photo/NIIPA/Timur Nisematdinov

Just a few of the EU's 75 million new consumers.

Central Europe

Czech Republic

Capital: Prague
 Population: 10.2 million
 Area: 79 000 sq. kms

The Czech lands were part of the Habsburg Empire for 300 years. They became independent as part of Czechoslovakia in 1919. The country was one of the 10 most industrialised states before World War II. It split peacefully into the Czech and Slovak Republics in 1993.

Prague is more than 1 000 years old with a wealth of historic architecture of different styles. It is one of the most visited cities in Europe, second only to Paris for the number of foreign tourists. The Czech Republic produces world-famous beer as well as mineral water from more than 900 natural springs (a world record).

Slovakia

Capital: Bratislava
 Population: 5.4 million
 Area: 49 000 sq. kms

A former part of the Habsburg Empire, Slovakia became a separate independent state only after its split with the Czech Republic in 1993. At that time, it had to build a central administration, and a separate monetary, banking and tax system from scratch.

Bratislava, which lies on the Danube, has a rich heritage of medieval and baroque architecture. The fortifications on many hilltops bear witness to Slovakia's long history of invasions. Ethnically, the population is 86% Slovak, with Hungarians as the largest minority.

Hungary

Capital: Budapest
 Population: 10.1 million
 Area: 93 000 sq. kms

The two halves of the capital city, Buda and Pest, straddle the Danube, several hundred kilometres downstream from Bratislava. The city is rich in history and culture and famed for its curative springs.

The west of the country is hilly, the east flat and fertile. Lake Balaton, a popular tourist destination, is the largest lake in central Europe.

Hungary is a highly musical country whose traditional folk music inspired its great composers such as Ferenc (Franz) Liszt, Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály. The Hungarian language is unlike any other European language and is only distantly related to Finnish and Estonian.

Slovenia

Capital: Ljubljana

Population: 2.0 million

Area: 20 000 sq. kms

Slovenia was the first of the republics to split off from the former Yugoslavia and to seek its future at the heart of Europe.

The picture-book capital was founded in Roman times. Its architecture bears many traces of its links with the Habsburg Empire and with Italy. Its university, with more than 20 000 students, contributes to the city's cultural life.

Tourist attractions include the famous caves at Postojna, with their prehistoric aquatic animals.



Putting on the style at a fashion show in Slovakia.

New member states and key issues

The new member states have a number of things in common. They are all poorer than the average of the other 15 EU countries. Save for Malta and Cyprus they have recently emerged



© Photo European Parliament

Politicians from the new member countries can speak their own language when they address the European Parliament.

from 40 years of communist dictatorship. They have limited resources, yet major needs for infrastructure projects and social programmes. While they will, therefore, wish to obtain as much of the EU's structural funds as possible, their absorption capacity may be limited. They have no former colonies, but strong interests in their eastern neighbours, and can be expected to be very keen to strengthen the Union's policies towards eastern European countries.

Does this mean that the enlarged Union will develop an internal east-west fault line on certain policy issues? This is unlikely. In the 15-nation Union, some policy debates divided the members along north-south lines or between big and small countries. But

such coalitions were specific to individual issues, without any permanent character. In general, small countries may have a keener need than some bigger members to protect their interests via the EU institutional structure. But on most policy items, big and small members find each other on both sides of the argument.

The fact that all the newcomers with the exception of Poland are small countries was partly responsible for launching the process to draw up a new constitutional treaty for the enlarged Union. One of the prime concerns of the drafters of the treaty was to facilitate the decision-taking processes in a Union of 25, or even more, members.

In terms of sheer numbers, decision-taking is anyway more cumbersome with 25 ministerial delegations attending each meeting of the Council of the European Union. The linguistic complexity increases as nine more official languages are added to the previous 11. But a Slovenian member of the European Parliament or minister sitting in the Council are just as entitled to speak in the language of the people he or she represents as one from Germany, France or the United Kingdom. The extra costs of interpretation are marginal: the equivalent of one cup of coffee per Union citizen per year preserves EU multi-lingualism, says the European Commission.

The neighbours and the wider world

A European Union of 25 members will in many respects resemble the Union of 15, but it will also be quite different. For one thing, its relations with its neighbours and the wider world will evolve.

As an economic actor, the Union will acquire an even greater weight. It must adjust to the new situation, and so must its trading partners. On the one

hand, they too can benefit from the extension of the single market that will allow them to invest in or export to the new members in the same way as they do to the rest of the EU. On the other hand, the existence of a bigger home market will generate economies of scale and other advantages for European firms competing with them on world markets.

The Mediterranean islands

Malta

Capital: Valletta
Population: 0.4 million
Area: 315 sq. kms

Malta is a melting pot of civilisations with a history stretching back thousands of years. Its fortifications bear witness to its sometimes turbulent past. Tourism is important in Malta, but other services are booming too, particularly financial services and transportation. The local language, Maltese, is close to Arabic, but English is also an official language.

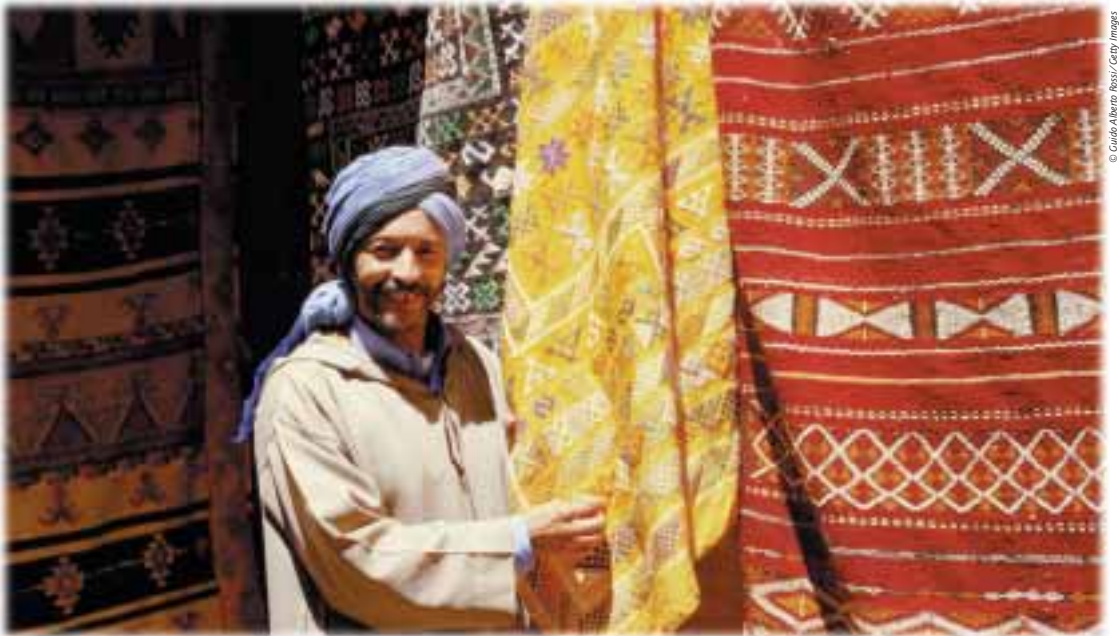
Cyprus

Capital: Nicosia
Population: 0.8 million
Area: 9 000 sq. kms

Cyprus has long been a crossroads between Europe, Asia and Africa, and still has many traces of civilisations from down the ages – Roman, Byzantine and Venetian. The island's main economic activities are tourism, merchant shipping, clothing and pharmaceutical exports, and business services.



Valletta's fortifications bear witness to Malta's long history.



© Guido Alberto Rossi/Getty Images

The enlarged Union will boost trade with its neighbours.

Post-enlargement relations need to be looked at on at least three levels:

- the impact on European countries that are present or potential candidates for membership;
- the neighbouring countries at the EU's new external borders (Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova to the east, and the Mediterranean countries to the south);
- the rest of the world: the impact of a large EU-centred trading area on relations with its trading partners in a globalised world economy.

The line-up of candidates

At the first level, the objective is to ensure that Bulgaria and Romania, the current candidate countries who were not yet ready for accession in 2004, can enter the European Union as early as 2007.

Then there is Turkey, the remaining current candidate for membership. Entry negotiations have not yet begun, mainly because Turkey does not yet meet the political criteria. But EU leaders confirmed in 1999 that Turkey "is a candidate state destined to join the Union on the basis of the same criteria as applied to the other candidates". A review of whether Turkey has met the political criteria takes place at the end of 2004, and, if it is positive, negotiations will begin without delay thereafter.

Turkey has a standard of living which is about 25% of the EU average – roughly the same as Bulgaria and Romania. Its population of about 70 million people would make it the biggest EU country after Germany.

Beyond these candidates, there are other potential future members. These are the countries of the western Balkans region, consisting of Albania and the former Yugoslav countries of Croatia, Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia-Montenegro. The EU needs to help these countries to step up their preparations for potential EU membership. In February 2003, Croatia submitted an application for EU membership, which is being examined by the European Commission.

Neighbours as a ring of friends

A second group comprises the countries that will have direct sea or land borders with the EU of 25 but have no current prospect of EU membership. An EU summit in 2002 agreed that the EU should avoid drawing new dividing lines and act to promote stability and prosperity on both sides of its new borders. A policy paper from the European Commission in March 2003 entitled *Wider Europe* puts forward an ambitious vision.

The idea is to offer the neighbours to the east and in the Mediterranean region increasingly close ties with the EU in return for progress towards respect for democratic values and the implementation of political, economic and institutional reforms. The range of advantages offered by the EU would include:

- participation in the EU's internal market and regulatory structures;
- preferential trading relations and market opening;
- easier cross-border cooperation, and more people-to-people exchanges in science, culture and education;
- closer cooperation against common security threats and in conflict prevention;
- integration into EU transport, energy and telecoms networks, research programmes, etc;
- new instruments for investment promotion and protection;
- increased financial assistance.

Bigger role in the world

As a result of enlargement, the EU will have a greater share of world trade, especially when it is forging closer links with its eastern and southern neighbours. Enlargement will also make the European Union an even bigger player in the World Trade Organisation and other trade-related international bodies. The Union and its trading partners will need to take account of this new status.

What of the future?

Part of the enlargement agenda for the next 10 years has already been written. Help for Bulgaria and Romania so that they can join by 2007 is top of the list. Then come the review of Turkey's position and the follow-up to Croatia's application. The rest of the western Balkan countries will be encouraged to follow their respective road maps towards eventual EU membership.

Less clear, however, will be the impact of enlargement on the only remaining possible candidates for membership – the countries of the European Free

Trade Association (EFTA), namely Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. Norway twice completed membership negotiations but these were twice rejected in a national referendum. Switzerland applied for membership in 1992 but has chosen not to pursue its application. Will they review their position? And if so, when?

What will Union membership be in 2012? One thing is sure. The 2004 enlargement may have been the biggest, but it is not the last enlargement of the European Union.

Further reading



If you want to find out more about enlargement visit the European Commission's website at europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement

European Commission

More unity and more diversity
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Europe on the move series

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The 2004 enlargement of the European Union finally heals the rift opened up by the East–West confrontation and the Cold War. The newcomers from central and eastern Europe, together with Malta and Cyprus, are legitimate members whose peoples share the same goals of democracy, liberty and prosperity as other EU citizens. They have met the strict criteria for joining the Union. Enlargement will stimulate economic growth in EU countries both new and old – for the benefit of all.

The integration process is already well under way. Even before formal accession, the EU opened its markets to exports from the newcomers, who also benefited from the Union's assistance programmes. Enlargement has raised concerns among citizens from existing and new member states, but there are adequate responses to meet them. An EU of 25 will create new relationships with its neighbours and the wider world.

Other information on the European Union



Information in all the official languages of the European Union is available on the Internet. You can access it through the Europa server: europa.eu.int



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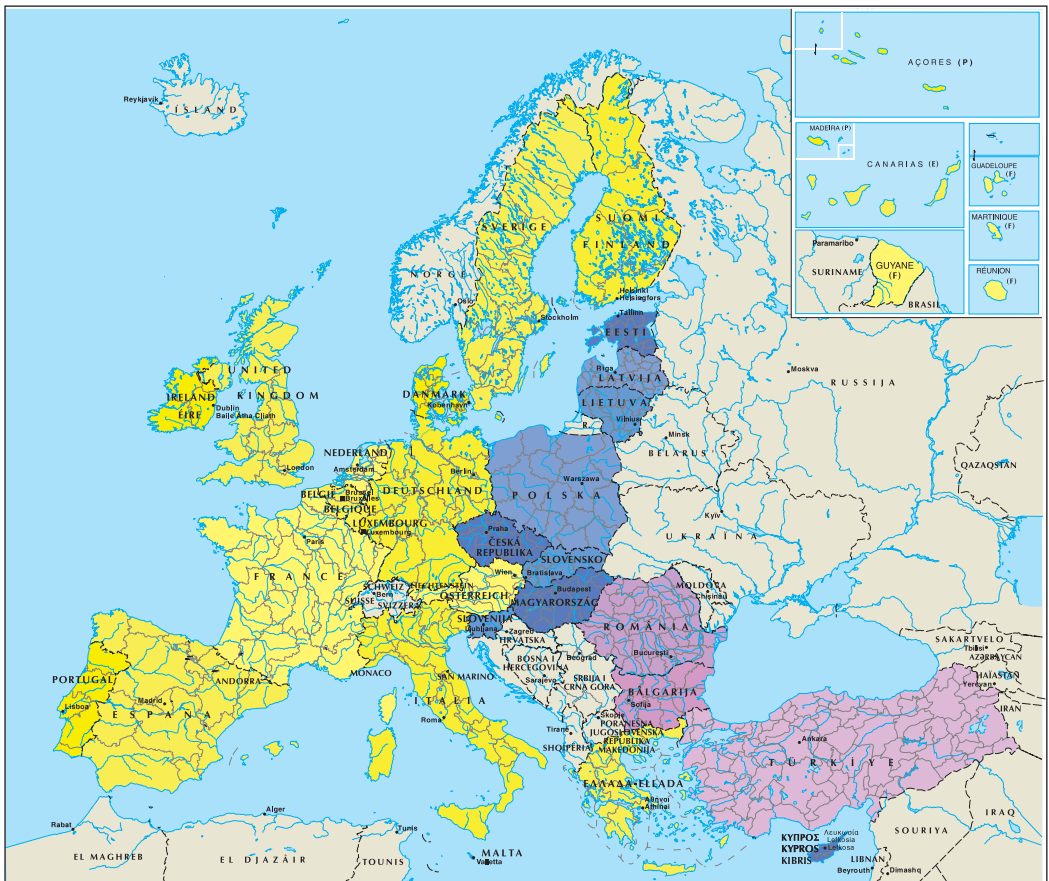
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The European Union



- Member states of the European Union
- Member states from May 2004
- Candidate countries

EN



The 2004 enlargement of the European Union finally heals the rift opened up by the East–West confrontation and the Cold War. The newcomers from central and eastern Europe, together with Malta and Cyprus, are legitimate members whose peoples share the

same goals of democracy, liberty and prosperity as other EU citizens. They have met the strict criteria for joining the Union. Enlargement will stimulate economic growth in EU countries both new and old – for the benefit of all.

The integration process is already well under way. Even before formal accession, the EU opened its markets to exports from the newcomers, who also benefited from the Union's assistance programmes. Enlargement has raised concerns among citizens from existing and new member states, but there are adequate responses to meet them. An EU of 25 will create new relationships with its neighbours and the wider world.



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