



European Commission

Understanding Enlargement

The European Union's enlargement policy





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During half a century, the European Union has pursued ever-deeper integration while taking in new members. Most of the time the two processes took place in parallel. As a consequence, today's EU with 27 Member States and a population of close to 500 million people is much safer, more prosperous, stronger and more influential than the original European Economic Community of 50 years ago, with its 6 members and population of less than 200 million.

A growing membership has been part of the development of European integration right from the start. The debate about enlargement is as old as the EU itself. Every time the EU accepts new members it changes. Thinking about what we might become forces us to think about what we are now, and what we want to be in the future.


The 2004/2007 enlargement to countries from Central and Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean has proven a great success for the EU, although it has been used as a scapegoat for all sorts of social and economic problems in Europe. Actually, this last round of enlargement has expanded the area of peace, stability and democracy on our continent and

strengthened the European economy by enlarging markets, creating new business opportunities and bringing fast-growing economies into the single market. Now the EU is the world's largest economic zone. The wider internal market and new economic opportunities have increased Europe's prosperity and competitiveness.

The democratically elected governments of the EU Member States, coming together in the European Council, have agreed that future enlargements will concern the countries already working towards EU membership – Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia including Kosovo (under UN Security Council Resolution 1244) and Turkey. Membership will only happen when each one of them meets the necessary requirements. A gradual and carefully managed enlargement process creates a win-win situation for all countries concerned.

The purpose of this brochure is to explain in a clear and concise way what the EU's enlargement policy is about and how it is put into practice. It aims to give the reader an overview of how the EU has grown since its creation, where it stands today after having undergone its most important round of enlargement in 2004/2007, and what the perspective of accepting new members in the future is. Above all, this publication provides a response to frequently asked questions like, "Who decides?" and "How does an aspirant become a Member State?"

I hope that reading this brochure will be both informative and easy, and that it will provide answers to your questions about EU enlargement.


Olli Rehn

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A great deal of additional information on the European Union is available on the Internet. It can be accessed on the Europa server (<http://europa.eu/>).

Information about the enlargement of the European Union can be found on the web site of the Directorate General for Enlargement (<http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/>).

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From 6 to 27 Member States

On 25 March 1957, leaders of six countries still recovering from the ravages of war met in Rome for the official signature of the Treaties that eventually gave birth to what we call today the European Union. It was an unprecedented step, one that required much courage and vision: countries that had fought each other for centuries agreed to decide together on essential questions for their common future. They also agreed to transfer some of their power to a new level, to what we now simply refer to as the European Union.

The EU has been a historic success. It has brought the longest period of peace and unparalleled levels of prosperity to its peoples. What began as a club of 6 is now home to 27 countries with a population of almost 500 million people.

Integrating new members was part of the plan from the beginning. The founding fathers were confident enough of their idea to leave the door open for other European countries to join. Helping countries that have the vocation to become members has been the EU's response to changes in the European political landscape in the past five decades, promoting economic growth and solidarity, and strengthening democratic forces in countries emerging from dictatorship.

The European Union has brought huge advantages to all Europeans – stability, prosperity, democracy, human rights, fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law. These are not just abstract principles. They have transformed the quality of life for millions of people. The benefits of the single market for consumers in the EU are obvious: economic growth and job creation, safer products, lower prices, and greater choice in crucial sectors like telecommunications, banking and air travel, to name but a few.

But the EU is not just about wealth and improved standards of living. The EU is a community of values. We are a family of democratic European countries committed to working together for peace and freedom, prosperity and social justice. And we defend these values. We seek to foster cooperation among the peoples of Europe, while respecting and preserving our diversity.



Successive enlargements

The organisation founded in 1957 which is now known as the European Union, originally had six members: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands.

In 1973, Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom became Member States. Greece joined in 1981, and Spain and Portugal followed in 1986. Austria, Finland and Sweden joined in 1995.

In 2004, in the EU's biggest-ever enlargement, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia became Member States.

In January 2007, Bulgaria and Romania joined, bringing the EU's membership up to 27.



Who can join?

The requirements for joining the EU have been spelled out with increasing precision over the course of its evolution, to provide clarity for its own citizens and guidance to countries wishing to join.

Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union states that any European country may apply for membership if it respects the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law.

A country can only become a member if it fulfils all criteria for accession as first defined by the European Council in Copenhagen in 1993, and reinforced in 1995. These criteria are:

1. *Political*: stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities.
2. *Economic*: a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competition and market forces in the EU.
3. The *capacity to take on the obligations* of membership, including adherence to the objectives of political, economic and monetary union.
4. *Adoption of the entire body of European legislation* and its effective implementation through appropriate administrative and judicial structures.

In addition, the EU must be able to integrate new members, so it reserves the right to decide when it is ready to accept them.

Some European countries have yet to convert their European perspective into EU membership. Croatia, Turkey and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia are now candidates; with Croatia and Turkey the EU has already begun negotiations towards membership. The other Western Balkan countries – Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia (including Kosovo under UN Security Council Resolution 1244) – are also working towards fulfilling the requirements to move ahead. The speed at which each country advances depends solely on its own progress towards our common goals.

Article 6(1), Treaty of the European Union

“The Union is founded on the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law, principles which are common to the Member States.”

Article 49 of the Treaty of the European Union

“Any European State which respects the principles set out in Article 6(1) may apply to become a member of the Union”.



Where do we stand?

Turkey and Croatia were recognised by the EU as candidates. Accession negotiations with both countries were opened on 3 October 2005.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was recognised as a candidate in December 2005.

In 2003, the Heads of State and Government of the EU adopted the “Thessaloniki Agenda” reconfirming the perspective of future membership to all the countries of the Western Balkans. Consequently, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, including Kosovo under United Nations Security Council resolution 1244, are considered as potential candidate countries.



Who decides?

New members are admitted with unanimous consent of the democratically elected governments of the EU Member States, coming together either in the Council of Ministers or in the European Council.

Long before any accession negotiations start, all agreements between the EU and any potential member – such as Stabilisation and Association Agreements with the countries of the Western Balkans or the Customs Union with Turkey – are reached only after the EU Member States have given their approval.

When a country applies to join the EU, the Member States' governments, represented in the Council, decide – after receiving an opinion from the Commission – whether or not to accept the application and recognise the country as a candidate. Similarly, the Member States themselves de-

cide when and on what terms to open and to close accession negotiations with candidates on each policy area. And it is the Member States who decide when accession negotiations are satisfactorily completed.

The draft Accession Treaty has to be agreed upon and signed by every Member State and the candidate concerned before the latter becomes an acceding country. It then has to be ratified by each Member State and the acceding country according to their own constitutionally established procedures. The European Parliament, whose members are elected directly by the EU's citizens, also has to give its consent.



The enlargement process at work: meeting the requirements

The EU enlargement policy ensures a well managed accession process, so that enlargement brings benefits simultaneously to the EU and to the countries joining. Candidates have to demonstrate that they will be able to fully play their part as members – something that requires wide support among their citizens, as well as political and technical compliance with the EU's standards and norms. Throughout the process, from application to accession, the EU operates comprehensive stage-by-stage approval procedures.

A country that wishes to join the EU submits an application for membership to the Council, where the governments of all the EU Member States are represented. The Council asks the Commission to assess the applicant's ability to meet the conditions for membership. If the Commission delivers a positive opinion, and the Council unanimously agrees on a negotiating mandate, negotiations are formally opened between the candidate and all the Member States.

To help the countries prepare for future membership, a pre-accession strategy is designed. Key elements of this strategy include agreements that set out rights and obligations (like the Stabilisation and Association Agreements in the case of the Western Balkan countries), as well as special co-operation mechanisms like Accession or European Partnerships, setting out concrete reform objectives to be achieved by the candidates and potential candidates. EU financial assistance is another important aspect of pre-accession strategies.

Accession negotiations

First, it is important to underline that the term "negotiation" can be misleading. Accession negotiations focus on the conditions and timing of the candidate's adoption, implementation and application of EU rules – some 90,000 pages of them. And these rules (also known as "acquis", French for "that which has been agreed") are not negotiable. For candidates, it is essentially a matter of agreeing on how and when to adopt and implement EU rules and procedures. For the EU, it is important to obtain guarantees on the date and effectiveness of each candidate's implementation of the rules.

Negotiations are conducted *individually* with each candidate, and the pace depends on each country's progress in meeting the requirements. Candidates consequently have an incentive to implement necessary reforms rapidly and effectively. Some of these reforms require considerable and sometimes difficult transformations of a country's political and economic structures. It is therefore important that governments clearly and convincingly communicate the reasons for these reforms to the citizens of the country. Support from civil society is essential in this process.

Accession negotiations take place between the EU Member States and candidate countries. Negotiating sessions are held at the level of ministers or deputies, i.e. Permanent Representatives for the Member States, and Ambassadors or Chief Negotiators for the candidate countries.

To facilitate the negotiations, the whole body of EU law is divided into "*chapters*", each corresponding to a policy area. The first step in negotiations is called "*screening*"; its purpose is to identify areas in need of alignment in the legislation, institutions or practices of a candidate country.

The chapters of the acquis

1. Free movement of goods
2. Freedom of movement for workers
3. Right of establishment and freedom to provide services
4. Free movement of capital
5. Public procurement
6. Company law
7. Intellectual property law
8. Competition policy
9. Financial services
10. Information society and media
11. Agriculture
12. Food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary policy
13. Fisheries
14. Transport policy
15. Energy
16. Taxation
17. Economic and monetary policy
18. Statistics
19. Social policy and employment
20. Enterprise and industrial policy
21. Trans-European Networks
22. Regional policy and coordination of structural instruments
23. Judiciary and fundamental rights
24. Justice, freedom and security
25. Science and research
26. Education and culture
27. Environment
28. Consumer and health protection
29. Customs union
30. External relations
31. Foreign, security, defence policy
32. Financial control
33. Financial + budgetary provisions
34. Institutions
35. Other issues

As a basis for launching the actual, technical negotiation process, the Commission establishes a “*screening report*” for each chapter and each country. These reports are submitted to the Council. It is for the Commission to make a recommendation on whether to open negotiations on a chapter, or require that certain conditions (or “*benchmarks*”) should be met first.

The candidate country then submits a *negotiating position*. On the basis of a proposal by the Commission, the Council adopts an EU *common position* allowing opening of the negotiations.

Once the EU agrees a common position on each chapter of the acquis, and once the candidate accepts the EU’s common position, negotiations on that chapter are closed – but only provisionally. EU accession negotiations operate on the principle that “nothing is agreed until everything is agreed”, so definitive closure of chapters occurs only at the end of the entire negotiating process.

Screening report Croatia, Chapter 20– Enterprise and industrial policy

“III. Assessment of the degree of alignment and implementing capacity.
Overall, Croatia has reached a satisfactory level of alignment with the acquis; it needs to finalise its industrial strategy and improve its capacity to assess industrial competitiveness and improve policy analysis and formulation [...]”



Reporting and monitoring

The Commission keeps the Council and the European Parliament duly informed about the candidate countries' progress, through *annual strategy papers and individual country progress reports*. It also monitors the fulfilment of benchmark requirements and progress in respecting undertakings.



Turkey 2006 Progress Report, Chapter 25, "Science and Research"

"Turkey's research policy resulted in significantly increased budgets for research and development: nearly fivefold compared to 2002 levels. New universities have been opened in 15 cities. Improvements were also achieved in Turkey's science and research capacities including its gradually more successful participation in FP6 [the 6th Framework Programme]. Turkey's success rate under FP6 improved and is now about 17%. However, it is below the EU averages of about 20%. In terms of funding, Turkey was mostly successful in obtaining small projects. However, EU funding is not achieving its potential.

Taking into account actions that Turkey has taken with respect to mobility of researchers, science and society and 3% of GDP for Science and Technology Action Plan measures, Turkey is already well integrated into the European Research Area."

Monitoring continues until accession. This makes it possible to give additional guidance as countries assume the responsibilities of membership, and also guarantees to the current Member States that new entrants meet the conditions for accession.

The Accession Treaty

When negotiations on all the chapters are completed to the satisfaction of both sides, the results are incorporated into a *draft Accession Treaty*. If it wins the support of the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament, the Treaty is signed and ratified by the candidate country and all the Member States.

From signing the Accession Treaty to accession

Once the Accession Treaty is signed, the candidate country becomes an "*Acceding State*" and is entitled to certain provisional privileges until it becomes an EU Member State. As an acceding state, it can comment on draft EU proposals, communications, recommendations or initiatives, and it acquires "active observer status" on EU bodies and agencies, where it is entitled to speak, but not to vote. Once the ratification process is complete, the Accession Treaty enters into force on its scheduled date, and the accession state becomes a Member State.



Helping candidates preparing for membership

A candidate country's progress towards the EU depends on how well it implements reforms needed to fulfil the accession criteria. The EU provides support to the countries in their preparations for EU accession.

The candidate countries' formal links to the EU may be established in different agreements. For example, Turkey's formal links with the EU are enshrined in an agreement first signed in 1963 (the "Ankara Agreement"), repeatedly updated since then, and in a Customs Union agreed in 1995.

For the countries of the Western Balkans, a special process was established in 2000, called the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP). The SAP pursues three aims, namely stabilisation and a swift transition to a market economy, the promotion of regional cooperation and the prospect of EU accession. It helps the countries of the region to build their capacity to adopt and implement European standards. In the framework of the SAP, the Union offers the countries of the Western Balkans trade concessions, contractual relations and economic and financial assistance. Since 1991, the EU has provided some €12 billion in assistance to the Western Balkans, some of the highest per capita assistance in the world.

Candidate countries often need to carry out significant reforms to ensure that EU rules are not only adopted, but properly implemented too. They may have to set up new bodies, such as an independent



Croatia

competition authority, or a food-standards agency. Or they may need to restructure existing institutions: de-militarising the police, upgrading environmental and nuclear-safety watchdogs, or giving prosecutors more autonomy in combating corruption.

These reforms usually imply major investments in know-how and funds. The EU offers a wide range of complementary programmes and mechanisms to provide financial and technical assistance in carrying out these reforms. Aware of the challenges that reforms can present to citizens in candidate countries, the EU also promotes strategies to boost public understanding of the accession process, including dialogue between the EU countries and candidate countries at the level of civil society: trade unions, consumer associations and other non governmental organisations.

An important aspect of the EU's assistance is strengthening institutional capacity, or "institution building", by developing the structures or training the staff responsible for applying EU rules in the candidate country. Advice on implementing the acquis is often provided via "Twinning" arrangements, in which experts are seconded from EU Member States, or through short-term workshops.

Preparing countries for membership can also mean helping them to upgrade their infrastructure: building solid-waste disposal plants or improving transport networks. Candidate countries are allowed to

participate in EU programmes, for example in the areas of public health or research, and may also receive grants and loans from international financial institutions. This experience allows candidate countries to learn how to handle the kind of funding they will be entitled to after accession, also helping to familiarise them with EU policies and instruments.

The EU has created a new financing instrument to fund its assistance to countries on their way to membership, including a range of incentives and conditions to ensure the best use of EU money. This single "Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance" (IPA), in force since 1 January 2007, is a simplification of the EU's previous wide range of support programmes, like Phare, CARDS or SAPARD.

In particular, IPA will help strengthen democratic institutions and the rule of law, reform public administration, carry out economic reforms, promote respect for human as well as minority rights

and gender equality, support the development of civil society and advance regional co-operation, and contribute to sustainable development and poverty reduction. For candidate countries, the additional objective is the adoption and implementation of the full requirements for membership.

IPA will provide a total of €11,468 million at current prices over 2007–2013, with precise allocations decided year by year.



Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

<i>Indicative Financial Framework for the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) until 2010 (€million, current prices)</i>				
	2007	2008	2009	2010
Turkey	497.2	538.7	566.4	653.7
Croatia	138.5	146.0	151.2	154.2
Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	58.5	70.2	81.8	92.3
Serbia	186.7	190.9	194.8	198.7
Montenegro	31.4	32.6	33.3	34.0
Kosovo (under UNSCR 1244)	68.3	64.7	66.1	67.3
Bosnia-Herzegovina	62.1	74.8	89.1	106.0
Albania	61.0	70.7	81.2	93.2
Albania	1260.2	1383.3	1480.4	1621.7



Turkey

The future

Future enlargements will concern the countries of south-eastern Europe. It is in the best interest of all of Europe to promote democratic transformation in the Western Balkan countries and Turkey and to consolidate stability.

In December 2006, the European Council renewed its consensus on enlargement. The EU has taken the concerns of its citizens about the pace of enlargement seriously. Enlargement policy is based on consolidation. This means that the EU honours existing commitments towards countries already in the process, but is cautious about assuming any new commitments. Rigorous conditionality is applied to all candidate and potential candidate countries. Their possible dates of accession depend on their progress with political and economic reforms as well as compliance with the EU body of laws. Each country will be judged on its own merits.



For enlargement to be a success, it is essential to secure the support of citizens both in the EU Member States and in the candidate and potential candidate countries. It is important to better communicate the successes and challenges of enlargement, in order to gain public support and make growing together a common project.

The accession of Bulgaria and Romania in January 2007 completed the EU's fifth round of enlargement, which began in 2004 and increased the number of EU Member States from 15 to 27. There is no similar big enlargement wave ahead in the foreseeable future. The EU should continue to grow at a pace to be determined by its own citizens and the progress of candidate countries in fulfilling the requirements.

The European Union's nature is dynamic. Much has been achieved in recent years, and the journey continues. The Union is committed to keeping the negotiations on track. In the process of integrating new members, together we will work towards increasing prosperity and security while enhancing solidarity.

Both the EU and the countries involved stand to benefit from the transforming power of the process leading to accession.

The History of the Process

- 1957 Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands sign the Treaty of Rome and establish the European Economic Community (EEC).
- 1963 Ankara Agreement signed with Turkey.
- 1973 Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom join the EC.
- 1981 Greece joins the EC.
- 1986 Spain and Portugal join the EC.
- 1987 Turkey applies to join the EC.
- 1990 Following the reunification of Germany, integration of the former German Democratic Republic.
- 1993 Copenhagen European Council agrees on the accession criteria.
- 1995 Austria, Finland and Sweden join the EU. Customs Union with Turkey.
- 1999 Helsinki European Council confirms Turkey as a candidate country.
- 2000 The Zagreb summit confirms full commitment to the Stabilisation and Association Process by countries in the Western Balkans
- 2003 Croatia applies to join the EU. The Thessaloniki summit reaffirms the EU's commitment to eventual integration into the Union of the countries of the Western Balkans.
- 2004 Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia join the EU. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia applies to join the EU.
- 2005 Opening of accession negotiations with Turkey and Croatia. Screening starts for Turkey and Croatia.
- 2006 Opening and provisional closure of the first chapter of negotiations with Croatia and Turkey.
- 2007 January: Bulgaria and Romania become EU Member States.

You will find more information on enlargement on the website of the Directorate General for Enlargement of the European Commission.

<http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/>

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