



# EU ENLARGEMENT

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

EU Enlargement: A Careful Approach

## HOW DOES THE ACCESSION PROCESS WORK?

### GETTING THE BEST OUT OF COMING TOGETHER

For a Swede seeking the sun on Europe's Mediterranean coast, the choice is wide – because the European Union allows a citizen of any member state to holiday where they like, and even to settle there if they want to. In just the same way, a Spanish computer engineer or a Greek chef can take a job anywhere they want in another EU country. And for companies in any EU country too, the market of the entire European Union is open for business – so a Polish pig-farm can sell pork in Germany and an Italian cheesemaker can ship its parmigiano to everywhere from Ireland to Hungary.

As the EU has grown, it has offered more and more chances to more and more people.

But it has always made sure that as it grows, it gets the best out of coming together.

That is why the EU has a well-planned approach to enlargement. It is an approach that has seen the EU grow from just six members in the 1950s to 27 today. But it is a careful process.

It has to be careful, because it makes sense for the EU to enlarge only if bringing in new members results in benefits – for the existing member states, but for the new member states too. And any new member state has to be able to meet the EU's conditions for joining, too.

So each time, before it lets in any new countries, it runs a rigorous check.

### THE STEPS IN MAKING THE EU BIGGER

This has just happened with Croatia, which is scheduled to become the 28th member state in July 2013.

The reform and checking process has taken 9 years. This so-called "accession process" is a wide-ranging cooperation exercise.

It starts officially when a country applies to join the EU.

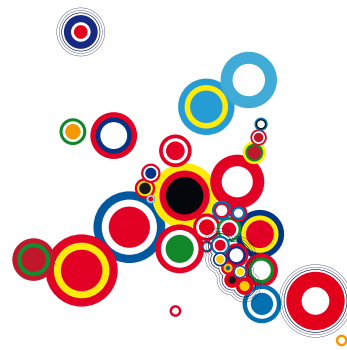
The existing member states have to make the final decision on letting in a new member, but the European Commission and the European Parliament play key roles in the process.

First, the Commission makes an evaluation of the country's application, and recommends either going ahead or not.

If the opinion is favourable, the member states, meeting as the Council of the European Union, may decide to consider the applicant as a candidate country.

That leads to a much more detailed assessment, in which the Commission identifies precisely how far the applicant country's legislation and standards meet the requirements to become a member state – and what gaps it will have to fill.

Once that framework has been defined, setting out specific tasks for the candidate on everything from environment to company law, and from economic policy to agriculture, it becomes possible to open talks.



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## NEGOTIATING THE TERMS

It is when these real negotiations begin that the careful approach really matters.

The EU needs to pin down just how and when the candidate is going to match up to the EU's rules. This covers dates for complying with laws on air pollution, for instance – because it would harm public health if a new member state was permitted to keep operating dirty factories. It covers how far subsidies can be given to local companies – because it would harm businesses in the existing member states if they were to be faced with unfair competition from a new member state.

It isn't just a matter of imposing controls on a new member – although that is important. The negotiations also ensure that any new member state can cope successfully with the challenges of being a member of the EU, across a broad range that includes running an efficient government machine, respecting human rights, and maintaining an effective banking system.

This sometimes requires big changes in a country's ways of doing things, and the EU offers financial and technical assistance as well as advice in order to achieve the changes.

After all the conditions of membership have been negotiated, the agreements reached are set out in an accession treaty.

This too has to be ratified – not just by the candidate, but by each of the EU countries, and the European Parliament. Only then, on the date it fixes for accession, can the new member state become part of the European Union.

With every condition met and every agreement in place, the new member state can then take its place within the EU – an EU that continues to grow, and to function for the benefit of all its citizens, including the new ones. That is the purpose and the product of the careful approach.

### Dominik Bagola, band leader of *Balladero* from Slovenia



Photo: (c) Matej Leskovsek

I was 23 and working for Slovenia's biggest advertising agency when Slovenia joined the European Union in 2004. I then began studying at Tech Music School London, which was a great experience with London's multicultural European and global mindset. Because the markets opened up I started as a freelancer, working with agencies or organising concerts abroad. Music has always been my passion and my international music career started after joining a band for a European tour. Being part of the EU allows an easier flow of communication and getting international

projects done faster. Strict checkups for music equipment at border controls, for instance, stopped when Slovenia joined the EU.

I am an EU artist now which makes it easier to become recognised in a global market. Hopefully the future creates an even stronger Europe.