European Commission

Understanding Enlargement

The European Union's enlargement policy

Foreword

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Having grown from six members in the 1950s to 27 since 2007, the European Union is now home to over 500 million people. Stretching from the Atlantic to the Black Sea, the EU now unites Europe's western and eastern parts. The Community was created to foster peace and stability on the continent, and its purpose is as relevant today as it was then. New members have joined the endeavour along the way and the EU has become more prosperous, stronger and more influential.

The EU's enlargement policy makes Europe a safer place, with its focus on consolidating the rule of law, while promoting democracy and fundamental freedoms across the aspirant countries, who are our closest neighbours. Enlargement allows us to promote our values and interests. It enables us to assume our role as a global player.

We project the common values that unite Europe beyond our borders, onto an international stage marked by change and uncertainty. A Union that builds cooperation between former rivals, while upholding the highest standards of human rights, will maintain the influence needed to shape the world around it.

The EU continues its work with this belief. The governments of the 27 Member States, reunited in the European Council, have agreed on the membership perspectives of the Western Balkans, Turkey and Iceland, which have all chosen the EU values based model.

In order to continue its success, the EU's enlargement policy must remain credible. Credibility is a two way street. For Member States, the credibility of the enlargement process means that a candidate country is only recommended for membership once it is fully prepared. Aspirant countries' credibility rests in their genuine commitment to EU-related reforms. The commitment towards the enlargement process will be the determining factor in ensuring that this is a win-win policy for all countries involved.

As it continues to enlarge, the EU must pay particular attention to its citizens and their views and worries. Because it is only with the full support of EU citizens, the true decision makers, that the EU is able to pursue one of its most successful policies – enlargement.

We want to make the EU's enlargement policy clear and easy to understand for all citizens. This brochure presents the history of the process and how the European Union, as we know it today, was created. It explains the conditions for joining the EU, who decides if the applicants are ready, how the enlargement process works, and what lies ahead for both the EU and the countries that wish to join.

Štefan Füle

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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/).

Cataloguing data can be found at the end of this publication.

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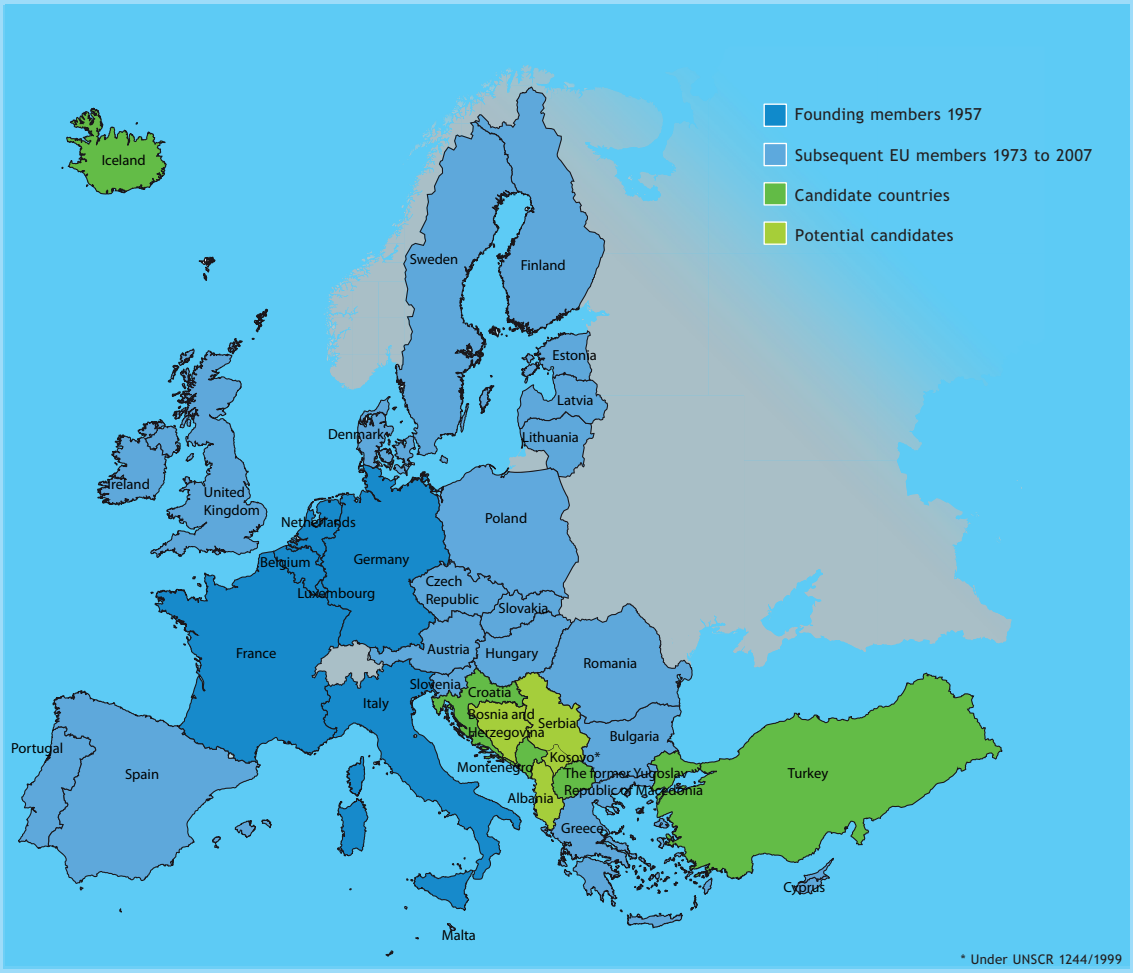
From six to 27 Member States

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 six is now home to 27 countries with a population of more than 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 great advantages to all Europeans – stability, prosperity, democracy, human rights, fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law. These are not just abstract principles. They have improved 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 consumer goods, lower prices, and greater choice in crucial sectors like telecommunications, banking and air travel, to name but a few.

By multiplying these opportunities, EU enlargement has also been beneficial overall for European economies. The economic and financial crisis has exposed the union and its currency to an unprecedented test. It has shown that its members are mutually dependent and that new forms of solidarity and economic cooperation are needed to face the challenges of the globalised economy. When responses to the crisis are discussed on the global stage, the enlarged EU carries more weight and acts as a stronger international player.

As well as promoting economic and financial solidarity and opportunities for consumers, the EU is a community of values. We are a growing 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 democratic values of the EU and is committed to promoting them.

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 ability to take on the obligations* of membership, including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union.

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.

Article 2, Treaty of the European Union

"The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States[...]."

Article 49, Treaty of the European Union

"Any European State which respects the values referred to in Article 2 and is committed to promoting them may apply to become a member of the Union."

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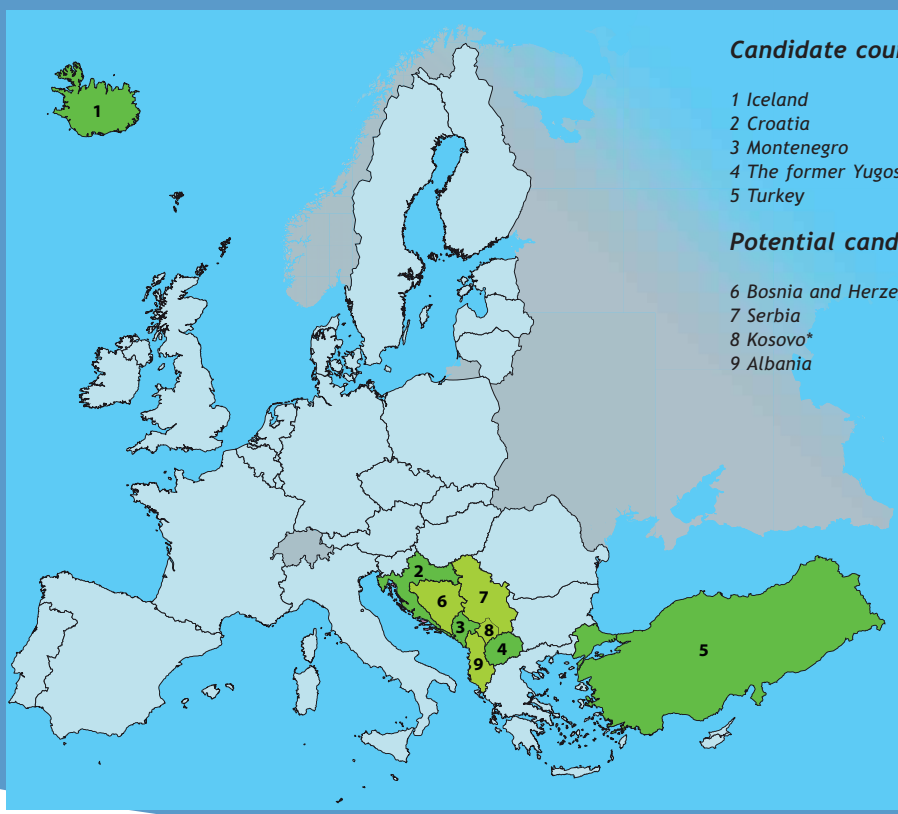
Where do we stand?

The European Union Member States have granted the perspective of EU membership to the Western Balkans, Turkey and Iceland. They are at different stages of the enlargement process.

Turkey, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland and Montenegro are candidate countries. Of these, accession negotiations are underway with Iceland and Turkey. Croatia has already concluded accession negotiations.



Candidate countries

1 Iceland
2 Croatia
3 Montenegro
4 The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
5 Turkey

Potential candidates

6 Bosnia and Herzegovina
7 Serbia
*8 Kosovo**
9 Albania

* Under UNSCR 1244/1999

2011

Who decides?

New members are admitted with the 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.

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 decide when and on what terms to open and to close accession negotiations with candidates on each policy area, in the light of recommendations from the European Commission.

And it is the Member States who decide when accession negotiations are satisfactorily completed.

The Accession Treaty has to be signed by every Member State and the candidate concerned. 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.

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How the enlargement process works: meeting the requirements

To ensure that enlargement brings benefits simultaneously to the EU and to the countries in the process of joining it, the accession process needs to be carefully managed. 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.

To help the countries prepare for future membership, the EU has designed a pre-accession strategy. 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 Balkans), as well as special cooperation 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

Accession negotiations concern the candidate's ability to take on the obligations of membership. 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 100,000 pages of them. And these rules (also known as the *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 between the EU Member States and each individual candidate country and the pace depends on each country's progress in meeting the requirements. Candidates consequently have an incentive to implement the 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. 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 and rural development*
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 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 […]."

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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. The progress reports provide valuable feedback to the countries and signal the main areas where efforts are still required.

Turkey 2010 Progress Report, Chapter 25, "Science and Research"

"Good progress can be reported in the area of science and research policy. A number of regulatory arrangements were made to encourage international researchers to stay longer or settle permanently in Turkey. A new support programme was launched to encourage the return to Turkey of Turkish researchers who have completed their doctoral studies but currently live abroad.

Turkey is well prepared in the area of science and research and good progress has been achieved towards future integration into the European Research Area. Overall, Turkey's participation and success rate in Framework Programmes are on the rise. However, further efforts are required to maintain these rates all through the 7th Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP7)."

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.

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 Acceding State becomes a Member State.

Helping candidates' preparations 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. From 1991 to 2011, the EU has provided over € 16 billion in assistance to the Western Balkans, some of the highest per capita assistance in the world.

Candidate countries 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 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.

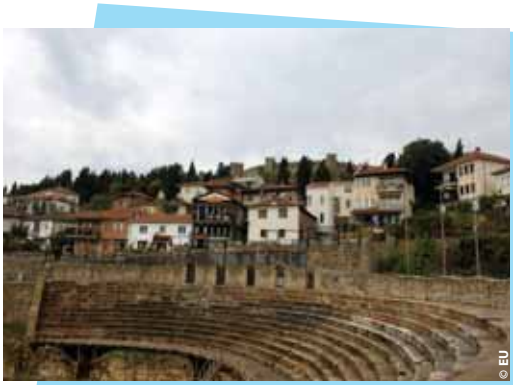
Turkey

Croatia

These reforms imply major investments in both 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.

Iceland

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"*



The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

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 through a combination of grants from EU assistance and loans from international financial institutions. Candidate countries are allowed to participate in EU programmes, for example in the areas of public health, research or education. 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.

Since 2007, both candidate countries and potential candidates have received focused EU funding and support through a single channel – *the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance*, or IPA.

IPA-supported projects aim to 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 cooperation, 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.

The total pre-accession funding for the period 2007-2013 is € 11.5 billion, with precise allocations decided year by year.

Montenegro

Indicative Financial Framework for the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) until 2013 (€ million, current prices)

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Turkey	497.2	538.7	566.4	653.7	781.9	899.5	935.5
Croatia	141.2	146.0	151.2	153.6	156.6	159.7	163.0
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	58.5	70.2	81.8	91.7	98.0	105.1	117.2
Serbia	189.7	190.9	194.8	197.9	201.9	205.9	214.8
Montenegro	31.4	32.6	34.5	33.5	34.1	34.8	35.4
Kosovo (under UNSCR 1244/1999)	68.3	187.7	106.1	67.3	68.7	70.0	73.7
Bosnia and Herzegovina	62.1	74.8	89.1	105.4	107.4	109.5	111.8
Albania	61.0	73.8	81.2	94.2	94.4	96.3	98.1
Iceland	-	-	-	-	10.0	12.0	6.0
Multi-beneficiary Programme	129.6	137.7	188.9	146.6	191.6	162.5	183.9
TOTAL	**1239.0**	**1449.4**	**1494.0**	**1543.9**	**1744.6**	**1861.3**	**1939.4**

The future

Future enlargement concerns the countries of south-eastern Europe and Iceland. It is in the interest of all of Europe to promote democratic transformation in the Western Balkans and Turkey and to consolidate stability, and to deepen the longstanding cooperation it has had with Iceland.

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 candidates and potential candidates. 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 candidates and potential candidates. 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 EU's commitment to the enlargement process reflects the Member States' conviction that enlargement is in our mutual interest. The enlargement process is part of the solution to many of our citizens' concerns, whether in the prevention of organised crime and corruption or in the creation of growth and jobs. By making a success of enlargement today, the EU is able to better address the many challenges it will face tomorrow.

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.

1994 Iceland joins the European Economic Area, which allows it to participate in the single market.

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.
Iceland becomes a participant in the Schengen agreement on free movement of people.

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.
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is granted candidate status.

2007 Bulgaria and Romania join the EU.

2008 Montenegro applies to join the EU.

2009 Albania, Iceland and Serbia apply to join the EU.

2010 Opening of accession negotiations with Iceland.
The European Council confirms Montenegro as a candidate country.

2011 Conclusion of accession negotiations with Croatia.

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