

## 'As far as Europe goes' from the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (3 March 1994)

**Caption:** On 3 March 1994, the German daily newspaper the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung describes the economic implications of Sweden, Austria and Finland joining the European Union.

**Source:** Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. Zeitung für Deutschland. Hrsg. JESKE, Jürgen; MÜLLER-VOGG, Hugo; REIßMÜLLER, Johann Georg; NONNEMACHER, Günther; SCHIRRMACH, Frank. 03.03.1994, n° 52. Frankfurt/Main: FAZ Verlag GmbH. "So weit Europa reicht", auteur:Hort, Peter , p. 13.

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## As far as Europe goes

by Peter Hort, Brussels

After a difficult birth in Brussels, it should actually have been quads that were to enlarge this family of twelve. Then it turned out to be just triplets: Foreign Ministers of the European Union have successfully concluded negotiations with Sweden, Finland and Austria on the substance of the Treaties of Accession, but agreement has not yet been reached with Norway, mainly because of the hotly disputed issue of fisheries. Early next week, the Ministers will again meet in Brussels and, if possible, complete the quartet of newcomers. That will just leave the matter of securing the approval of the citizens of the four applicant countries.

The four applicants and the Community have come a long way since the initial discussions to reach the present situation. In the beginning, back in January 1989, the President of the Commission in Brussels, Jacques Delors, very cleverly offered the countries of EFTA (European Free Trade Area) an agreement on a new form of partnership, which would go far beyond free trade agreements and treaties of association. With this carrot, Delors wanted to dissuade the seven EFTA countries from eventually considering applying for accession to the EC. His calculation did not work out: using the halfway house called the 'European Economic Area' (EEA), he extended the internal market of the Twelve to the EFTA countries. Four of them quickly came to the conclusion that they would be better off sitting at the table of the Council of Ministers in Brussels.

The EEA Treaty turned out to be a short cut to accession. Switzerland, Iceland and Liechtenstein, however, opted to stand aside: Swiss voters could see nothing in the EEA Treaty to attract them. It is still not clear how Switzerland defines its future relationship within the enlarged Europe and whether the predictable entry of the four newcomers will lead to a change of opinion. Swiss citizens will first wait to see the results of the referenda in the applicant countries, especially how their neighbour Austria votes. Transit transport using heavy goods vehicles plays such an important role in both Alpine republics that Brussels is also now considering what possibilities there are to relieve the situation, for instance by making more use of the railways. At all events, the Union is going so far to meet Austria's concerns that the provisions in the existing transit treaty are to remain in force until the year 2004.

Apart from Austria's Alpine transit trade, it was agriculture, regional aid, contributions to the Community budget and fisheries policy that caused the biggest headaches for the negotiators. For the first time, new Member States have to bring their agricultural prices into line with those of the existing Member States from the date of accession. The Norwegians, Finns and Austrians find that difficult because their prices are considerably higher than those within the Community. For weeks now, there has been haggling over compensation for farmers. The applicant countries may be well satisfied with the outcome in the first year: they are to receive some DM 3 500 million from the Brussels coffers as 'transitional aid'. This means a considerably lighter burden for the three net contributors — Austria, Sweden and Norway. After five years, these comparatively prosperous countries with a combined net contribution of DM 3 700 million will, of course, start contributing towards the budget. Germany, far and away the largest net contributor, will be delighted with this.

Once again, fishing rights have turned out to be a subject of high politics. With the slogan 'not a single fish for the fleets of the Twelve', the Norwegians still believed — even on Tuesday — that they would emerge victorious from the negotiations. They certainly found Spain a tough negotiator. Spain wanted a further 18 000 tonnes of cod from Norwegian waters in addition to the fisheries rights granted in the EEA Treaty. Negotiators in Brussels could hardly believe that the talks threatened to collapse for the sake of 500 grammes of fish per head of the Spanish population. It was not until Wednesday, when the EU Ambassadors once again sat down with the Norwegians, that both sides seemed prepared to make concessions. According to the optimists, differences over fishing may still be settled this week. For the time being, the demands of Great Britain and Spain to the blocking minority in the Council of Ministers, as well as a further Spanish objection in connection with the planned audit of national economic data prior to transition to the final stage of economic and monetary union, remain unresolved.

There is a perceptible change in the character of the Community as it expands to the North: the German and Scandinavian system of values will lead the rather Mediterranean ideas of the 'old Europeans' into new ways. The Community will be defined more by the periphery than by the centre as it has been hitherto; conflict within the Council of Ministers will inevitably grow. It will be less feasible than ever to regulate in detail the lives and jobs of some 370 million people from the North Cape to Sicily, and subsidiarity and autonomy will become more and more important. The 'new boys' will finally introduce fresh ideas into the Community with their distinct individualism, and that will benefit everyone.

The Scandinavians will, after all, make sure that attention is immediately turned to the next group of applicants: they have a free trade agreement with the three Baltic Republics and will see themselves — alongside Germany — as the champions of fast-track entry for Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. That, however, will create an irresistible vortex that will prompt Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia to join the others. The Hungarian application is expected in a few months. Even if the Eurocrats in Brussels become giddy at the speed of the process, the advent of the Greater Europe is now unstoppable. Reform of the decision-making process is becoming much more urgent, for a club with more than 20 members cannot function according to the same procedural rules as the original Community of six Member States.