

## 'The cost of enlargement' from Le Monde (8 November 1994)

**Caption:** On 8 November 1994, the French daily newspaper Le Monde speculates on the cost of the successive enlargements of the European Union.

**Source:** Le Monde. dir. de publ. Colombani, Jean-Marie. 08.11.1994. Paris: Le Monde. "Le coût de l'élargissement", auteur:Lemaitre, Philippe.

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## The cost of enlargement

Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden have not yet been integrated in the European Union, but the next enlargement — to the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CCEE) — is already underway. Alain Juppé admits the process is now ‘practically irreversible’ and will eventually lead to a Community of ‘around thirty countries.’

Germany is setting the pace, its main priority being to help stabilise its eastern neighbours – a desire that can only be strengthened by Russia’s growing propensity to intervene in its ‘near abroad’. It is encouraged by France, which was once reluctant to embark on successive enlargements that could weaken Community cohesion. The French foreign minister is now losing no opportunity to repeat that he supports the present initiative.

Is this just one more concession to Germany? Anti-Maastricht fundamentalists may claim as much, but those among them who advocate a Europe reaching to the Urals or the Pacific are badly placed to protest at a project that is modest in comparison: except for inclusion of the three Baltic states, it would set the final frontiers of the Union at those of the former Soviet Union.

We may more reasonably suppose that, like most Member States, the French Government basically shares Bonn’s analysis. Considering that it would be dangerous to offer nothing but fine words to countries seeking a solid attachment with the West, it has decided to commit itself to enlargement.

Nevertheless, the prospect makes one dizzy. Political urgency does not do away with difficulties, and in this case the difficulties are considerable, given the very poor state of the CCEE countries’ economies.

The Sixteen (i.e. the Twelve plus the four countries about to accede) and the six CCEE countries, whose foreign ministers held a joint meeting in Luxembourg on 31 October, have decided to adopt a step-by-step accession strategy, it being understood that negotiations proper cannot begin until after the intergovernmental conference on institutional reform provided for in the Maastricht Treaty, which is scheduled for 1996.

While not holding things back, France’s role will be to help candidate countries realise the size of the task facing them. Alain Juppé endeavoured to do so on 31 October, in connection with the request to the Commission to draw up a white paper on alignment of CCEE countries’ legislation with that of the Union. ‘Accession presupposes your adoption of the whole Community acquis,’ he said, ‘so that you can play your full part in a territory without frontiers and in the single market.’ The enormity of that task calls for circumspection on the part of those who lightly talk of one accession after the other at the end of the century.

But who, if not the Commission, is to explain that enlargement will require a further effort of solidarity with the CCEE countries? One day or other a figure will have to be put on it. It would be naive to suppose the modest sums currently envisaged, i.e. 7 billion ecus over five years under the Phare programme, will be enough. And the existing support arrangements — namely the structural funds, of which the ‘cohesion countries’ (Greece, Ireland Portugal and Spain) are the main beneficiaries, and the common agricultural policy (CAP), from which France derives considerable advantage — will not suffice to provide the indispensable aid.

The four ‘cohesion countries’ are keeping a low profile for the time being in the hope that the CAP will bear the brunt of the costs or that the Central European countries, overjoyed at the prospect of accession, will prove less greedy than they themselves were. For their part, the French are calling for a study of how the agriculture of the CCEE countries can be integrated with that of Green Europe. But they are surely worried about the prospect of further changes to the CAP that would restrict their right to export more than the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) rules allow. Europe is not creating enough wealth to envisage granting the CCEE countries aid on a comparable scale to that received by the ‘cohesion countries’. But enlargement will certainly have a cost, and all will have to contribute. The Germans readily avoid talking about the budgetary aspect. Is it not hypocritical to claim that the ‘hard core’ of the Union’s

five most dynamic countries (as described in the *Reflections on European policy* published by the CDU-CSU group in the Bundestag) will be open to other partners as soon as they achieve the necessary level, while hoping to take advantage of enlargement to pare down contributions to the structural funds, whose very purpose is to enable the Union's less prosperous countries to catch up?

Moreover, does the Bonn government really believe the French will accept a further reform of the CAP that would leave France as the main, if not the only, loser? In today's European debate, the intrinsic contradiction in French policy is that France is seeking to deepen the Union but is not prepared to accept the inevitable political and institutional constraints. The German contradiction seems to be that Germany is pushing for enlargement but is unwilling to pay the cost. Just as Jacques Delors twice persuaded the Twelve to double their contributions to the structural funds, so must the new Commission impose the idea that future enlargement will require sacrifices all round. Will it have the necessary authority to do so?