

Conclusions of the Luxembourg European Council: excerpt on the enlargement (12-13 December 1997)

Caption: The Luxembourg European Council on 12 and 13 December 1997 decides to launch a comprehensive, inclusive and ongoing enlargement process, including the ten applicant States for accession to the Union from Central and Eastern Europe and Cyprus.

Source: Presidency Conclusions - Luxembourg European Council, 12-13 December 1997. [ON-LINE]. [s.l.]: Council of the European Union, [16.04.2004]. SN400/97. Available on <http://ue.eu.int/en/info/eurocouncil/>.

Copyright: (c) European Union, 1995-2012

URL:

http://www.cvce.eu/obj/conclusions_of_the_luxembourg_european_council_excerpt_on_the_enlargement_12_13_december_1997-en-bab447ae-5e30-425e-b68e-8398f5aa0755.html

Publication date: 21/10/2012

Luxembourg European Council (12-13 December 1997) Presidency Conclusions

Introduction

The European Council meeting in Luxembourg on 12 and 13 December 1997 marks a moment of historic significance for the future of the Union and of Europe as a whole. With the launch of the enlargement process we see the dawn of a new era, finally putting an end to the divisions of the past. Extending the European integration model to encompass the whole of the continent is a pledge of future stability and prosperity.

At the same time as launching the enlargement process, the European Council has embarked upon a comprehensive study of the development of the Union and its policies so that it can make a fitting response to the challenges coming up after the year 2000. The Union will thus have a clear and coherent vision with which to take on the next century and face up to enlargement.

The European Council adopted a Resolution on economic policy coordination which will complete preparations for the third stage of Economic and Monetary Union. It was also pleased to note that the arrangements for Union action on employment are now in place.

The European Council began its proceedings by an exchange of views with Mr José María GIL-ROBLES, President of the European Parliament, on the main subjects for discussion.

A meeting was also held with the Heads of State and Government and the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Cyprus. The meeting was devoted to the launch of the overall process for enlargement of the Union.

European Union enlargement

1. The Luxembourg European Council has taken the decisions necessary to launch the overall enlargement process.
2. The task in the years ahead will be to prepare the applicant States for accession to the Union and to see that the Union is properly prepared for enlargement. This enlargement is a comprehensive, inclusive and ongoing process, which will take place in stages; each of the applicant States will proceed at its own rate, depending on its degree of preparedness.
3. As a prerequisite for enlargement of the Union, the operation of the institutions must be strengthened and improved in keeping with the institutional provisions of the Amsterdam Treaty.

The European Conference

4. The European Council decided to set up a European Conference which will bring together the Member States of the European Union and the European States aspiring to accede to it and sharing its values and internal and external objectives.
5. The members of the Conference must share a common commitment to peace, security and good neighbourliness, respect for other countries' sovereignty, the principles upon which the European Union is founded, the integrity and inviolability of external borders and the principles of international law and a commitment to the settlement of territorial disputes by peaceful means, in particular through the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice in the Hague. Countries which endorse these principles and respect the right of any European country fulfilling the required criteria to accede to the European Union and sharing the Union's commitment to building a Europe free of the divisions and difficulties of the past will be invited to take part in the Conference.

6. The States which accept these criteria and subscribe to the above principles will be invited to take part in the Conference. Initially, the EU offer will be addressed to Cyprus, the applicant States of Central and Eastern Europe and Turkey.
7. The European Conference will be a multilateral forum for political consultation, intended to address questions of general concern to the participants and to broaden and deepen their cooperation on foreign and security policy, justice and home affairs, and other areas of common concern, particularly economic matters and regional cooperation.
8. The Conference will be chaired by the State holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. At the Presidency's invitation, Heads of State and Government and the President of the Commission will meet at the Conference once a year, as will the Ministers for Foreign Affairs.
9. The first meeting of the Conference will be in London in March 1998.

The process of accession and negotiation

10. The European Council has considered the current situation in each of the eleven applicant States on the basis of the Commission's opinions and the Presidency's report to the Council. In the light of its discussions, it has decided to launch an accession process comprising the ten Central and East European applicant States and Cyprus. This accession process will form part of the implementation of Article 0 of the Treaty on European Union. The European Council points out that all these States are destined to join the European Union on the basis of the same criteria and that they are participating in the accession process on an equal footing. This process, which will be evolutive and inclusive, will comprise the following elements.

a. The framework

11. The accession process will be launched on 30 March 1998 by a meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the fifteen Member States of the European Union, the ten Central and East European applicant States and Cyprus. A single framework for these applicant countries will be established.

12. The Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the fifteen members of the European Union will meet their opposite numbers from the ten Central and East European applicant States and Cyprus as the need arises. Technical ministerial meetings could also be envisaged, bearing in mind experience with the structured dialogue.

b. The enhanced pre-accession strategy

13. The enhanced pre-accession strategy is intended to enable all the applicant States of Central and Eastern Europe eventually to become members of the European Union and, to that end, to align themselves as far as possible on the Union acquis prior to accession. With the Europe Agreements, which remain the basis of the Union's relations with these States, the strategy centres on accession partnerships and increased pre-accession aid. It will be accompanied by an analytical study of the Union acquis for each applicant State taken individually.

(i) Accession partnerships

14. Accession partnership is a new instrument, the key feature of the enhanced pre-accession strategy; it will mobilize all forms of assistance to the applicant countries of Central and Eastern Europe within a single framework.

15. This single framework will cover in detail for each applicant the priorities to be observed in adopting the Union acquis and also the financial resources available for that purpose, in particular the PHARE programme. In that context financial assistance would be linked to the applicants' progress and, more

specifically, to compliance with the programme for adoption of the acquis.

16. The Council will decide unanimously on the establishment of the partnerships as the key element in the pre-accession strategy. On that basis it will then decide, by a qualified majority and by 15 March 1998 at the latest, on the principles, priorities, intermediate objectives, significant adjustments and conditions applicable to each individual partnership. When an element essential to the continuation of pre-accession assistance is missing in an applicant State, the Council will take appropriate measures by the same procedure.

(ii) Increased pre-accession aid

17. Pre-accession aid will be increased substantially; alongside the PHARE programme, which will already have been refocused on accession priorities, it will, as from the year 2000, comprise aid for agriculture and a structural instrument which will give priority to measures similar to those of the Cohesion Fund.

Financial support to the countries involved in the enlargement process will be based on the principle of equal treatment, independently of time of accession, with particular attention being paid to countries with the greatest need. The European Council welcomes in this connection the catch-up facility envisaged by the Commission.

18. Without prejudice to decisions on the financial perspective for 2000-2006, the PHARE programme will focus on accession by setting two priority aims: the reinforcement of administrative and judicial capacity (about 30% of the overall amount) and investments related to the adoption and application of the acquis (about 70%).

19. Some Community programmes (e.g. education, training and research) will be open to applicant States and this will enable them to familiarize themselves with the Union's policies and working methods. Such participation will have to be determined case-by-case, with each applicant State making a steadily increasing financial contribution of its own. PHARE will, if necessary, be able to continue part-financing the applicant States' national contributions. Such financing should remain at around 10% of the PHARE appropriation, not including participation in the research and development framework programme.

20. The applicant States should be allowed to take part, as observers and for the points which concern them, in the management committees responsible for monitoring the programmes to which they contribute financially, under specific arrangements adapted to the case in question.

21. The Community agencies in which applicant countries will be able to participate will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

22. A specific pre-accession strategy for Cyprus will be based on:

- participation in certain targeted projects, in particular to boost judicial and administrative capacity and projects in the field of justice and home affairs;
- participation in certain Community programmes and agencies (as in the approach followed for the other applicant States);
- use of technical assistance provided by TAIEX (Technical Assistance Information Exchange Office).

c. Commission opinions and accession negotiations

23. The Commission's opinions on the applicant States constitute a sound overall analysis of each applicant

State's situation in the light of the membership criteria set by the Copenhagen European Council. The prospect of membership is a unique incentive to the applicants to speed up the implementation of policies which comply with the Union acquis. Incorporation of the acquis into legislation is necessary, but is not in itself sufficient; it will also be necessary to ensure that it is actually applied.

24. The European Council noted the link between the applicant States' ongoing efforts in that direction in sectoral policies, in particular the internal market and related policies, and the harmonious operation of Community policies after accession.

25. Compliance with the Copenhagen political criteria is a prerequisite for the opening of any accession negotiations. Economic criteria and the ability to fulfil the obligations arising from membership have been and must be assessed in a forward-looking, dynamic way.

26. The decision to enter into negotiations does not imply that they will be successfully concluded at the same time. Their conclusion and the subsequent accession of the different applicant States will depend on the extent to which each complies with the Copenhagen criteria and on the Union's ability to assimilate new members.

27. The European Council has decided to convene bilateral intergovernmental conferences in the spring of 1998 to begin negotiations with Cyprus, Hungary, Poland, Estonia, the Czech Republic and Slovenia on the conditions for their entry into the Union and the ensuing Treaty adjustments. These negotiations will be based on the general negotiating framework acknowledged by the Council on 8 December 1997.

At the same time as the above, the preparation of negotiations with Romania, Slovakia, Latvia, Lithuania and Bulgaria will be speeded up in particular through an analytical examination of the Union acquis. This preparation may also be discussed at ministerial-level bilateral meetings with the Member States of the Union.

28. The accession of Cyprus should benefit all communities and help to bring about civil peace and reconciliation. The accession negotiations will contribute positively to the search for a political solution to the Cyprus problem through the talks under the aegis of the United Nations which must continue with a view to creating a bi-community, bi-zonal federation. In this context, the European Council requests that the willingness of the Government of Cyprus to include representatives of the Turkish Cypriot community in the accession negotiating delegation be acted upon. In order for this request to be acted upon, the necessary contacts will be undertaken by the Presidency and the Commission.

d. Review procedure

29. From the end of 1998, the Commission will make regular reports to the Council, together with any necessary recommendations for opening bilateral intergovernmental conferences, reviewing the progress of each Central and East European applicant State towards accession in the light of the Copenhagen criteria, in particular the rate at which it is adopting the Union acquis. Prior to those reports, implementation of the accession partnerships and progress in adopting the acquis will be examined with each applicant State in the Europe Agreement bodies. The Commission's reports will serve as a basis for taking, in the Council context, the necessary decisions on the conduct of the accession negotiations or their extension to other applicants. In that context, the Commission will continue to follow the method adopted by Agenda 2000 in evaluating applicant States' ability to meet the economic criteria and fulfil the obligations deriving from accession.

30. A dynamic approach should be maintained in assessing the progress made by applicant States in the regular reports which the Commission will submit to the Council.

A European strategy for Turkey

31. The Council confirms Turkey's eligibility for accession to the European Union. Turkey will be judged

on the basis of the same criteria as the other applicant States. While the political and economic conditions allowing accession negotiations to be envisaged are not satisfied, the European Council considers that it is nevertheless important for a strategy to be drawn up to prepare Turkey for accession by bringing it closer to the European Union in every field.

32. This strategy should consist in:

- development of the possibilities afforded by the Ankara Agreement;
- intensification of the Customs Union;
- implementation of financial cooperation;
- approximation of laws and adoption of the Union *acquis*.
- participation, to be decided case by case, in certain programmes and in certain agencies provided for in paragraphs 19 and 21.

33. The strategy will be reviewed by the Association Council in particular on the basis of Article 28 of the Association Agreement in the light of the Copenhagen criteria and the Council's position of 29 April 1997.

34. In addition, participation in the European Conference will enable the Member States of the European Union and Turkey to step up their dialogue and cooperation in areas of common interest.

35. The European Council recalls that strengthening Turkey's links with the European Union also depends on that country's pursuit of the political and economic reforms on which it has embarked, including the alignment of human rights standards and practices on those in force in the European Union; respect for and protection of minorities; the establishment of satisfactory and stable relations between Greece and Turkey; the settlement of disputes, in particular by legal process, including the International Court of Justice; and support for negotiations under the aegis of the UN on a political settlement in Cyprus on the basis of the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions.

36. The European Council endorses the guidelines that emerged from the General Affairs Council of 24 November 1997 on future relations between the Union and Turkey and asks the Commission to submit suitable proposals.

[...]