

# European union

Business



On 1 May 2004, the European Union is expected to admit ten more countries as members. Three years after that it is expected to admit two more and possibly another one shortly afterwards. For countries which are not in EU this means that there will be a major change in the membership of the economic and political grouping which, among other things. The enlargement, which was finally negotiated in Copenhagen on 12 and 13 December 2004, has been years in the planning but as it progresses towards fulfilment coincides with the war in Iraq and divisions in views among Europeans towards that war. Three important questions present themselves.

Will the enlargement change the European Union significantly? The deals settled at Copenhagen are not the final step towards enlargement. Each of the acceding countries has to hold a referendum to test whether their populations support joining the European Union. Malta and Slovenia among the new countries had held their referendums and the voters supported entry. Some of the acceding countries are confident that their referendum will support membership, but others are less certain. In addressing the question of whether the present enlargement will change the European Union significantly one can look at history.

The enlargement is the fifth of the European Union and its predecessors. The original members—France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg—admitted Britain, Ireland, and Denmark in 1973. Greece was admitted in 1981, Portugal and Spain in 1986, and Austria, Finland and Sweden in 1995. (Brezigar, 2003) These enlargements resulted in the alteration of some balances between southern and northern members. The enlargements added to the number of those who believed in a strong federal

centre and they added to the number of those who believed that the European Union should simply be a loose collection of sovereign states.

Yet the European Union remained very much the same. This was despite a considerable growth in the numbers of EU citizens and in the area covered by the European Union. For its part, the present enlargement will mean very considerable changes in population and area. An initial enlargement by ten will mean that the European Union will have more than 450 million citizens in 25 countries rather than its present 370 million in 15 countries. In area, the European Union will increase by 34 per cent, compared with the present area of the European Union of the 15.

The ten new countries will represent about 16.5 per cent of the population of the European Union of the 25. If Romania and Bulgaria are admitted in 2004 and Turkey not long after, another 97 million plus people will be added. (Dinan, 2005) the first place, not only is it the biggest enlargement that the European Union and its predecessors have ever undertaken but also it exceeds all previous enlargements put together. There are always periods of adjustment when the membership of an organisation is changed.

In this case the membership is being increased by 66 per cent. If there are 27 members within a few years the change will amount to 80 per cent. ...