

## Supplementary Reading for

### Chapter 8 EU Enlargement

#### Continuing enlargement and continuing integration

There is much work to be done during the Netherlands Presidency and beyond to integrate the new Europe successfully, Dutch prime minister and new EU Council President, Jan Peter Balkenende, told the European Parliament in Strasbourg last week. He summed UP the key challenges as: “Internally, by working for consolidation of the enlarged Union, for sustainable economic growth, for security and for a sound financial foundation for the years ahead; externally, by looking ahead, together with our partners elsewhere in the world, and by operating more decisively, as a Union, on the world stage.”

Presenting the Netherlands Presidency's priorities for the next six months to the Parliament, Balkenende said: “The ten countries which joined on 1 May 2004 need to be able to feel completely at ease within the Union as quickly as possible. The Presidency has a particular responsibility in this. We shall do our level best to ensure that the new Member States can fully participate in all of the Union's proceedings as soon as possible”.

“At the same time”, he went on, “we want to pave the way thoroughly for future enlargements. Membership negotiations with Bulgaria were completed a short while ago. Those with Romania have reached a very advanced stage. Membership negotiations with Croatia are to begin next year. In December, too, the European Council is to consider whether Turkey fulfils the Copenhagen political criteria for human rights and democracy. If so, membership negotiations will be opened with Turkey as well.”

And on the question of whether to open talks with Turkey, he insisted: “The decision must be arrived at honestly, under the ground rules to which we previously, in 2002, firmly committed ourselves. That means strict application of the criteria laid down, but without inventing any new criteria. We must not allow ourselves to be guided by fear, e.g. of Islam. Raising barriers to any particular religion does not fit in with Europe's shared values. Our opposition should be directed not against religions but against people and groups misusing their religion to get their way by force. Islam is not the problem. Muslims, Christians and people of other beliefs can live together perfectly well. The problem is not religion but misuse of religion to sow hatred and intolerance and to repress women.”

Balkenende recognised, nonetheless, that the decision concerning Turkey does “greatly concern

and trouble many people”. He said the Presidency wants to make possible “a well-founded decision which gains all-round endorsement and will also hold firm in future.”

And on the international dimension of the EU, Balkenende said: “As a result of the most recent enlargement, the EU has gained not only new members, but also new neighbours. We feel closely associated with them and want to strengthen our ties with them. The same applies to countries in the ‘wider Middle East’ and the Mediterranean. The Netherlands Presidency is keen to work towards increasing stability in that region and encouraging reforms in the political, economic and sociocultural arenas. The Barcelona process must be strengthened and intensified.”

The Council President also looked more widely at the challenges facing the new enlarged Europe, identifying what he described as a paradox: “On the one hand, we have seen the dream of the founders of the European Union fulfilled. The countries of Europe have dared to throw in their lot together, and have thereby brought about reconciliation, stability and prosperity. Whichever way you look at it, that is a huge achievement. On the other hand, however, it is becoming increasingly clear that such cooperation and such a feeling of solidarity are no longer obvious to many people. We seem to be finding it more and more difficult to identify our common ground, as if we have lost sight of what connects us at the deepest level. This is something which cannot be ignored, especially now that the EU is working intensively on its enlargement. Before an edifice can be extended, it must be ensured that its foundations remain solid, otherwise the entire structure and therefore all its inhabitants are at risk.”

For this reason, the Netherlands is organising a debate “on the importance of European values in 2004. The fact that such values are enshrined in the Constitution is not enough. They must also live on in people's minds and hearts”, said Balkenende. “We will devote a number of meetings to that subject and develop initiatives to stimulate discussion of European affairs with Europe's citizens. In this way, we hope to make Europe's citizens more aware of what it means to be European. What makes Europe so valuable is that we are a community in which freedom, respect and solidarity hold equal weight. Are we sufficiently aware of the importance of that fact?”, he demanded.

During his remarks, Balkenende also paid tribute to the Irish Presidency “for the great job done” by Irish prime minister Bertie Ahern and his team – notably “successful enlargement to bring in ten countries”.

## **New commission president for a new enlarged EU**

José Manuel Durão Barroso, confirmed last week as President of the European

Commission from November 1, made clear in his remarks to the European Parliament that he now wants to build on the success of EU enlargement. “The 1st of May was an event of historic proportions with the accession of ten new member states”, he said. “But now we have to work to ensure the success of a reunited Europe, in order to guarantee prosperity, solidarity and security of our continent.”

The new Commission President urged a generous attitude to the task of building the new Europe. “The Union needs to match its political ambition with its financial resources. You cannot have more Europe for less money, especially if we want a similar level of solidarity towards the new member states as we have shown to the less developed regions in the past.”

In his speech to the Parliament, Barroso made explicit allusion to the importance of this moment in an enlarged Europe. “I feel privileged to stand here before the first democratically elected Parliament of an enlarged European Union. You are the representatives of 450 million Europeans. Your election brings an end to half a century of division. This assembly symbolises the renaissance of freedom and democracy – spreading to every corner of our continent from the Mediterranean to the Baltic Sea. We are united in our rich diversity - national, regional, cultural, linguistic and political. Never before has there been an experiment like ours: to forge, democratically, a union out of the diverse nations of Europe.”

“Over fifty years we have designed a new and unique way of working together”, he said. “We have pooled limited parts of our sovereignty to face common challenges. We have shown that our nation-states are stronger when we act together in areas where Europe delivers the best results. Let us never underestimate this great European achievement.”

European People’s Party secretary general Antonio López-Istúriz greeted the confirmation with delight, with a similar view to making enlargement work: “We are sure that Barroso will head an independent and strong Commission, which will work with the European Parliament and the European Council in favour of a successful enlarged Union”, he said.

## **Prodi sees enlargement challenges for new president**

“Being president is a big challenge: he will have to guide the work of an institution that will feel the effects of enlargement, the Constitution’s approval and major world issues more keenly than the other institutions -- precisely because it is elected directly”, said Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission, congratulating Josep Borrell on his election last week as the European Parliament’s new President.

“The new President takes over at an exceptional time and this needs stressing”, said Prodi.

Enlargement is “an undeniable success of the Union”, but, he warned, it will bring new complexities to the way the Parliament – and the EU - works too. “Hard negotiations and the fact that all bore the common interest in mind now mean that 25 States can share their hopes for the future.” But if it all works out as it should, concluded Prodi, “together, the Commission and Parliament can give new impetus to the European integration process.”

“The new Europe is taking shape before our eyes in this House. It is an immensely moving and exciting development”, said Prodi. And the Constitution – when it is ratified – “will allow the enlarged Union to work more effectively in the interest of its peoples.”

Reflecting on his own tenure as Commission President, Prodi also told the Parliament: “The greatest achievement of the last five years has been the removal of the wall that divided the continent into two for half a century. On the first of May this year, a singular political achievement was realised. Now more than ever, the strengths of the EU model and the values on which it is founded, namely peace, freedom and solidarity, come to the fore. I am convinced that, with enlargement, we have improved the security and the prospects for growth of the entire Union.”

In his view, “On the crest of this success we should now complete the unification of Europe by opening the door to the Balkans. The Macedonian government has already applied for accession and is moving with studied determination towards that goal. Croatia is already moving down the same path; the other countries will follow, each at its own pace, and I know that the Commission will always lend its support.”

“Ever since I entered into office”, said Prodi, “I have believed that only the EU can guarantee lasting stability and development in this part of our continent. Only the European model can help these people, so close to us, to overcome old and new divisions.”

Enlargement is far from over, he made clear. “Since the historic events of 1 May 2004, the day on which the Union gained ten new countries and 75 million new citizens, we have continued our efforts towards the unification of Europe”, Prodi insisted. “Negotiations with Bulgaria are technically over. As regards Romania, I intend to do everything in my power to carry negotiations forward as rapidly as possible and thus comply with commitments made which, it will be recalled, are the outcome of the negotiations conducted in 2004, provided that the country is ready.”

And for Turkey - “By October my Commission will have adopted the report and the opinion on the initiation of accession negotiations with Turkey. Our opinion will form the basis of the Council decisions and public expectations are high. It was without hesitation that I accepted the mandate entrusted to me in December 2002 by the European Council to present a report on Turkey’s compliance with the political criteria of Copenhagen and to send a report on this matter to the Council. I can confirm that we have every intention of seeing this task through and presenting the

results of our labours by the beginning of October.”

Prodi didn't give away anything on the results – but did underline how seriously the Commission was taking its duties. “It would be premature to reveal the contents of the report, but I can say that we are collecting analyses, facts and evidence at every level. We can thus ensure that our studies are truly exhaustive and absolutely objective. Total impartiality is what we owe our young people, our fellow citizens and the Turkish people who hope to join us.”

And casting his view more extensively into the wider Europe, Prodi remarked: “The new neighbourhood policy has given us an original and realistic formula for putting forward a new model for our increasingly closer relationship with our new neighbours, creating a ring of friendly countries throughout the region, from Morocco to Russia.”

### **Questions for discussion:**

1. What are the Netherlands Presidency's priorities for the next six months?
2. What might be the biggest concern of the European Union over the membership of Turkey?
3. What are the challenges facing the new enlarged EU?
4. According to Barroso, the new president, how can Europe make enlargement work?
5. What is the view of the current President Prodi concerning the future enlargement?