



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**Brussels, 7 June 2006**

**10249/06**

**LIMITE**

**ELARG 64  
COWEB 121**

**"I" ITEM NOTE**

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from :	Antici Group
on :	7 June 2006
to :	Permanent Representatives' Committee
Subject :	Approval of the remit for the Working Party on Enlargement and Countries Negotiating Accession to the EU

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1. At the meeting of the Permanent Representatives' Committee on 26 April 2006 (see doc. 8701/06), delegations supported reinforcing the political dialogue and monitoring of the political criteria as an essential element of the pre-accession process. Delegations also supported the idea of merging the Working Party on Enlargement with the Working Party on Central and Southeast Europe, and for the merged group to be responsible for all negotiating candidate countries. The Committee agreed that it would return to an examination of these suggestions on the basis of a Presidency proposal.

2. With regard to reinforcing the political dialogue and monitoring of the political criteria, the Presidency proposes that the merged working party be informed in advance and debriefed by the Presidency and the Commission about their respective meetings on issues relating to the Copenhagen political criteria. This would allow the preparation of accession negotiations to be more closely informed of progress on the ground by involving Member States in the preparation of the political dialogue and in the area of the Copenhagen political criteria.
3. The proposed remit for the new Working Party on Enlargement and Countries Negotiating Accession to the EU is set out in Annex. It provides for those responsibilities currently under the remit of the Working Party on Central and Southeast Europe to be transferred to the new Working Party. As a result, the Working Party on Central and Southeast Europe would be removed from the List of Council Preparatory Bodies and the Working Party on Enlargement would be replaced by the new Working Party. Furthermore, those aspects regarding bilateral relations with Croatia (in particular under the Stabilisation and Association Agreements) currently under the remit of the Working Party on the Western Balkans Region would equally be transferred to the new Working Party on Enlargement and Countries Negotiating Accession to the EU. The remit of the Working Party on the Western Balkans Region is amended accordingly.
4. In light of the above, the Permanent Representatives' Committee is invited to:
  - approve the remit for the Working Party on Enlargement and Countries Negotiating Accession to the EU set out in Annex;
  - agree that this remit will take effect from the beginning of the Finnish Presidency in July 2006.

**DRAFT REMIT FOR THE WORKING PARTY ON ENLARGEMENT  
AND COUNTRIES NEGOTIATING ACCESSION TO THE EU**

1. The Working Party on Enlargement and Countries Negotiating Accession to the EU is a working party under the heading "General Affairs" in the List of Council Preparatory Bodies<sup>1</sup> and reports to the Permanent Representatives' Committee (part 2).
2. From July 2006, the Working Party on Enlargement and Countries Negotiating Accession to the EU will be responsible for:
  - all horizontal issues concerning enlargement, including pre-accession strategies for candidate countries (in particular financial assistance and the establishment of Accession Partnerships with those countries), as well as monitoring of preparations for accession by acceding countries;
  - the preparation of accession negotiations with candidate countries, in line with the relevant European Council decisions and the respective internal arrangements agreed by the Council;
  - close and regular monitoring of preparations for accession by the candidate countries negotiating accession including their progress towards meeting the Copenhagen criteria;

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<sup>1</sup> Doc. 8605/06 POLGEN 45.

- close and regular monitoring of respect for the Copenhagen political criteria by the candidate countries negotiating accession, including the timely preparation and follow-up of political dialogue meetings<sup>2</sup>. For this purpose, and for the purpose of preparing meetings with third countries<sup>3</sup>, the Working Party on Enlargement and Countries Negotiating Accession to the EU may also meet in the special composition of a "capitals format"<sup>4</sup>;
- bilateral relations with the candidate countries negotiating accession, including under the respective Association Agreements and in particular preparation of meetings and decisions of the relevant Association Agreement bodies.

3. It is understood that any candidate country from the Western Balkans region negotiating accession remains part of the Stabilisation and Association Process. Items related to such candidate country's role in regional issues, initiatives and regional cooperation will remain the responsibility of the Working Party on the Western Balkans Region (COWEB), with a view to the Union maintaining a consistent and fully coordinated policy in the region.

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<sup>2</sup> The Working Party will be informed in advance and debriefed by the Presidency on troika meetings held at Ministerial and political director level with the candidate countries negotiating accession, and by the Commission on scheduled meetings, developments and the results of its regular contacts with these countries.

<sup>3</sup> It is understood that the subjects discussed in third country meetings will remain limited to those pertaining to external and CFSP matters.

<sup>4</sup> Summaries of "capitals format" as well as troika format meetings at political directors' and ministerial level will continue to be distributed via COREU, as appropriate.