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Europe's Agenda 2000

Strengthening and widening the European Union

Under the heading of « Agenda 2000 » the European Union reformed in 1999 a number of its important policies. The new EU actions aim to solve common European challenges in new and efficient ways, but the reforms are also part of the effort to prepare the European Union for enlargement with a number of new member countries. Practical preparations are well under way for this historic opportunity to heal the previous divisions of Europe, and the financial help from the EU to the applicant countries will be doubled. The European agricultural policy will in the future focus more on the environment, food quality and the vitality of rural life. The EU regional policy continues to be one of the main instruments of solidarity among Europeans, helping to create jobs and economic development in less well-off regions. The overall frames for spending from the EU budget have been settled until the year 2006.

Stronger foundations

The European Union (EU) is shaping up for a new millennium, steadily transforming itself, deepening its integration and broadening its responsibilities.

Some of these changes anticipate the political, economic and security challenges that are bound to emerge in the next couple of decades. Others are about preparing the Union for a dramatic increase in membership - involving up to 13 additional countries - in the early years of the new century.

Very important foundations for the future were laid in 1999:

- 1 January: **the euro was born** with the launch of Economic and Monetary Union;

- 24-25 March: **Agenda 2000 reforms to modernise key policies and to prepare the Union for enlargement** were agreed by European heads of state or government at the European Council in Berlin;

- 1 May: **the Treaty of Amsterdam came into force,** strengthening democratic controls and putting the EU to work in new areas such as job creation and protecting our societies against organised crime and illegal immigration;

- To complete a landmark year, the Union's forward momentum was boosted in June 1999 by the election for a five-year term of a **new European Parliament**, and in the autumn by the arrival in office of a **new European Commission** under the presidency of the former Italian Prime Minister, Romano Prodi.

Agenda 2000: a manifesto for change

Of the new directions for the Union that were set in 1999, none is more essential than the Agenda 2000 package of reforms. Based on proposals from the European Commission, and agreed upon at the EU summit in Berlin in March 1999, they responded to popular demands in Europe for:

- greater equality of opportunity and a better quality of life for people living in areas and regions in special need;
- passing on to the next generation a natural environment that is beginning to recover from the damage and degradation inflicted in the past;
- access to a wide range of high quality foodstuffs that are safe to eat and produced at competitive prices by a farming population guaranteed reasonable incomes;
- responsible and efficient management of the Union's finances so that expenditure is as disciplined as that of Member States.

At the same time, one of the greatest tasks for the EU is to heal the divisions of Europe and to extend the same peace and prosperity to the central and eastern European countries that present EU countries have. The Agenda 2000 reform process is also about reshaping the Union so that it can make a success of enlargement and at the same time deliver better economic prospects for Europe’s citizens. The challenge for the EU is to negotiate enlargement with up to 13 countries who want to join, while at the same time vigorously preparing them for the moment of accession and being able to pay for these "pre-accession" preparations.

A three part challenge

Emphasising the need to modernise and strengthen the Union, the Commission presented proposals that focused on three central challenges:

1. "to update the European Model of Agriculture"

Quite different from many of its competitors, the European model of agriculture is designed to fulfil several functions, including promoting economic and environmental development so as to preserve rural ways of life and countryside landscapes. Keeping farming economically healthy is crucial, and this requires updating a Common Agricultural Policy that was devised for a community of 6 Member States, not 15 as it is now, and certainly not for 28 as the EU may become.

2. "to narrow the gaps in wealth and economic prospects between regions "

The EU has been addressing the challenge of regional economic differences for well over 20 years. The problem is that the task will be even tougher after enlargement because per capita incomes in the applicant countries are only one third of the Union's average.

The Commission said it was time the Union's structural funds concentrated aid more firmly on those areas and regions whose local economies are clearly in need of revival.

3. "to honour priorities while enjoying only very modest increases in budget income until 2006"

The Commission outlined a very tight financial framework for the years 2000-2006. It tried to ensure that there would be enough money in the EU's budget to meet the costs of enlargement during this period, while also adopting the tight spending approach which the Member States has agreed upon for themselves in connection with the Economic and Monetary Union.

Decision time in Berlin

The reforms were first outlined in the documents with the title "Agenda 2000" published by the Commission in July 1997. After a thorough public debate all over Europe reforms were finally agreed by the heads of state or government of the 15 EU countries at their meeting in Berlin in March 1999. An agreement was later reached with the European Parliament, and the decisions were put in the shape of detailed legislation, which were passed by all the EU institutions.

The following sections explain the main implications of the Agenda 2000 reforms.

A leaner, greener European model of agriculture: contented consumers, cleaner countryside, competitive farmers, stable spending

Once apparently stable and timeless, the countryside is now under constant pressure to change. So too must policies for the countryside, beginning with the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) itself.

The CAP was conceived in the 1950s and 1960s for a Europe which still had keen memories of food shortages and rural poverty; it was designed to eradicate these problems forever.

One of the main instruments used to this end has been for the EU to guarantee that farmers could get certain prices for their products. This has helped stabilise the market against uncontrollable factors like climate, and ensured that farmers receive a fair and regular income, as well as achieving increased production. At the turn of the century, the CAP has to move on and face new challenges.

Why the CAP needed to be reformed

The roots underlying the Commission's initiative for a radical reform of the agricultural policy lie both within the EU's borders and further afield. The major external factors include growing world demand for food, further moves towards a more liberal global trading environment, and the challenge of the European Union's eastward enlargement.

On the internal front, there are four broad factors. Firstly, there is the very real risk of a return to market imbalances in some sectors. Secondly, the Treaty of Amsterdam, which came into force on May 1 1999, makes it the responsibility of EU lawmakers to integrate environmental concerns into all legislation. Next, the CAP needs to rise to the challenge of greater consumer interest in food safety, quality and animal welfare. Lastly, the CAP must respond to the need for better administration: more decentralisation, greater transparency and simpler rules.

The road to reform

The Commission unveiled proposals for reforming the main sectors of the EU farm economy as well as for rural development in the spring of 1998. After the agreement on the Agenda 2000 package at the EU summit and consultation with the European Parliament, the formal texts were adopted by the Council of Ministers for agriculture in May 1999. While in some respects the policy as finally agreed is not as far-reaching as had originally been proposed, it remains the most radical and wide-ranging reform of the CAP in its history. The reformed CAP is a step towards supporting the broader rural economy rather than agricultural production, and ensures that farmers are rewarded not only for what they produce but also for their general contribution to society.

What was reformed?

The reform decisions covered the arable crops, beef, dairy, and wine sectors. The rules concerning olive oil and tobacco had already been reformed in 1998. Taken together, these sectors make up over half of EU agricultural production. The reform also includes new arrangements for rural development for the period 2000-2006.

Lower guaranteed prices

The guaranteed prices that farmers receive are cut by 20% in the beef sector and 15% in the arable crops and dairy sectors. The cuts will be introduced gradually with the objective of bringing Europe's farmers into closer touch with world market prices, thus helping improve the competitiveness of agricultural products on domestic and world markets with positive impacts on both internal demand and exports levels.

Equally important, the changes will contribute to the progressive integration of the new Member States from Central and Eastern Europe.

A continued commitment to stable farm incomes

The EU maintains its commitment to helping ensure farmers earn a decent living. This is achieved by means of direct payments to farmers, which have been increased to help offset the lower guaranteed prices.

A new approach to the challenges facing rural economies

The new policy for rural development seeks to establish a coherent and sustainable framework for the future of Europe’s rural areas. It complements the reforms of the markets by other actions that promote a competitive, multi-functional farming in the context of a comprehensive strategy for rural development.

Each Member State sets up its own programmes for rural development. They must correspond to the framework of objectives agreed at European level and receive a financial support from the EU. A programme can consist of many different measures: for example help for young farmers, training courses, measures to promote more environmentally-friendly farming methods, etc.

The guiding principles of the new policy are those of decentralisation of responsibilities – from EU to local level - and flexibility of programming based on a 'menu' of actions which can be implemented according to the countries’ specific needs. As a coherent package of measures it has three main objectives:

- to create a stronger agricultural and forestry sector, the latter recognised for the first time as an integral part of the rural development policy;

- to improve the competitiveness of rural areas;
- to maintain the environment and preserve Europe's rural heritage.

Actions to promote the environment are the only compulsory element of the new generation of rural development programmes. This represents a decisive step towards recognising the role agriculture plays in preserving and improving Europe’s natural heritage.

A Community Initiative for the countryside

A key element in the EU strategy for rural development is to involve local people in finding local solutions to local problems. LEADER, one of the four Community Initiatives under the Structural Funds, builds on the successes of previous LEADER programmes in creating new jobs and developing a network to exchange ideas and know-how on rural development issues.

A greener CAP

The integration of environmental goals into the CAP and the development of the role farmers can play in managing natural resources and contributing to landscape conservation are increasingly important objectives for the CAP.

The so-called “agri-environmental measures” will support the sustainable development of rural areas and will respond to society's increasing demand for environmental services by encouraging farmers to use farming practices compatible with environmental protection and natural resources conservation.

As an additional measure which will help in the further 'greening' of the CAP, the compensatory allowances in support of farming in less favoured areas (LFAs) have been extended to areas where farming is restricted by the existence of specific environmental restrictions. Forestry, for its part, has been recognised as an integral part of rural development, serving an ecological, economic and social function.

EU Member State may also make direct payments to farmers conditional on the observance of environmental requirements. In other words, Member States should define environmental measures to be applied by farmers, as well as proportionate penalties for environmental infringements. These could involve, where appropriate, the reduction or cancellation of direct payments.

Preparing the ground for enlargement

The EU has created a specific instrument to help the farm sectors and rural economies of the candidate countries prepare for membership, known as SAPARD. Under the scheme €529 million per year is set aside for structural and rural development programmes. Priorities include investing in farms, developing processing and marketing structures, improving veterinary and plant health controls, and encouraging economic diversification in rural areas.

Local decision-making

The way that direct payments to producers is managed has been reorganised to allow Member States to target specific national or regional priorities. Each EU country will be able to allocate resources freely, subject to certain EU criteria designed to prevent distortions of competition. For example, part of the direct payments for beef and dairy will take the form of a national financial envelope funded from the EU budget which Member States can distribute.

Flexibility and partnership continue to be key words in rural development programming, and in some initiatives, like the LEADER + programme, decisions on how to allocate funds are taken in the rural community itself.

Simplifying the rules

The CAP reform contains important elements of simplification in various sectors. In the wine sector, for instance, there is now one regulation where previously there were twenty-three. In rural development, again, there is now one regulation where before there were nine. The way each programme is run has also been decentralised and simplified.

Towards a European model of agriculture

The new reform will help to develop a genuinely multi-functional, sustainable and competitive agricultural sector, which will also help to secure the future of the more fragile rural regions. It recognises that agriculture has a key role to play in preserving the countryside and natural spaces and in the vitality of rural life. It also seeks to respond to consumer concerns on food safety, quality and animal welfare. Finally, the reform of the CAP aims to ensure that the rural environment is protected and improved for future generations.

A new look regional policy: concentrated aid, focused funding, decentralised management

The European Union Structural Funds in the years 2000-2006 will continue to be one of the main instruments of solidarity among Europeans - helping to create jobs and economic development by investing in infrastructure and training in less well-off regions.

Concentration of financial support is the watchword of regional policy reform under Agenda 2000. In order to use the money from the Structural Funds as efficient as possible, it was decided to concentrate their use by reducing the number of priority objectives from 7 to 3, and nearly 70% of total spending will be targeted on regions whose development is lagging behind ("objective 1").

There are four Structural Funds operating under a common set of rules which ensure that EU grants are given as part of long-term development programmes adopted by the local authorities:

- the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF);
- the European Social Fund (ESF);
- the Guidance section of the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF);
- the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIFG)

Spending volumes agreed for 2000-2006 should allow the EU to maintain all of its current efforts in favour of economic and social cohesion. This means that Member States' current receipts from the Structural Funds will not be diminished as a result of enlargement, although they may be altered by changes in the policy itself.

	Objective 1	Objective 2	Objective 3
What problem?	Regions lagging behind in development	Regions in structural crisis	Regions needing support for education, training and jobs (All regions except Objective1)
EU funds available 2000-2006 (in billion €)	135.9	22.50	24.05
% of Structural Funds budget 1)	69.7%	11.5%	12.3 %
Which funds? 2)	ERDF, ESF, EAGGF, FIFG	ERDF, ESF	ESF
% of population covered	22.2%	18%	(not relevant)

The new Structural Funds 2000-2006

1) The remaining share is dedicated to Community Initiatives

2) The EAGGF and FIFG funds also finance certain other types of actions outside objective 1 regions.

Objective 1: Concentrated help for regions which are lagging behind

"Lagging behind" means that regions qualify for special help if their per capita gross domestic product (i.e. the value of total economic output divided by population) is below 75% of the EU average.

There are such regions in 9 EU countries. These regions include the most remote areas of the EU: the French overseas departments, the Azores, Madeira and the Canary Islands - all below the 75% threshold. Objective 1 furthermore include the less populated parts of Finland and Sweden guaranteed special help in the treaties by which these countries joined the Union in 1996.

A special programme was designed under this objective to support the peace process in Northern Ireland. The PEACE programme was extended for 5 years and allocated €500 million of EU funding, €100 million of which will support projects in the Republic of Ireland.

Objective 2: Moving regions out of crisis and into growth and jobs

Crisis is often caused by the fall-out from economic change. Objective 2 regions need help to deal with problems caused by declining activities. Typically these regions have high unemployment because many people used to work in a particular type of industry which is decreasing considerably. A maximum of 18% of the EU's population is covered by this objective, which should breakdown into 10% in industrial and service areas, 5% in rural areas, 2% in urban areas and 1% in areas dependent on the fishing industry.

Transitional support

Regions and areas eligible for funding under the 1994-99 arrangements which lose entitlement under the redesigned programme will receive gradually decreasing payments until the end of 2005.

Objective 3: education, training and employment: helping people to adapt and prepare for change

Funding will be available for all areas not covered by Objective 1. Objective 3 will provide a policy frame of reference for all EU measures to promote human resources, i.e. all kind of activities that make citizens more qualified for work. Moreover, it will contribute to the new European Employment Strategy and the respective National Action Plans for Employment, which each EU country has established as part of a joint effort to create employment.

Measures that could be given funding have been broadly defined and include:

- active labour market policies to combat unemployment;
- promoting equal opportunities for all in accessing the labour market;
- helping to improve peoples' employment prospects through lifelong education and training systems;
- measures to anticipate and help adjustment to economic and social change;
- positive action for women to improve their participation in the labour market.

Community Initiatives

These policies attempt to develop common solutions to common problems of regional development. Agenda 2000 reduces Community Initiatives from 13 to four, covering the following themes:

- transnational, cross-border and inter-regional cooperation designed to stimulate a balanced development across the European territory (INTERREG);
- economic and social conversion of crisis-hit towns and cities (URBAN);

- rural development (LEADER);

- transnational cooperation to identify new means of fighting all forms of discrimination and inequality preventing men and women getting jobs (EQUAL).

These four initiatives are due to receive 5.35% of total Structural Funds during the 2000-2006 period.

Management of the programmes: decentralisation is the principle

Under the new arrangements, there will be a clearer division of responsibilities in the management of the Structural Funds and also a stronger application of the principle of "subsidiarity" - taking decisions as close as possible to the people affected.

Member States will take charge of the management of the programmes and their financing. This means they have to guarantee that EU funds are being efficiently used and controlled and they must also prevent, detect and correct any irregularities.

The Cohesion Fund: continued support

The Cohesion Fund will continue to assist Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain, as it has done since 1994 because their per capita Gross National Product (GNP) is less than 90% of the EU average. The purpose of the € 18 billion allocated for the seven years is to help them to close the standard of living gap by supporting environmental and transport infrastructure projects. The Cohesion Fund works in addition to the four "Structural Funds", under slightly different technical arrangements.

In the year 2003 the Commission will check whether all these states are still eligible to support from the Cohesion Fund. If a Member State climbs above the 90% average GNP ceiling and is no longer eligible, the total Fund will be reduced accordingly.

Financial framework 2000-2006: funds available for reform and enlargement but spending on a tight rein

The agreement that has been reached on the seven-year framework for EU's budget reflects the determination of the Member States, the Commission and the European Parliament to ensure that:

- overall EU spending will be disciplined;
- enlargement can be achieved without raising the existing ceiling on the EU's revenues;
- spending on the main policies - agriculture and regional development – can be made more efficient and better controlled;
- Member States' contributions to the EU budget should be modified to give a better reflection of their ability to pay.

Priorities have been set

Total budget allocations are presented in the table. They show a picture of disciplined financial responsibility for the years 2000-2006:

- agricultural spending peaks in 2002 and then declines;
- structural funding declines by just over 8% but will be much more concentrated on regions genuinely in need;
- an assumption of an enlargement of EU to six new countries as early as 2002 has been made and funds are earmarked for this purpose;
- substantial funds will be available to finance pre-accession preparations in the candidate countries;
- throughout the period foreseen spending does not consume all available revenues - quite a large safety margin has been preserved within the revenue ceiling of 1.27% of gross national product.

Financing the budget

The EU's general budget is financed by revenues known as "own resources" which are drawn from customs duties, agricultural levies and some of the tax revenues collected by Member States. The limit on EU's resources is 1.27% of the combined Gross National Product of the 15 Member States and was not changed by the 1999-reforms. However, the Heads of state or government brought in three budgetary reforms to achieve a better balance in Member States' contributions to EU's expenditures:

- they reduced the size of Member States' Value Added Tax payments to the budget;

- they increased the amount of border tariffs and levies Member States can hold back from the Union to cover collection costs and fighting fraud;

- they maintained, with some minor changes to avoid windfall benefits, the special compensation paid to the United Kingdom since 1984, while they reduced the burden of financing the British compensation which falls on Germany, the Netherlands, Austria and Sweden.

The Interinstitutional Agreement

In May 1999, the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission reached a new interinstitutional agreement which commits them to respect the spending ceilings. They also pledged to cooperate more effectively and apply discipline in the Union's budgetary procedures.

	2000	**2001**	**2002**	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**
Agriculture	40 920	42 800	43 900	43 770	42 760	41 930	41 660
Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund	32 045	31 455	30 865	30 285	29 595	29 595	29 170
Internal policies	5 930	6 040	6 150	6 260	6 370	6480	6 600
External action	4 550	4 560	4 570	4 580	4 590	4 600	4 610
Administration	4 560	4 600	4 700	4 800	4 900	5 000	5 100
Reserves	900	900	650	400	400	400	400
Pre-accession aid to applicant countries	3 120	3 120	3 120	3 120	3 120	3 120	3 120
Total appropriations for commitments	92 025	93 475	93 955	93 215	91 735	91 125	90 660
Appropriations for payments reserved for possible new Member States after accession	-	-	4 140	6 710	8 890	11 440	14 220
Total ceiling on appropriations for payments	89 600	91 110	98 360	101 590	100 800	101 600	103 840
Ceiling on appropriations for payments as % of GNP of the EU countries	1.13%	1.12%	1.18%	1.19%	1.15%	1.13%	1.13 %

Financial perspectives: what the EU will spend 2000-2006

The "Financial perspectives" is a political agreement about the upper ceilings for EU's spending. Each year the annual EU budget is decided within these ceilings by the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers.
The figures are million euro expressed in the 1999 price-level, appropriations for commitments. The EU budget operates with separate appropriations for the decision to spend a sum ("commitments") and the later transfer of the sum ("payment"). One euro (€) corresponds to app. Irish £ 0.79 or British £ 0.67.

Enlargement: the "historic priority" is on track

In their conclusions to the summit in Berlin in March 1999, the heads of state or government sought to reassure the candidate countries for membership of the Union that "Enlargement remains a historic priority for the European Union. The accession negotiations will continue each in accordance with its own rhythm and as rapidly as possible."

The EU's commitment is based on the conviction that enlargement is a historic opportunity for creating a stronger, wider, more stable Europe. This will be a great achievement for the 500 million citizens of what would be a 28-member European Union.

The benefits for existing Members will be a more influential European voice in world affairs, a broader, and therefore more effective, cooperation in dealing with challenges such as environmental pollution and organised crime and also opportunities for business to develop new markets and new economies of scale.

The attractions of membership for the applicants from central, eastern and south-eastern Europe are democratic and social stability, as well as enhanced prosperity. For many of these countries joining the Union is almost a homecoming, a return to European political and cultural traditions that were denied them for decades.

Negotiations well under way

Agenda 2000 recommended that accession negotiations should begin with Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia. Negotiations began in March 1998 and are focusing specifically on the terms under which candidates adopt and enforce the entire body of EU rules and regulations, known as the “acquis communautaire”.

Negotiations with these six countries will not necessarily be concluded at the same time. They are conducted individually and the pace of each negotiation will depend on the degree of preparation by each candidate country and the complexity of the issues to be resolved. For this reason, how long each negotiation will last cannot be predicted in advance.

During the entire process, the EU is making every effort to negotiate fairly and objectively, treating all candidates equally.

The way to membership

The Commission's Agenda 2000 proposals from 1997 also included its "opinions" on the candidate countries' applications for membership. Each opinion evaluated a country's readiness for membership, as measured against the objective criteria for membership that the EU laid down already in 1993. Membership requires that a country has a stable democracy that guarantees the rule of law, human rights and protection of minorities, a functioning market economy and that it has a public administration that is able to apply and manage EU rules and regulations. The Commission's approach was forward-looking and assessed progress that could be expected from each candidate country.

The Commission recommended that accession negotiations start with the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia and Cyprus.

On the basis of the Commission's recommendations, the EU summit in Luxembourg in December 1997 launched a process for all countries wishing to join the EU. It encompasses the "European Conference", a multilateral forum for discussing issues of common interest, and an inclusive accession process, which brings together all the ten central and eastern European candidates, Cyprus as well as Malta, which in 1998 reactivated its earlier application for membership. It is an inclusive process in the sense that all these countries are destined to join the EU on the basis of the same criteria, regardless of whether or not they have already started negotiations. The accession process is driven by an enhanced pre-accession strategy, designed to prepare all candidate countries for membership.

Full accession negotiations with other candidate countries can begin as soon as their progress towards fulfilling the criteria is satisfactory.

Accession Partnerships - a key element of the accession process

In order for a new member to settle in comfortably, it has to prepare itself thoroughly. This requires more than simply adopting the EU's laws and regulations. Its public administration, its financial markets, its industrial and service economies must all be in a condition not just to survive but to prosper in the new framework.

Accession Partnerships help each candidate to get into shape. Each Partnership is an agreement between the EU and a candidate country, which is tailored for the country's particular needs and brings together in one framework all the various forms of EU financial and other support.

Doubling financial assistance

The Berlin summit more than doubled pre-accession assistance to the candidate countries of central and eastern Europe from the year 2000 onwards, making €3,120 million available every year between 2000 and 2006. These funds are channelled through the Phare Programme, which has been the EU aid programme for these countries since 1990, and two new pre-accession instruments (ISPA, the fund for financing investment in transport and the environment, and SAPARD, the fund for modernising agriculture and rural development).

When the first new Member States join the EU, pre-accession funds that had been allocated to them will be freed for use in the other candidates, so that the same total resources will help a smaller number of countries.

New skills and investments

In Agenda 2000, the European Commission proposed to focus the Phare Programme on preparing the candidate countries for EU membership by concentrating its support on two priorities that are crucial for the countries to function well within the EU: institution building and investment support.

Institution building means adapting and strengthening democratic institutions, public administration and organisations so that, once adopted, EU legislation or the national equivalent is properly implemented and enforced. This requires development of the necessary structures, human resources and management skills.

Candidate countries also have to make the considerable **investment** in adapting their enterprises and main infrastructure to respect EU norms and standards in areas such as environment, nuclear safety, transport safety, working conditions and marketing of food products and consumer information.

Twinning

Twinning was launched in May 1998 as a key initiative for helping candidate countries to meet the same standards as Member States in implementing and enforcing EU norms, rules and regulations.

As the word suggests, it involves bringing together administrations and semi-public organisations in a candidate country with a counterpart from an EU Member States to work on a specific project. Usually this will involve developing and implementing a project that ensures the transposition, enforcement and implementation of a specific part of the EU laws. The scheme is not designed to foster general cooperation but to deliver specific results agreed between the parties.

Initially, twinning has been focused on the four priority sectors that have been identified in the Accession Partnerships: agriculture, environment, finance and justice and home affairs. The latter means for example to improve the border controls in applicant countries and to combat drug-related and others forms of serious crime.

Other areas may be added to extend, gradually, the twinning process to cover the whole body of EU rules..

Access to EU programmes

All candidate countries from central Europe as well as Cyprus can already participate in the EU programmes that support cooperation and exchanges across border among citizens and business. These include, for example, the Socrates and Leonardo programmes in the fields of education and vocational training, but can also concern EU programmes for culture, research, energy, the environment and small and medium-sized enterprises. Malta and Turkey are also likely to have this opportunity.

Participation in EU agencies is also in prospect, particularly in the Environment Agency and the Monitoring Centre for Drugs.

Conclusions

The EU confounded its critics and doubters by putting into place all of the key elements of Agenda 2000 by mid-1999. There were many who said that the issues were too complicated, the decision-making procedures too long-winded and the conflicts of interest too great for the Union to meet such a deadline.

The successful launch testifies to the determination of all the institutions - the Council, the Parliament and the Commission - to equip the Union with the policies and the political will to meet the needs of its citizens. In the next few years, their numbers will be greatly expanded by the addition of new Member States whose arrival will bring new problems and new opportunities.

Agenda 2000 anticipates many of these problems. As it moves into another millennium, Europe must now grasp the new opportunities opening up for its future growth and development.

Further reading

« Europa » on the internet : europa.eu.int/comm/agenda2000.
This is the site within the EU institutions' « Europa » server on the internet, which guide you to detailed information related to the Agenda 2000 reforms.

European Commission: *Agenda 2000***.** Volume 1: *For a stronger and wider EU.* Volume 2 : *The challenge of enlargement*. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1997. cat. no. CB-CO-97-379-EN-C and CB-CO-97-380-EN-C,. Also published as Bulletin of the European Union, Supplement 1997/05, cat. n° CM-NF-97-005-EN-C. The full text of this original document from 1997 is also available on internet via the above-mentioned address.

The European Commission has published various free information publications about subjects dealt with in this brochure; see the catalogue on internet at europa.eu.int/comm/dg10/publications.