

Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA)

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The Council adopted **conclusions** confirming that the coherent implementation of the renewed consensus on enlargement approved by the European Council on 14 and 15 December 2006 which is based on the consolidation of commitments, fair and rigorous conditionality, better communication and the EU's capacity to integrate new members, continues to form the basis for EU action at all stages of the enlargement process, with each country being assessed on its own merits.

The Council welcomes the support provided to the enlargement process through financial assistance, in particular in the form of the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA), and emphasises the essential link between enlargement policy priorities and financial assistance, in line with the results from the recent conferences designed to improve aid effectiveness, and welcomes the efforts by the Commission to closely align IPA annual programmes with the priorities identified in the Progress Reports.

The conclusions recall that **Iceland** is a country with long and deep democratic roots, with the potential to make a significant contribution to the EU, both strategically and politically. The country is already closely integrated with the EU in several areas, through its membership of the European Economic Area and the Schengen area.

The Council recalls that it invited the Commission in July 2009 to submit its opinion on Iceland's application for membership in the European Union. The application will be assessed according to the principles set out in the Treaty and the criteria defined by the Copenhagen European Council in 1993, as well as the December 2006 European Council conclusions on the renewed consensus for enlargement. The Council agrees to return to the matter when the Commission has presented its opinion.

In addition, the Council notes that the inclusion of Iceland as a country eligible for preaccession assistance, under the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA), would contribute to preparations for its candidacy.