2004 enlargement: progress towards accession by the candidate countries. Strategy paper and report

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The Council discussed the way ahead with a view to concluding accession negotiations with Cyprus, Malta, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, the Czech Republic and Slovenia in time for the European Council in Copenhagen on 12 and 13 December 2002. Taking into consideration the discussion at the Ministerial meeting with these countries in the margins of the Council, the Council decided that the accession of these countries to the Union would take place on 1 May 2004. Accordingly, it was confirmed that these countries will participate as Member States in the 2004 elections for the European Parliament. The Commissioners from the new Member States will join the Commission upon accession. It was also confirmed that, in line with Article 8 of Declaration attached to the Treaty of Nice, the acceding States will fully participate in the forthcoming Intergovernmental Conference, while candidates which are still negotiating will participate as observers. With a view to concluding negotiations with these ten candidate countries, the presidency with the help of the Commission will elaborate an offer to each candidate on all outstanding issues, including those with a financial impact. This offer, while providing for the necessary flexibility towards the needs of the candidates, will respect the acquis, the ceilings set at Berlin for financing enlargement and the decision taken by the European Council in Brussels. Lastly, the Council took note of a presentation by the Commission of its proposal for roadmaps and increased financial assistance for Bulgaria and Romania in line with the decisions of the European Council in Brussels, with a view to preparing the relevant decisions to be taken by the European Council at Copenhagen.