The European Union and the region of Kaliningrad

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PURPOSE: to present a Communication from the Commission to the Council on the EU and Kaliningrad.
CONTENT: In keeping with the Commission's Enlargement Strategy paper of November 2000, the purpose of this Communication is to contribute to a debate which the EU should launch with Russia (including Kaliningrad), and with the two neighbouring future Member States, Poland and Lithuania, on issues which will affect their common future. The Communication looks at the impact of EU enlargement and distinguishes between issues which will arise for all Russian regions and those which are specific to Kaliningrad. Enlargement of the EU will be a positive development for its neighbours, contributing to stability and prosperity. Russia stands to benefit substantially from enlargement and regions such as Kaliningrad are well placed to take advantage of the new opportunities which will be created. This paper does not set out formal Commission proposals for decision, but rather outlines ideas and options for discussion between the parties. Against this background, the main suggestions contained in this Communication are the following: - the EU and Russia examine the trade impact of enlargement on Kaliningrad, in the trade and industry sub-committeee of the PCA, during the first half of 2001; - the EU, Russia, Poland and Lithuania discuss the functional manangement of border crossings, starting with the main road and rail crossings, particularly those linking the region to the Pan-European Transport Corridors I and IX. Discussion should include customs, border guard, phytosanitary, veterinary and health aspects. Discussions could be held in working groups, with Russia under the relevant PCA sub-committees and with Lithuania and Poland within the framework of the European Agreement; - the output of the Tacis study on a multi-modal transport strategy be discussed with the IFIs and the Russian and neighbouring countries authorities, with a view to securing funding for priority projects; - a Tacis study on energy needs, energy potential and possible scenarios should be undertaken; - the practical measures to conduct proper and efficient border control be continued, facilitating the movement of persons and goods across the future external borders. The use of liaison officers could be considered; - without pre-empting accession negotiaitons with Poland and Lithuania, EU technical and financial assistance can contribute to the creation of a functioning border control system, including appropriate sufficiently fake-proof travel documents; - the suitability of Community rules on small border traffic and transit for the specific situation in Kaliningrad be assessed; - in the wider context of Community policies on visas and on external borders, the cost of passports (the responsibility of Russia) could also be examined, as well as the cost of visas (responsibility of current and future EU Member States); - the EU and Russia quickly conclude a readmission agreement; - the EU should provide the administration and population of Kaliningrad and bordering regions with information on the wayin which the future external border of the EU will function taking into account the need for fast and efficient border crossing for goods and people while preventing illegal activities; - the EU-Kaliningrad fisheries relations to be reviewed in light of the consequences of enlargement on fishing access and of future fisheries agreements between the EU and Russia; - the EU and Russia discuss key issues of environmental concern in Kaliningrad and finally, - issues concering Kaliningrad be addressed in co-operation with Russia in the relevant PCA bodies and, in parallel, that the EU continue to discuss the same issues with Lithuania and Poland in the framework of the Europe Agreements.