

A EUROPE FOR ALL

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The EU closes an almost decade old chapter with the formal accession of ten new member states on 1 May 2004: the inclusion of the Other Europe, doubling its size, extending from Portugal to the frontiers of Russia. For the first time in history, it is possible that democracy may thrive over the whole of Europe.

This ambitious venture called for efforts on both sides: the Union had to prepare its institutions for enlargement, and avoid diluting integration in the process; and the aspirants had to undertake political and economic reforms with an, often, high social cost. However, there are now new challenges to face, and success is far from certain.

First, there is the challenge of involving Europe's citizens in leading the future of Union. European citizenship must reinforce and complement national citizenship; fundamental rights and the great diversity that is a central trait of European culture must be protected.

Second, there is the constitutional challenge. Regardless of its failings, a Constitution can unite states and citizens, ensure the democratic functioning of the Union, reinforce the efficacy of institutions, and cohere the foreign policy of the Union. The Constitution must be democratically legitimate so its governmental approval should be followed by its submission to popular vote in all the countries of the Union.

Third, there is the challenge of cohesion. The principle of solidarity is even more crucial after enlargement. The accession of the new members has deepened the divide between rich: narrowing the gap between the most and least favoured regions of Europe must be a top priority in coming decades. This calls for a clear awareness that the growth of the least favoured regions contributes to the growth of Europe as a whole, and is therefore in the interest of all. The Union can only survive if it practises this kind of solidarity. It is essential to reinforce cohesion policy, both to promote development among new members and to combat persisting inequalities within established member states.

Finally, there is the challenge of projecting the Union beyond its borders. The accession of the new members has given the Union a whole new set of neighbours, some of which are in the middle of transitions away from authoritarian rule and seek support for political and economic transformation from the European Union. As the current enlargement process did, the Union of 25 must 'export' to its closest neighbours what is effectively its main foreign policy instrument: stability and

prosperity through multilateral cooperation. This process will throw up some difficult questions: can all the countries surrounding the Union expect to join it? Or should there be – if this is possible – cooperation with neighbouring countries in which all is shared except Union institutions?

Citizenship, cohesion, and projection beyond borders are some of the pieces that make up the new European puzzle. As always, success will depend on an awareness that the integration process can always dissolve if xenophobia and national jealousies are not defeated and if the ties that sustain the Union are allowed to weaken.