



EU COUNCIL SECRETARIAT

~FACTSHEET~

1/2007

Changes within the European Union as from 1 January 2007

The Council has overseen a number of institutional changes applicable from the beginning of this year, in particular in the light of enlargement of the European Union and of the euro area.

Two new Member States

On 1 January 2007 the European Union welcomed two new Member States: Bulgaria and Romania. The EU has 27 Member States and 492.8 million inhabitants.

New weighting of votes

As from 1 January, where the Council acts on the basis of a Commission proposal, the qualified majority for votes in the Council is set at 255 votes in favour of the act out of a total of 345, cast by at least 14 Member States out of 27¹. In addition, a Member State may request verification that the qualified majority represents at least 62% of the population of the EU (for 2007 the threshold is established as 305.5 million people out of a total of 492.8 million). For this purpose EU population figures are updated every year in accordance with data supplied by Eurostat.²

The distribution of votes is the following:

Germany, France, Italy, United Kingdom	29 votes
Spain, Poland	27 votes
Romania	14 votes
Netherlands	13 votes
Belgium, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Portugal	12 votes
Austria, Sweden, Bulgaria	10 votes
Denmark, Ireland, Lithuania, Slovakia, Finland	7 votes
Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Luxembourg, Slovenia	4 votes
Malta	3 votes

¹ Where the Council does not act on the basis of a Commission proposal, the qualified majority threshold is the same with the difference that the votes in favour shall be cast by at least two-third of the Member States out of 27 (i.e. 18 Member States).

² On 1 January, the Council adopted a decision amending Annex III of its rules of procedure in order to update the population figures of each Member State for 2007 (OJ L 1 of 4.1.2007, p. 9).

P R E S S

New official languages

Starting from 1 January 2007, the EU has three new official languages (i.e. 23 in total): Bulgarian and Romanian, as well as Irish (Gaelic).³

Order of presidencies

The Council adopted a decision modifying the order in which the presidency of the Council will be held until 2020 (*OJ L 1 of 4.1.2007, p. 11*). The Council will be presided over for periods of six months in accordance with the following list:

	<i>1st half</i>	<i>2nd half</i>
2007:	Germany	Portugal
2008:	Slovenia	France
2009:	Czech Republic	Sweden
2010:	Spain	Belgium
2011:	Hungary	Poland
2012:	Denmark	Cyprus
2013:	Ireland	Lithuania
2014:	Greece	Italy
2015:	Latvia	Luxembourg
2016:	Netherlands	Slovakia
2017:	Malta	United Kingdom
2018:	Estonia	Bulgaria
2019:	Austria	Romania
2020:	Finland.	

Appointments

The Council has overseen a number of appointments in the European Union's institutions to coincide with the accession of Bulgaria and Romania.

On 1 January the Council, having regard to the opinions of the European Parliament and by common accord with the president of the Commission, appointed as members of the **Commission** for the period from 1 January 2007 to 31 October 2009:

- Ms Meglena Kuneva (Bulgaria)
- Mr Leonard Orban (Romania);

³ Council Regulation No 920/2005 of 13 June 2005, which is applicable as of 1 January 2007, granted the Irish language the status of official and working language of the EU (OJ L 156, 18.6.2006, p.3). For practical reasons, only regulations adopted by the European Parliament and the Council under the co-decision procedure will be available in Irish as from 1 January. Other legislative acts will be exempt for a period of five years (renewable).

It also adopted:

- a decision appointing as members of the **Court of Auditors**, for a period of six years from 1 January 2007:
 - Ms Nadhezhda Sandolova (Bulgaria)
 - Mr Ovidiu Ispir (Romania);
- a decision appointing the Bulgarian and Romanian members of the **Economic and Social Committee**, for the period from 1 January 2007 to 20 September 2010 (*see list in OJ L 1 of 4.1.2007, p. 6*);
- a decision appointing the Bulgarian and Romanian members and alternate members of the **Committee of the Regions**, for the period from 1 January 2007 to 25 January 2010 (*see list in OJ L 1 of 4.1. 2007, p. 13*).

Representatives of the member states adopted:

- a decision appointing as judges at the **Court of Justice**:
 - Ms Camelia Toader (Romania) for the period from 1 January 2007 to 6 October 2009,
 - Mr Alexander Arabadjiev (Bulgaria) for the period from 1 January 2007 to 6 October 2012;
- a decision appointing as judges at the **Court of First Instance**:
 - Mr Theodore Chipev (Bulgaria) for the period from 1 January 2007 to 31 August 2007,
 - Mr Valeriu Ciuca (Romania) for the period from 1 January 2007 to 31 August 2010.

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Slovenia joins euro area

Slovenia joined the euro area on 1 January, when euro banknotes and coins became legal tender, making it the first of the ten Member States that joined the EU in May 2004 to adopt the euro. This follows a Council decision on 11 July 2006 to allow Slovenia to join the euro area as from 1 January 2007.

Twelve of the EU's 27 Member States have been using the euro since 1999: Belgium, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Austria and Finland. Euro notes and coins were introduced in all twelve countries on 1 January 2002.

Slovenia thereby also joins the eurogroup, the informal forum in which euro area finance ministers discuss questions related to the specific responsibilities they share with regard to the single currency.