



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO NEPAL

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PRESS RELEASE

The Fifth Enlargement of the European Union

1st of January 2007 marks a historic moment—the accession of Bulgaria and Romania completed the fifth enlargement of the European Union. As has been the experience from the four previous enlargements, this event will not only contribute to the cohesion and stability of the European continent, but will also make it more prosperous socially, economically, and culturally.

This accession will make the two new countries the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh members of the European Union. The memberships of Bulgaria and Romania will bring a new dynamism to the European Community.

The Enlargement Commissioner Mr. Olli Rehn has said, “The EU accession process is rather like the Orient Express, a train which takes its time where the quality of the service and comfort comes first, before hurry. Yes, it is a slow, slow train coming, and not precisely up around the bend. But it is indeed essential that the train remains on track, and thus enables us to maintain our soft power of democratic and economic transformation in our future home territory”.

Enlargement has an enormous strategic value in ensuring peace, liberty and prosperity in Europe. The European Community, which was initiated with just six members in 1957, has enjoyed immense benefits from the enlargements in 1973, 1981, 1987, 1995 and finally in 2004, which will be completed when Rumania and Bulgaria join on January 1st. Politically, enlargement has helped to spark major changes. It has strengthened democracy, human rights and stability across the European continent and beyond.

The two new member states are both Balkan states. They enjoy similar landscapes with coastlines on the Black Sea and spectacular mountains, and were historically both included in the Ottoman Empire.

Due to these similarities Bulgaria and Romania are often grouped together, but are culturally, historically and in terms of language different.

Bulgaria has a population of about 8 million. In spite of about 500 years, as part of the Ottoman Empire, the Orthodox Christian tradition in the country remained strong. The Bulgarian language is Slavic and Sofia is the capital of the country.

Romania has a larger population of just under 22 million people. Romanian is a Romance language. The capital is Bucharest.

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