
Editorial

Expansion of the European Union

The undoubted welcome to the successful accession negotiations between the Union and Norway, Sweden, Finland and Austria must be tinged with a measure of regret at the disgraceful haggling over the size of the blocking minority in relation to measures to be adopted by a qualified majority. On the occasion of every enlargement the relevant figures have been expanded in order to take account of the view that as there are more votes with the increase in Member States, so too the conditions for a blocking minority should increase. Given that this principle has been applied on the occasion of the first three accessions, there is no reason why it should not be applied on this occasion too. The clear indications that the European Parliament will be unlikely to approve a draft accession treaty and act which leaves the blocking minority where it is should concentrate the minds of those proclaiming the desirability of enlargement whilst seeking to play to the blinkered vision of those in the gallery back home.

Accession, if agreed to by the European Parliament, the Member States (according to their various constitutional

requirements) and the candidate countries, does not necessarily spell the death of the European Economic Area as all the States concerned are parties to the agreement, along with the European Community (as it now is) and the ECSC (but not Euratom). The change should effectively be a movement in positions around the table. The EEA Agreement itself envisages in Article 128 the accession of other States. It may well be the model which a number of countries, whose relations with the Union are presently regulated by the various Europe Agreements, may wish to pursue prior to full membership, although some may seek to by-pass this model altogether. If, for some reason (such as a negative vote in a referendum) the envisaged accession of one or more States does not proceed, relations will continue to be governed by the present models. In welcoming the envisaged accession we welcome a yet closer co-operation as equal partners; it is to be hoped that the narrow-mindedness of those to whom further co-operation is a nightmare will not prevail against the clarity of vision of those dedicated to co-operation and integration within Europe.

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