

Editorial

Wider Still and Wider

The Commission has been asked by France and Germany to prepare a consultation paper for Spring 1995 with a plan for enlargement of the Community to Eastern Europe. Such a plan might to some extent draw inspiration from the success of the White Paper of 1985 drawn up under Lord Cockfield's responsibility. That White Paper crucially identified the gaps in the functioning of the internal market within the Community, although it left much of the functioning of the common market itself unaddressed. The difficulties of adapting to the Community norms various systems of crucial importance to business – such as banking, legal, transport and economic systems – could be set out and the needs of the Eastern European countries could be placed at the forefront of the Community agenda.

The model of the European Economic Area may well form a halfway house toward membership of the Community while the process of adaptation is under way. Adaptation will, of course, be necessary on both sides if the Community structures are not to become unworkable and its policies unaffordable. It will be important for the Community to recognise that a number of the Eastern European countries have economies stronger than those of some of the Member States, and thus to ensure that the Member States do not simply consider the whole of Eastern Europe as weaker brethren.

The Europe Agreements which have gradually come on stream have offered what is apparently a one-sided objective (contribution to the development of the

county concerned), whereas what is sought is a much more even-handed approach in terms of market access – there is little point in opening up markets and then slapping anti-dumping duties on the products for which Eastern Europe countries are already competitive, whilst proclaiming how generous one is being. The strains and tensions which this will impose will certainly not be one-sided (indeed, those strains have already shown with the pressure for social reasons to take measures against imports of Polish steel) and they will strengthen the hand of those seeking to achieve a variable geometry within the Community, centred around a core of a small number of Member States. It is no accident that that core would most likely comprise the founder Member States of the Community.

It remains to be seen whether the United Kingdom will find its place in the next-to-centre circle or will retreat into a sort of EEA-like relationship with the Community, but then as a move outwards rather than as a precursor to a move inwards.

As the Eastern Europe countries find the Community ever more their logical home, it would be a pity if the *Drang nach Osten* resulted in valedictory noises in the West.

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*Readers interested in the CDU/CSU parliamentary group's *Reflections on European Policy* can find the document translated in *Europe Documents* no. 1895/96, 7 September, 1994.