



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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6th meeting of the Accession Conference at ministerial level with Croatia

The sixth meeting of the Accession Conference with Croatia at Ministerial level was held today in Luxembourg, following the start of accession negotiations on 3 October 2005. The European Union delegation was headed by Dimitrij Rupel, Slovenia's Foreign Minister and current President of the Council. The Croatian delegation was led by Gordan Jandroković, Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration.

The Conference opened negotiations on two new chapters: Chapter 2 - Freedom of Movement for Workers and Chapter 19 - Social Policy and Employment.

The Conference also confirmed the opening at ministerial level of four chapters: Chapter 14 - Transport Policy; Chapter 15 - Energy; Chapter 21 - Trans-European Networks and Chapter 33 - Financial and Budgetary Provisions - which were previously opened by Accession Conferences at deputy level.

P R E S S

On the basis of the negotiating positions of Croatia for the two chapters, the Union has closely examined Croatia's general state of preparedness in the two areas. Taking into account Croatia's present state of preparations - and on the understanding that Croatia will continue to make progress in the alignment with and implementation of the *acquis* - the EU underlined the main issues regarding the closing benchmarks to be met by Croatia, namely:

Chapter 2 - Freedom of Movement for Workers

- Croatia demonstrates that adequate administrative structures and enforcement capacity will be in place to implement correctly the *acquis* on freedom of movement for workers, particularly in the field of co-ordination of social security systems, by the time of accession.

The EU and Croatia also considered proposals for transitional arrangements concerning freedom of movement of workers.

Furthermore, the European Union underlined that it would devote particular attention to monitoring all specific issues mentioned in its common position, with a view to ensuring Croatia's administrative capacity and its capacity to abolish any discriminatory measures towards EU migrant workers.

Chapter 19 - Social Policy and Employment

- Croatia amends the Labour Act and the Occupational Safety and Health Act in order to align its legislation in the fields of labour law and health and safety at work with the *acquis*.
- Croatia adopts an anti-discrimination act and a new Gender Equality Act in order to align its legislation in the fields of anti-discrimination and equal opportunities with the *acquis*.

In both areas, Croatia should demonstrate a satisfactory track record of progress in setting up adequate administrative structures and enforcement capacity. It should also demonstrate that all appropriate administrative structures will be in place in good time to enable it to implement correctly the *acquis* in these fields by the time of accession.

The Union will closely monitor Croatia's progress in these two chapters throughout the negotiations.

Since the start of the negotiations, twenty chapters have been opened, of which two have been provisionally closed.