



## EUROPEAN COMMISSION - PRESS RELEASE

### EU closes accession negotiations with Croatia

Brussels, 30 June 2011 – EU Member States decided today to close accession negotiations with Croatia, which should allow for the signature of the Accession Treaty by the end of the year. Following the ratification procedure in all Member States and Croatia, accession is foreseen for 1 July 2013.

*"We are celebrating this historic event with our Croatian friends: within 20 years as an independent republic, Croatia has changed tremendously. It has made impressive progress towards meeting the EU membership criteria. This is being rewarded today",* said Stefan Füle, EU Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy. *"The European Commission has consistently supported Croatia on this reform path. We have been fair but strict: no discount has been accorded, no shortcuts taken, no corners rounded. The Commission will continue this strict, transparent approach to monitor how Croatia delivers on the commitments so that it will be able to fully assume the responsibilities of membership from the first day of accession". "What a great contribution to the credibility of enlargement process!"* he added.

Today's decision marks a successful end to six-years of negotiations during which Croatia has been asked not only to adopt new laws and regulations to comply with EU standards, but also to implement them, thus proving the reforms have taken an irreversible course of action.

Accession negotiations between the EU and Croatia, consisting of 35 negotiating chapters covering the whole range of EU policies and rules, started in October 2005. Solutions have been found between the two parties to allow for Croatia to smoothly integrate in the EU and for the EU to be able to welcome a new member. At the final accession conference in Brussels today, EU Member States agreed to close the remaining policy chapters under negotiations, including in two key areas: judiciary and fundamental rights, and competition policy.

In the chapter on judiciary and fundamental rights, Croatia has launched reforms in critical areas, strengthening the independence and efficiency of the judiciary, in fight against corruption and protection of fundamental rights. These are essential to bringing results in the near future in support of the rule of law for the benefit of all citizens.

In the chapter on competition policy, which lies at the very heart of the EU internal market, Croatia has had to adopt restructuring plans to help achieving the viability of its steel and shipbuilding sectors, in line with the EU state aid rules.

It was agreed by Member States that the Commission will closely monitor up to the date of accession Croatia's fulfilment of the commitments undertaken in the negotiations and its continued preparations to assume the responsibilities of EU membership upon accession.

The financial framework approved on 30 June foresees that Croatia will join the EU on 1 July 2013. Structural Funds will be available for infrastructure projects in support of the Croatian economy and its regions. EU funds for rural development will also be used to modernise the agricultural sector and to help the development of rural areas in Croatia.

After the closure of the talks with EU member states, an accession treaty with Croatia is expected to be signed within six months, following a formal opinion by the Commission, consent from the European Parliament, and a decision by the Council. After that, all Member States and Croatia will launch ratification procedures in line with their own national rules, in most cases by a vote in parliament.

**Further information:**

Website of European Commission's Directorate General for Enlargement:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/index_en.htm)

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