

EUROPE PREPARES FOR 'BIG BANG' ENLARGEMENT

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In line with EPP policy, enlargement of the European Union to embrace the new democracies of central and eastern Europe - plus Cyprus and Malta - is foreseen in the latest European Commission progress report.

The report sees it as realistic that 10 candidate countries could complete negotiations by the end of 2002.

But big problems remain over the distribution of power between large and small countries, and with recession in the air, public concern in existing Member States about free movement of labour. Agricultural policy, especially in relation to Poland, is also likely to be a sticking point, along with the unresolved issue of the divided Cyprus.

