

Interview with Jacques F. Poos published in the Luxemburger Wort (12 December 1997)

Caption: On 12 December 1997, in an interview granted to the daily newspaper Luxemburger Wort, Jacques F. Poos, Luxembourg Foreign Minister, considers the implications of the forthcoming enlargement of the European Union.

Source: Luxemburger Wort. Für Wahrheit und Recht. 12.12.1997. Luxembourg: Imprimerie Saint-Paul. "Der Beitrittsprozeß muß global, inklusiv und evolutiv sein", p. 19.

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The accession process must be comprehensive, inclusive and evolutive

Luxemburger Wort interview with the President of the European Council, Luxembourg's Foreign Minister Jacques Poos

LW: Minister, on Monday a majority of the EU Foreign Ministers agreed on what has been called the 'Luxembourg process model' for enlargement. Is that a guarantee of unanimity in the European Council of Heads of State or Government?

Jacques Poos: There would be no need for the summit if unanimity had already been secured. What the Foreign Ministers can do at this stage, however, is to establish that the Presidency's process model represents a general approach that is highly likely to result in consensus. I should not be surprised if the decisions taken at the end of the second day of the Council differed only fractionally from the Foreign Ministers' proposals — particularly with regard to the procedure for the accession negotiations. The accession process must be comprehensive, inclusive and evolutive. It can be adjusted at any stage, according to the timescales, development and efforts of the individual candidate countries. It will be a phased process, taking account all the way of the pace of candidate countries' efforts at national level. There is always the possibility that, in the course of the negotiations, one country will overtake others that have been in the process from the start. Working from the basic idea that everyone should be involved, we have also developed a model whereby we can start with everyone on board.

The stadium model

That means there will be a joint opening of the accession process at Foreign Minister level on 31 March — involving the 15 Member States and the 11 candidate countries — probably in London. The process will thus be set in motion. There will then follow accession negotiations with six countries and pre-accession negotiations with the other five (Romania, Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia). The pre-accession negotiations will not be conducted on the same formal basis but there will be an option — if they prove fruitful and it is clear that the countries concerned are making major efforts to adopt the Community *acquis* — for those countries to move up immediately into the first group and formal negotiations will then be conducted with them too. I like to think of it in terms of German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel's 'stadium model', with all the runners entering the stadium together. There is a joint opening ceremony, and six candidates then start the qualifying heats while the others continue training off the main track; they will then start a second phase of heats once they have ensured they are fit to run. I believe it is a model capable of securing a consensus. My impression is that even the Scandinavian countries, which had favoured the 'regatta model' — involving negotiations with all 11 countries — will be able to live with it.

LW: Does that mean the regatta model, which Sweden, Denmark and the European Parliament had favoured, is definitely no longer viable?

Jacques Poos: It means that it has now been incorporated into the stadium model. In fact the European Parliament also wants everyone to start together and for there then to be different types of negotiations, intensive and less intensive. Parliament is effectively talking about the same thing but using different terms.

LW: What is the point of a European Conference in which the Heads of State or Government of all 26 countries meet once a year and their Foreign Ministers twice a year if they specifically won't be talking about the accessions?

We shall invite Turkey to the European Conference

Jacques Poos: The European Conference is as necessary as ever. There is a range of shared interests — especially in foreign policy and areas of home affairs and justice, such as fighting crime, asylum law and visa policies — that need to be addressed in a multilateral context. That is why we shall also invite Turkey to this conference. No decisions will be taken at the conference, however, and in particular it will not interfere in any way with the bilateral accession negotiations. There is no reason why — if, for example, we

are discussing common measures concerning infrastructure — the Transport Ministers should not meet on the same basis as the Foreign Ministers or the Ministers for Justice and Home Affairs.

LW: Will the structured dialogue that has been going on with the Eastern Europeans then become redundant?

Jacques Poos: That is not yet clear. Several countries believe that the structured dialogue will transfer over into the conference. No formal decision has been taken to that effect, however. The first thing we have to do is to agree the principle of the conference, something on which France, in particular, is insistent. Greece still has reservations with regard to Turkey.

LW: Will the other EFTA countries also be invited to the conference?

Jacques Poos: That remains an open question. Initially the idea was to limit it to a conference of the 15 plus 12. Then several delegations and the Presidency said that it should be an open conference and that all those countries with a European vocation should be able, in the fullness of time, to apply for accession to it. Norway, Switzerland, Iceland and Liechtenstein come to mind immediately — and Malta is not excluded either.

LW: Many commentators fear that the Luxembourg Summit will turn into a ‘Turkey Summit’. What strategy does the Luxembourg Presidency propose with regard to Turkey?

We want to prevent a ‘Turkey Summit’

Jacques Poos: We and the other Member States want to prevent the Luxembourg Summit from turning into a ‘Turkey Summit’. What it should be is a positive signal to the Eastern European countries that have waited for years for the day when a decision will be taken, via formal negotiations, to welcome them into our ‘family’. Prime Minister Juncker and I have been engaged in intensive discussions with Turkey over recent weeks. We have to prevent Turkey from becoming a bone of contention before, during and after the summit. We have offered something to Turkey: firstly, involvement in the European Conference, as I have already mentioned, and secondly, a European strategy. The purpose would be, first of all, to reconfirm that Turkey is eligible to become a Member State and then to prepare it, by means of a tailored strategy, for accession at a future date. The strategy will unfold within the confines of the Association Agreement and the Customs Union. It will also be made clear that Turkey needs to fulfil all the same criteria that apply to the other applicant countries, particularly respect for human rights and minority rights. In addition we need to see a non-hostile stance on the question of Cyprus acceding to the Union and a resolution of the border issue with Greece.

LW: You mentioned Cyprus. What real prospect is there of successful negotiations with a divided country? Can a divided Cyprus become an EU Member State?

Jacques Poos: We hope that the years of negotiation under the auspices of the UN will produce a definitive solution for the form that the shared state will take and that it will be possible for a united island to accede to the EU.

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