

PRESS RELEASE

ST 16963/14

PRESSE 657

Brussels, 16 December 2014

Fifth meeting of the Accession Conference with Montenegro at Ministerial level - 4 new chapters opened

The fifth meeting of the Accession Conference with Montenegro at Ministerial level was held today in Brussels to open negotiations on Chapter 18 - Statistics, Chapter 28 - Consumer and health protection, Chapter 29 - Customs union, and Chapter 33 - Financial and budgetary provisions.

Earlier today, the Council adopted its [annual conclusions on the enlargement process](#), including Montenegro.

The European Union delegation was led by Mr Sandro Gozi, State Secretary for European Affairs of Italy. The Montenegrin delegation was led by Mr Igor Lukšić, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and European Integration. The European Commission was represented by Johannes Hahn, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood policy and Enlargement negotiations.

With today's Conference, out of a total of 35 negotiation chapters, 16 chapters have now been opened for negotiations of which 2 chapters have already been provisionally closed. Further Accession Conferences will be planned, as appropriate, in order to take the process forward in the first half of 2015. The accession negotiations were launched in June 2012.

Chapters opened

Regarding the opening of negotiations on Chapter 18 - Statistics, Chapter 28 - Consumer and health protection, Chapter 29 - Customs union, and Chapter 33 - Financial and budgetary provisions, the Union has closely examined Montenegro's present state of preparations. On the understanding that Montenegro has to continue to make progress in the alignment with and implementation of the *acquis* in these chapters, the EU noted that there are benchmarks that need to be met for provisional closure of these chapters. With particular regard to Chapter 33, it was also noted that this chapter could only be provisionally closed once agreement has been reached with regard to Montenegro's request for "transitional financial compensation and assistance" as regards the EU Budget.

In addition, the EU underlined that it would devote particular attention to monitoring all specific issues mentioned in its common positions. Monitoring of progress in the alignment with and implementation of the *acquis* will continue throughout the negotiations. The EU will, if necessary, return to these chapters at an appropriate moment.

The benchmarks for each chapter opened are as follows:

Chapter 18 - Statistics

- Montenegro submits key national accounts data in accordance with European System of National and Regional Accounts (ESA) 2010 and other relevant requirements together with the required detailed description of the methodology used.
- Montenegro presents to the Commission a road map for the transmission of the remaining tables from the ESA 2010 Transmission Programme and the pending methodological issues

Chapter 28 - Consumer and health protection

- Montenegro amends the Law on General Product Safety and the Law on Consumer Protection in order to further align its legislation in the field of consumer protection, particularly with Directive 2011/83/EU on consumer rights, and demonstrates that adequate administrative structures and enforcement capacity will be in place to implement the legislation correctly by the time of accession.
- Montenegro demonstrates alignment with the EU communicable diseases *acquis*, and ensures that adequate institutional, technical and administrative capacity will be in place by the time of accession to implement it and to fulfil EU reporting and coordination obligations to deal with serious cross-border threats to health.
- Montenegro adopts legislation aligning with the *acquis* on substances of human origin, especially with regard to organs, reproductive cells and reporting of serious adverse events and reactions. Montenegro demonstrates that it will have the adequate administrative capacity to properly implement and enforce the legislation in the area of blood, tissues, cells and organs by the time of accession.

Chapter 29 - Customs union

Montenegro continues to adopt legislation in the remaining areas requiring further alignment; it should in particular align its legislation on customs status and transit, customs risk management and security aspects, including the Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) program, intellectual property rights, and drug precursors.

- Montenegro applies its customs rules consistently and efficiently across its customs offices, notably in the areas of declaration processing, origin, simplified procedures, intellectual property rights, and selectivity of controls and risk analysis (including automated pre-arrival/pre-departure risk analysis across all modes of transport).
- Montenegro reaches sufficient progress in developing all the required IT interconnectivity systems, in particular the New Computerised Transit System (NCTS), the Integrated Tariff Management System (ITMS), the Export Control System (ECS) and the Import Control System (ICS).

Chapter 33 - Financial and budgetary provisions

In view of the present state of Montenegro's preparations, the EU notes that, on the understanding that Montenegro has to continue to make progress in the alignment with and implementation of the *acquis* covered by the chapter on financial and budgetary provisions, this chapter may only be provisionally closed once agreement has been reached with regard to Montenegro's request for "transitional financial compensation and assistance" as regards the EU Budget and once it is agreed by the EU that the following benchmark is met:

- Montenegro increases its administrative capacity and to this end adopts an action plan in order to sufficiently prepare and introduce procedural rules to ensure that it will be able, from accession, to correctly calculate, forecast, account for, collect, pay, control and report to the EU on own resources in line with the *acquis*.
-