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 EUROPA - EU Enlargement - 1 May 2005

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## Statement by the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, to mark the first anniversary of enlargement, 1 May 2005

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"The first anniversary of the 5th enlargement which has re-unified Europe is a happy event for all Europeans. It reminds us that the European Union is not a closed club and how much its power of attraction is important.

The historic moment when the ten most recent Member States joined the Union not only marked the achievement of a major political objective, but above all it expressed the determination and courage of their citizens and their desire to fulfil their dream of living in a better world.

It is a forceful reminder that openness towards others - and not isolationism - is what drives the EU and yields results. This enlargement has brought new quality to Community life and a new vision of Europe. With 25 members - 27 in around two years' time - the EU is strengthening its position on the international stage.

This enlargement has already helped consolidate political and economic stability, democracy and human rights in Europe.

It shows us that profound changes can be achieved in a short time: setting up a market economy, reinforcing the principle of a state based on the rule of law, creating democratic institutions in line with European standards, transposing Community rules and above all feeling European without losing sight of the fact that we are also Polish, Portuguese, Spanish, Czech, French or Finnish.

The question raised in the early 1990s – do we widen or deepen Europe – no longer arises. Together, we are building a strong Union in order to make a bigger success of the European project.

There are 25 of us working together to preserve stability and peace and to ensure prosperity in Europe. We are together so that we can gain from each other's experiences, cultures and talents. We translate our aspirations into action.

The distinction between new and old Member States no longer makes sense. For me, this enlargement felt like a real reunion of members of the same family who had been broken up against their will and who, after many years of separation, were getting together again to live and work side-by-side and put their divisions behind them. It was a reunification not

only of nations and peoples, but also of cultures and ways of looking at the world.

The arrival of ten new Member States bridged that artificial divide between Eastern and Western Europe. But the enlarged Europe has not closed in on itself. It is open to all countries which belong in Europe, subscribe to our values and meet the Union's accession conditions.

This last enlargement has prompted the EU to adopt a new approach to Eastern Europe, in particular the "neighbourhood policy", which is still very much an open field.

It also requires greater solidarity between Member States, one of the key principles underpinning the EU.

We must strive for an open Europe, a Europe of dialogue. In each of the 25 countries work has begun on explaining and educating the public. This task is being pursued. It is by establishing a culture of dialogue and openness that we can improve ourselves. But it is also very true that we are still getting to know each other, getting to grips with the new realities of our Community. And that will take time. We must be patient and give ourselves the time to learn about and get to know each other.

Nor should we forget that expansion to 25 members has prompted questions about the EU's identity, its borders and how it should function in future.

Finally, united Europe is also a response to the fears bound up with populism, chauvinism, xenophobia, terrorism and, at the heart of it all, with poverty.

It is our duty to show ordinary people that Europe has no hang-ups.

We must go forward with confidence and openness.

Together, we are stronger in the face of the major challenges in today's globalised world."

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