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<input type="checkbox"/> Margot Wallström	<h2>A year in the EU / European Commission Vice-President: no more new and old members</h2> <p>Brussels, <a href="#">PAP</a>, 29.04.2005   Rozmawiała Inga Czerny</p> <p>In hindsight, it is apparent that Poland's and 9 other countries' accession to the European Union last year was the best-prepared enlargement in EU history. After a year, divisions into old and new members no longer exist – believes European Commission's Swedish Vice-President, Margot Wallström.</p>
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According to Wallström, because of the last enlargement, "the Union and its sensitivity to certain issues changed – the EU's role in solving the conflict in the Ukraine, with Poland's and Lithuania's remarkable involvement, serves as an example".

The text of the full interview is shown below.

**PAP:** - What in the EU has changed because of the enlargement? How have the new members influenced how the Union works?

**Margot Wallström:** - I think that, with a year of hindsight, it is apparent that this enlargement was the best-prepared one in EU history.

The most important success is that, after a year, reality no longer includes speaking about old and new members. It is also important that no catastrophic scenarios occurred, for example those pertaining to an influx of immigrants looking for work or to dramatic price increases.

I don't think in terms of old and new members at all. Compromises aren't made by old and new countries, but by 25 countries, all with their own positions and interests. Of course, because ten countries joined the EU at the same time, the Union and its sensitivity to certain issues changed – the EU's role during the Orange Revolution in the Ukraine, with Poland's and Lithuania's remarkable involvement, serves as an example.

**PAP:** - Has Poland's position in Europe been strengthened since it joined the European Union?

**M.W.:** - Poland has really triumphed over the past 16 years. To

people who visited Poland during the past 20 years, the changes are immense. The Poles can be proud of this. It's important that this success creates a belief that EU membership is a pass to a better life, especially for the younger generation. But only the Poles themselves can take advantage of the opportunities. As usual, strategic matters must be the focus: strengthening regional and industrial competitiveness, as well as fighting against unemployment.

At the moment, all information concerning the use of EU resources in Poland is very optimistic, including where economic growth is concerned. This should give Poles reason to be more self-assured and optimistic as to their country's future.

**PAP:** - Were people in the old Member States prepared for this enlargement? Is it not the enlargement that is one of the reasons for the uncertainty, which exists around the ratification of the EU constitution, in France for example?

**M.W.:** - If we look at public opinion polls in France, there is nothing to indicate that enlargement is a problematic issue.

In referendum campaigns, people often answer a question that is not the one actually asked. The debate in France concerns the economic and social models for France and for Europe. I personally am convinced that the constitution strengthens the European social model: a social market economy.

**PAP:** - Will the enlarged European Union be able to cope without a constitution?

**M.W.:** - The European Union needs this constitution, which is a founding act for the new Europe, the citizens' Europe and not a bureaucratic project. Each country, either via a parliamentary vote or a referendum, should decide about the constitution coming into force. It is a project common to 25 countries, whose governments negotiated and signed the document. I don't take into consideration a scenario wherein the Constitution doesn't come into force.

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