

**Journalist's Notes**

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**THE EU ENLARGEMENT:
IN THE EUROPE'S BACKYARD****The Neighbours to Be of the Enlarged Europe
Are Anxious about New Barriers
and Feel Isolated**

About two dozens of demonstrates are standing in front of the Polish Embassy in the Ukrainian city Lviv. «No to New Berlin Wall!» is written on the self-made transparencies. «We are against New Demarcation Lines between Poland and Ukraine!» – protests a pensioner Lesya Molchanovska, baby doctor in the past. Her relatives live in the Polish capital.

Pressed by the EU, in autumn of 2003 Poland introduced obligatory visa regulations for the Ukrainians, and at that, restricted again, after ten years, free movement of neighbours across its borders. Naturally, the visa is made out free of charge, but the costs are still large – the line to Polish embassy is long. Those who do not want to stand it all day long, people say, are impelled to bribe the mafia.

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Gradual Expansion of Fundamental Freedoms

From Kaliningrad in the North to Moldova in the South, the new neighbours of the EU start feeling the fear of isolation and dissociation. New exterior boundaries of the European Union are protected, and people – non-citizens of the EU – need visas. The Polish eastern boundary was built at the EU cost and turned into the station of highest security equipped with dozens of new watch-towers. Thousands of Polish customs officials were forced to move from the border at Odra to the east. «We had no other choice: either service in Kroscienko or unemployment», says young customs official Pavel, commissioned nowadays to pursue Ukrainian smugglers.

The people in Brussels deem the fear of people staying on the other side of the border unreasonable. Last year the EU submitted the concept of «a broader Europe» which discards the new demarcation lines on the continent. Brussels does not want to shake the air around the compulsory visa regime and hopes to ease visa procedures «where possible». To avoid getting into welfare traps, the reforms in the EU neighbouring countries must have financial support. Brussels strives for «common European economic area, which will also include the countries on the threshold of the European Union» it is said in the conception. At that, four main freedoms must gradually expand on the other side of the European Union, i.e. free movement of people, goods, services, and capital.

Turkey Meets Opposition

The concept's formulations are still vague. For those countries, which have just become the members of the EU, free movement at the labour market is put off for the period from two to seven years. The idea of «a broader Europe» is going wrong in the absence of clear EU-accession outlook conferred to the neighbours. This is what the governments from Kyiv to Tirana complain about. Except for Russia and Belarus, all other European countries aspire to join the EU, in particular, Ukraine, Moldova, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Serbia and Montenegro, and Croatia. Brussels does not deny them their right to accession, but before a new wave of the EU enlargement can take place, it wishes to carry on «a fundamental» dialogue with them concerning possible boundaries of Europe.

As to whether Turkey falls within these boundaries, the debate goes on. In 1999, the EU conferred Turkey a status of an applicant country and promised full membership no more than in 40 years, but this is not being negotiated. Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission, during his visit to Turkey in January 2004 approvingly mentioned that in the times of Prime-Minister Recep Tay-

yip Erdogan the country has achieved much progress in the development of human liberties and freedom of the press. Moreover, the country rapidly implements economic reforms. Nevertheless, many European politicians reject the possibility of Turkey's accession to the EU. In Germany these processes come across strong resistance of the parties in opposition – the Christian-Democratic Union and the Christian-Social Alliance.

Russia Expects Export Losses

It is already clear that Romania and Bulgaria will join the EU. The people in Bucharest complain that after the highest-level meeting in Copenhagen regarding the EU enlargement, which took place in the middle of 2002, the talks have nearly stopped. Officially, Brussels promises both countries the future accession to the EU in 2007. «Today, we figure rather on 2008», confesses the European Union's high official.

In the process of enlargement, Russia senses the approaching of the EU area to its borders. In principle, Moscow does not object to its neighbours' attempts to join the EU. However, Russia demands trade procedures simplification and financial compensation for potential export losses.

Cheap Labour under Threat

In Warsaw, the debate about moving the borders to the east gives rise to double feelings. After the fall of the communist regime, Poland developed the most intensive relations with its neighbours, especially Ukraine, and gained authority of a regional power. In its turn, as the Ukrainian publicist Mykola Ryabchuk puts it, «Ukraine gained tangible benefits from cooperation with Poland in political and cultural regard». This should not be put to risk. «Poland is the Ukraine's gate to the West».

Polish communities that live alongside the Ukrainian border are rather afraid of negative economic consequences of the new visa pressure, since before that the border region earned its living by trading and smuggling Ukrainian cheap cigarettes and horilka. Ukrainian cheap man-power employed mainly at field works and construction helped many of the Polish enterprises to survive. «Not a single Polish person will work for the money I pay to my Ukrainian workers», says Krzysztof Janas, who hires Ukrainians as additional labour for harvesting. At the time when Polish janitors work in the West, in Poland work more than 100000 Ukrainians as additional labour in households. From the moment Poland joined the EU, the risk to be caught and deported increases.

Loosening the Control Procedure

In the Republic of Belarus, notable for its totalitarian regime, the opposition is afraid that the new border with Poland will become an obstacle for cooperation and exchange between the countries. Compulsory visa regime applies to the neighbouring countries on entry too, and this makes the control procedure easier for both sides. «Now our consulates can refuse entry to critical Polish journalists, literati, labour unionists, or politicians», says Vynzuk Viatschorka, leader of Belarusian Popular Front. This type of experience exchange is very important for young democratic movement.

«Border always means decreased personal contacts», says Krzysztof Czyzewski, founder of the borderlands fund, which purports to contribute to cultural exchange between Poland and Belarus in the north-eastern Polish town Seiny. «The EU cannot stand aloof the problems of poverty, seclusion, and hopelessness».

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