

ENLARGEMENT

Since the recent enlargement of the EU landownership issues have taken on a new momentum. With the accession of New Member States, many of whom have recently restored private property rights, ELO is needed more than ever to help defend private landownership as a basic right necessary for democracy and a free market economy. **For a long time, ELO has been developing its network of member organisations in New Member States and Candidate Countries.** This has given the organisation credibility and visibility even before the Enlargement, helping them to prepare for accession. As the EU continues to consider further expansion, ELO continues to recruit in advance.

THE ENLARGED UNION

The fifth enlargement, the biggest in the history of the EU, has a political and moral dimension. European, in both geographical and cultural terms, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia have joined the democratic European family. In taking the enlargement decision, the European Union was not simply increasing its surface area and its population, it was also increasing the EU's competitiveness in the world market, creating positive interdependences between 450 million European Citizens.

The March 2005 European Council decision to enhance the Lisbon Strategy relaunched the entrepreneurial spirit to foster new opportunities also for the rural world and to encourage new ideas for job-creation in the countryside.

For some years before enlargement, in addition to general services given to all its Members, ELO **provided specific information and advice to its associated members in the Accessing and Candidate Countries.** The organisation was also lobbying at the European political level in favour of policies supporting rural business and property rights in these countries.



What about Restitution of Land in New Member States?

Despite the fact that this is a national question, property rights are a central issue for ELO, so the organisation is concerned about the restitution of land confiscated by the communist regime after WWII. More than any other concept, private property is at the heart of a liberal economy in democratic countries. The legitimate return of plundered land and payment of fair compensation for nationalized goods by the defunct peoples' democracies allow rural businessmen to inject life into the economy by enhancing the economic and environmental potential of the countryside. With this process still ongoing, ELO, which has members and partners all over Europe, support reforms in the New Member States towards solving this problem. ELO can also bring obstacles such as these, which are hampering development of a liberal economy-particularly in the countryside- to the attention of the European institutions.

Over the last few years, with the support of the European Commission, ELO has elaborated a series of programmes and events, for example training sessions on "Rural Land Ownership and Utilisation issues" which inform and train managers and rural entrepreneurs on legal aspects of landownership in the Union, funding for rural development, and other issues such as the role of the cadastre, banking, or mortgage.

Before and after Enlargement, ELO has continuously worked closely with its members in New Member States, helping them to deal with the challenges generated by their entry into a Union which is almost fifty years old.

PROJECTS AND CONFERENCES

With the support of the European Commission, ELO promotes land and rural business helps raise awareness of European legislation, and organises conferences in the New Member States. Feedbacks from these programmes are widely published through printed and electronic media at local, regional, national and European levels. More information is available at www.elo.org.

ELO Conferences Series 2003/2004: PRINCE 1

This project was organised by ELO with the support of the European Commission's "*Programme pour l'Information du Citoyen Européen*" (PRINCE) within the broader scope of the Commission's strategy for Enlargement.

This programme of conferences looked at the essential role of private property and private entrepreneurship in rural development in the context of the CAP reforms and Enlargement, informing New Member States and Candidate Countries about the impact of enlargement on rural activities.

The launch conference took place in Brussels, followed by Twinning Conferences in the EU15 Member States during 2004 (e.g. France Twinning Conference in April 2004, bringing together Polish, Estonian and French members of ELO).



Food and Sanitary Safety: a challenge for the Enlarged Union (2005)

This project has been organised with the support of the European Commission within the framework of the PHARE Small Projects Programme.



Its aim was to improve the competitiveness of rural businesses, to share experiences and good practices on this issue at the European level and to help rural professionals from the New Member States and the Candidate Countries to meet European requirements before and after enlargement.

For 2005 the programme consisted of three conferences, the first in Brussels, the second in Warsaw and the third in Sofia. All three events tackled at local level the implementation of the "Acquis Communautaire" in the field of Food and Sanitary Safety.

Building a dynamic sustainable rural world in an enlarged EU(2005/2006):

PRINCE 2

The objective of this project is to build and to continue to create, based on ELO's experience with PRINCE 1, synergies between rural actors of the EU25 and to contribute to the smooth implementation of the "Acquis Communautaire" in the enlarged EU.

To reach its goal, ELO organised a series of 14 conferences, including theory and case studies:

- 10 workshops, one for each New Member State, on different subjects,
- 3 regional conferences dedicated to the Baltic Region, Central-East Region and Mediterranean Region,
- 1 European conference in Brussels, with at least one representative from each of the 25 Member States.

In order to create new synergies as well as to exchange the knowledge and experiences between its members, ELO is in the process of elaborating other projects.