

Iceland's preparation for accession to the EU – the next steps

- Now that the Commission has recommended opening accession negotiations with Iceland, it is up to the European Council to decide unanimously on giving Iceland candidate status and on formally opening accession negotiations.
- Provided the Council's decision is positive, the first step for negotiations will be the 'screening' process: an in-depth analysis of the EU laws with which the candidate country must comply (known as the *acquis*). The laws are explained to the candidate country and any problem areas are identified jointly. This process allows candidate countries to familiarise themselves with the *acquis* and the Commission to evaluate the degree of preparedness of candidate countries to comply with EU legislation. A 'screening report' is then drawn up for the country on each area ('chapter') of legislation, as a basis for further negotiations.
- The candidate country submits a negotiating position, and the Commission sets out its view ('draft common position') to the Council. The Council then defines the EU's common position, opening the way for negotiation on each area of legislation.
- Negotiations take place at ministerial level between permanent representatives for EU countries and the ambassadors or chief negotiator for the candidate country. The accession negotiations will be conducted according to a 'Negotiating Framework', which sets out the method and the guiding principles of the negotiations. The substance of negotiations will be conducted in an Intergovernmental Conference with the participation of all Member States on the one hand and the candidate state on the other.
- After the negotiations are concluded, an Accession Treaty is drafted and the Commission issues its Opinion on Iceland's accession. The European Parliament needs to give its consent before the Treaty can be signed and ratified by Iceland and all EU member states.