



CHAT 5: March 15, 2001
Enlarging the European Union
Expert: Mr. Tom GLASER
The European Commission

Participating Schools:

Eminescu National College, Baia Mare, Romania
Engure Secondary School, Latvia
Junior Language School, Prague, Czech Republic
Liceo 'I. Kant', Rome, Italy
Lycée français Albert Premier de Monaco
Menntaskólinn á Akureyri - Akureyri Junior College, Island
St. Columbas College, Whitechurch, Dublin, Ireland
St. Paul School, Barcelona, Spain
Tartu Descartes Lyceum, Estonia
Ullvigymnasiet Köping, Sweden

<Petru> Welcome! Our guest has just arrived, please start your questioning!
<Lupacovaczechmilan> Hello from Prague!

<Colegiul> What can we the Romanian teenagers do in order to help our country be accepted as a EU member?
<Glaser1> Grow up quickly and vote for parties that don't tend to extremes.

<MA-Fjolnir> Will the candidate countries get to keep their resources for their own usage or will resource management fall under the EU after the candidate has joined the EU?
<Glaser2> Candidates countries will keep their resources just as member-states. Britain still keeps its oil and Spain its fisheries.

<Veronica> What do you think of the military force in EU after the enlargement? What's negative and positive with the "EU-force"?
<Glaser1> Veronica: Positive is the sign that Europe will give some muscle to its Foreign Policy. Negative is that some Member States want to use the force to display their anti-Americanism as if being anti-American automatically being pro-European.

<Descartes-Aleksandra> What can EU do for Estonia and what can Estonia do for EU?
<Glaser2> Estonia will had diversity to the EU and the EU will provide a non threatening form of club-membership to a small proud country.

<MA-Atli> Will we lose some of our independence if we join the EU, because we are such a small nation?



<Glaser1> MA-Atli Yes, but not because you are small. Big countries feel even more threatened because they sometimes think they can go it alone.

<Ingegerd> What is the real purpose with the enlargement? (from Ullvi, Sweden)

<Glaser2> To include countries which have asked for membership and last to increase the zone of stability, prosperity and the rule of law which is what the EU stands for.

<Eminescu-Felix> Are the countries from the EU pro or against the Enlargement?

What does it imply? Which are the advantages and disadvantages for the EU members?

<Glaser2> The latest poll in the EU shows that more than half citizens think that advantages and drawbacks of Enlargement are about even.

<Markit> Many countries which are waiting for a membership in EU are underdeveloped in many ways. How will EU finance to help these countries and still continue to help for example Africa and India?

<Glaser1> Markit: For the last ten years and more the EU has been financing up to 1 billion euros a year and stimulating up to 30 billion euros of direct investment. They are tripling the direct funding as of this year and will carry on funding development in other places too.

<Tina> What do EU do to prevent childtrade? (Ullvi Sweden)

<Glaser1> Tina: In all the threatened countries the EU is running programmes with border guards, customs services and the police to give them the training and the equipment to deal with this horrible trade.

<MA-Fanney> What about the European army? Do we have to have an army here in Iceland?

<Glaser2> Iceland is not part of the EU, it does not get an army...lucky Iceland!

<Descartes-Aleksandra> Older people are worried the prices will go up. Is it true?

<Glaser1> Descartes-Aleksandra: The EU doesn't fix prices. Producers and governments do. What the EU avoids is unfair subsidies and that might affect prices.

<Kristine> Will National currency loses its value?

<Glaser1> Kristina: National currency has a value determined by the country's GNP. Nothing to do with Europe. If your GNP goes up your currency will.

<Bengt> Are we sending our questions too fast? Is it time enough to answer all?

<Glaser2> Why? Are my answers confused?

<Lupacovaczemilan> Please, can you tell me why we are not in the EU in the way that the sixth graders can understand it.

<Glaser2> lupaco.../ because you can't compete with countries that have been democratic and free-market since 1945 and you still need technical help to catch up



<StPaulsLucas> What does a country need to enter the EU?

<Glaser2> St Paul /not straight away. They will have to meet a new set of economic criteria which could take about 5 years.

<MA-Atli> Could Icelanders decide their own tax rates after join the EU? And why was Ireland reprimanded? Was it because Ireland didn't follow EU's high-taxes policies?

<Glaser1> MA- Atli: Yes, of course. Tax rates haven't been harmonized yet although there is no guarantee they won't be.

<StPaulsLucas> Glaser 1: what characteristics does a country have to have to enter the EU?

<Glaser1> St Pauls: 1. Democratic system with rule of law and protection of minorities. 2. Functioning market economy. 3. Ability to withstand competition from other member states. 4. A public service able to put EU laws into effect.

<MA-Fanney> Will it be less expensive and easier to travel to the Eastern-European countries than it is now?

<Glaser2> MA-Fanney.../ Probably not!

<Miks> My grandfathers pension is little. I want to now does my pension will be bigger?

<Glaser1> Miks: EU rules don't cover pensions. National laws do. It is not something that the EU is competent for.

<Descartes-Aleksandra> What countries does the EU consider most important as new member states?

<Glaser2> Descartes-Alexandra/ The frontrunners at the moment are Malta, Cyprus, Poland, Slovenia, Czech Republic and Hungary but all that can change!

<Stpaulsjaviyemilio> what does the EU win with the introduction of poor countries as the ones from the east? Can someone answer?

<Glaser1> St Paul: Diversity. New blood and a wider area in which we share common values.

<StPaulsLucas> What do you think about the topic of immigrant?

<Glaser1> St Paul: Immigrants from where?

<Eminescu-Camelia> Which are the steps Romania has to follow in order to be accepted in the EU?

<Glaser2> Eminescu-Camelia: Implement reforms set out every year in the joint EU Romania document called 'the accession partnership'.

<Janis_T> What do you think about more immigrant from poor countries like Latvia?

<Glaser2> Janis-T/ I would be very surprised if they became a problem.



<Stpaulsalex> The seats in the European parliament are distributed depending on the population of the country. Taking in consideration that the real power (economic) does not always follow a big population. Is this fair for these countries, which find themselves in this situation? More seats mean more power (votes) when taking decisions, and these decisions, always have to be with money, especially with that of the people which have more.

<Glaser2> Stpaulsalex/ Luxembourg is the richest country of EU and is also the smallest.

<Eminescu_Olivia> We are impressed how many countries are participating in this chat!

<Descartes-Aleksandra> If Estonia enters EU will there be people moving to Estonia?

<Glaser2> Descartes-Aleksandra: Certainly for the holidays and probably some to invest in the country. Do you have a problem with that?

<Eminescu-Felix> Can I get more easily a job abroad?

<Glaser1> Eminescu: Once Romania is a Member State you will have freedom of movement but 95% of Europeans find their jobs at home.

<Eminescu-Ioana> What will happen if all the countries would be accepted in EU?

<Glaser2> Eminescu-Ioana/ The EU will be very much bigger!

<Eminescu-Ioana> What about visa?

<Glaser1> Eminescu: As far as I know the visa question should be dealt with by June this year.

<Colegiul-Ramona> In what way does the religion of a country affect the acceptance in the EU?

<Glaser2> Colegiul-Ramona: There is nothing in any of EU treaties that deals with religion and to legislate now would be to violate 50 years of religious tolerance

<Janis_T> Will I be able to travel in Europe freely if I haven't got citizenship?

<Glaser1> Janis T: Yes. Americans do Europe in 5 days and they don't have citizenship.

<Veronica> What will EU benefit when taking Turkey into EU? (Ullvi, Sweden)

<Glaser1> Veronica: Membership isn't just about benefits in the narrow sense as I said before it's about widening the zone of shared values lessening the chances of conflicts and sharing common practices.

<Stpaulsjaviyemilio> The languages could be a problem in such a big EU. What measures have been think to be applied?

<Glaser2> stpaulsjaviyem../ Nobody has died to tackle this question but there will be a difference between official languages and languages we use to communicate like now.

<Markit> Half of the budget goes to agricultural region today are not environmental question important to? Please answer.



<Glaser1> Markit: Yes, but you can combine productive agriculture with environmental safeguarding.

<Descartes-Aleksandra> Once it is decided that Estonia can join EU how long will it then take to really become a member?

<Glaser1> Descartes: The membership application has to be ratified in all EU Member States and that normally takes about a year. If you have made a lot of enemies it could take longer.

<Stpaulsjaviyemilio> Will all the documents of the parliament be written in all the languages of all the countries which form part of it?

<Glaser2> Stpaulsjaviyemilio: Yes, they will.

<Lupacovaczechmilan> being in EU are we going to have more or less school subjects?

<Glaser1> Lupa: I only know the English system but my daughter aged 14 is taking 11 subjects in GCSE. Is that enough for you?

<Descartes-Aleksandra> How does one make enemies in EU?

<Glaser1> Descartes: By pointing the finger at one of the Member States for being hypocritical or disapproving of some practice like eating raw fish or hunting foxes.

<stpaulsjaviyemilio> What measures will be taken in term of the pensions? Because most of the countries are getting older in population.

<Glaser2> Stpauls: Some EU countries are waking up to this and are replacing the old system based on contributions with systems which are fund-based and in which pensioners also invest in private schemes.

<Ingegerd> What will happen if one of the new countries don't follow the rules when they have got into the union?

<Glaser1> Ingegerd: Nothing much half the Member States don't follow most of the rules some of the time.

<lupacovaczechmilan> Thank you that you speak with us. Will you come to visit the Czech Republic?

<Glaser1> Lupa: Yes I've been several times but Zlata Praha is getting crowded.

<Miks> Have you been in Latvia?

<Glaser1> Miks: Yes I have been in Riga which has some of the most stunning art nouveau building I have ever seen.

<Descartes-Aleksandra> Is it possible to expel member states from EU if they break the rules?

<Glaser2> Descartes-Aleksandra/it s never been tried.



<MA-Fanney> Will the smallest candidates be absorbed wholly and only given power in accordance to their population, or will the power be determined on GNP?

<Glaser1> MA-Fanney: Has Luxembourg been absorbed? No, it hasn't. Ireland has become a real country since joining and is now nearly as rich as Luxembourg. I wouldn't call the Irish submerged.

<Descartes-Aleksandra> What should we do to be able to enter EU sooner?

<Glaser1> Descartes I don't think there's much that you can do. Both sides know about the need for speed but we can't sacrifice the quality of the legal administrative and managerial work that needs to be done.

<Eminescu_Olivia> What can the EU do for helping Romania to surpass its economic difficulties?

<Glaser2> Eminescu-Olivia/ we are already working with the IMF to provide short terms financial help but in the long run, Romania has to help itself.

<lupacovaczehmilan> Which language do you think is the second used in EU?

<Glaser1> Lupa: German is spoken by more people but the EU has long had French as it's first working language.

<stpaulsjaviyemilio> For how long does anyone can be president in the EU? What do we need to do so?

<Glaser2> Spauls..emiliot: The terms is five years but if you are lucky and the member states can't agree on your replacement, you might get a second turn.

<Colegiul-Ramona> Why aren't we in the first line with the visas?

<Glaser2> Colegiul-Ramona: Because you have not put in border control provisions similar to those in the member-states....

<ColumbasDeirdra> I don't think that Iceland should have to donate more money,

<Glaser1> Columbas: OK, fine, stay out of the EU.

<Colegiul-Ramona> But we have nothing to do with the control of the borders. We are just teenagers.

<Glaser2> Colegiul-Ramona: I know you are teenagers but you asked what you could do if you are teenagers, you can't do much.

<Ingegerd> Whats your opinion about the euro value when the enlargement is done? Will it go up or down, do you think?

<Glaser1> Ingegerd: Probably a bit down because there will be even more different rates of economic growth for one central bank to control but that doesn't mean it's a worthless project.

<Descartes-Aleksandra> When we enter EU will it enlarge our export as well?



<Glaser2> Descartes-Aleksandra: Yes, probably because your exports will be aligned with international standards and sellable all over the world.

<Markit> For Waste disposal and genetic manipulation which ethical rules will be valid? (Ullvi, Sweden)

<Glaser1> Markit: GM rules will be decided on by the Parliament but individual member states can make their own decisions at the moment. However, the EU has now a wide range of minimum standards for waste disposal which must be applied.

<Veronica> Are you worried about the future for the present members when the enlargement is done? (Ullvi Sweden)

<Glaser2> Veronica: No, not at all!

<MA-Fanney> Will import taxes change somehow by joining the EU?

<Glaser2> MA-Fanney: Yes, as regards imports from the outside the EU. This is how the EU raises much of its budget. So, it is quite important.

<Markit> What is GM rules? (Ullvi, Sweden)

<Glaser1> Markit GM stands for Genetic Modification which means putting a cell from one organism i.e; strawberry into another e.g. tomato because that cell has some property that could be good for tomatoes. Nobody knows the long-term effects on human beings. We could all turn into fishes in 20 years.

<Veronica> In what way will the new countries influence the older countries? (Ullvi Sweden)

<Glaser2> Veronica: I think their cultural political and social influence could be vital for us. We have got a bit materialistic and cynical and new blood will be most welcome.

<Ingegerd> What is the most difficult problem with the enlargement?

<Glaser1> Ingegerd: It is to set up public services like the civil service which can translate the new laws into action and thus make them work.

<Eminescu-Laura> We, the young generation of Romania, want to join the EU as soon as possible. What do the EU officials do in order to have us integrated in the European family faster?

<Glaser1> Manage training and investment programmes, monitor progress in alignment and conduct negotiations.

<Janis_T> What do you think about economic situation of Latvia?

<Glaser2> Better than it was, and not as good as it will be.

<Eminescu-Ioana> Which are the solutions taken into consideration by EU for encouraging the preservation of the national and cultural identity in Europe?



<Glaser1> The EU runs some small programmes but the main effort must come from the countries themselves.

<Tina> What do you consider is the biggest threat to EU? (question from Ullvi, Sweden).

<Glaser2> Apathy, cynicism and selfishness.

<Eminescu-Laura> I would really like to know what is your opinion about Romania.

<Glaser1> My wife has been three times to Romania and she thinks it is beautiful.

<Miks_> My father is a farmer. He is afraid that there will not be equal Competition with the farmers of EU. How can Latvian farmers benefit?

<Glaser2> They will get funds to modernise production and marketing, and help to diversify what they produce.

<Inara> Will the wider mobility affects the national identity of small nations?

<Glaser1> I don't see why.

<Uldis> If Latvia enters EU does it help to join NATO?

<Glaser2> It helps if you want to defend yourself. The EU army isn't ready yet.

<MA-JonOrri> How can countries that lean to the left in politics and have extensive welfare system and other countries like Iceland that have relatively low taxes compared to many EU countries agree on common policy?

<Glaser1> Britain has low taxes and agrees with high-tax countries like Denmark - even on the euro!

<Eminescu_Olivia> Which are the practical solutions for promoting the conscience of being European among the candidate countries?

<Glaser1> Better information, tailored to what people want.

<stpaulsjaviyemilio> what will the EU benefit with the incorporation of this new countries?

<Glaser1> As I said, it will widen the area of countries sharing similar ideas.

<stpaulsjaviyemilio> will the new be able to use the euro too?

<Glaser1> In due time, yes.

<Descartes-Aleksandra> what do you think which countries will join the EU first?

<Glaser1> Nobody can answer that - I told you who the 'favourite' candidates are at this moment - but all that can change.

<ingegerd> Whats the real purpose with the enlargement? Do you see any risk that the union gets too large?from ullvi sweden. The real purpose is what I have told you already. There is no hidden agenda.

<Glaser1> Yes, there is a danger in size.



<Inara> Will the Internet be cheaper when candidate countries are accepted to EU?

<Glaser1> No, that depends on service providers.

<Bengt> I want to know which countries will come first in this enlargement process. Will it be Slovenia or will the Baltic states to be first? And when will these first states be members?

<Glaser1> It's not a race. It's not a competition. And nobody knows the exact date.

<Uldis> What do member countries think of candidate countries?

<Glaser1> Many of them still don't know you well enough. They want to know more.

<MA-Atli> Will the smallest candidates be absorbed wholly and only given power in accordance to their population, or will the power be determined on GDP?

<Glaser1> No, I keep on telling you about Luxembourg and Ireland and how they are still there.

<MA-Fanney> Will fees in Icelandic collages rise to similar amount as in other countries? e.g. England, for it is a lot cheaper here than in most other countries...

<Glaser1> That is a matter for your education authorities.

<Stpaulsalex> What do you think will happen in the short term effect (economic wise) by enlarging the EU?

<Glaser1> Probably a marked increased in economic activity.

<Kristine> When we are in EU will telephone connections be better with other countries?

<Glaser1> Depends on your national system not on the EU.

<Markit> How will the money be enough for every country which have problem with the agricultural region. Who will EU give priority to?

<Glaser1> EU will give priority to those who need it most.

<StPaulsLucas> 4How can the EU enlarge if nowadays for aproving a law they need at least 5 years to take it abroad?

<Glaser1> Well, we could enlarge quickly and then spend 20 years trying to sort out the problems. The key words are 'thorough' and 'well-prepared'. Time we spend now, we save later.

<StPaulsLucas> How is it going to be solved the problem of the languages if nowadays we need more then 50% of the workers in the EU to be translators?

<Glaser1> Not true. The EU has 3 working languages. And 10% are translators not 50%.

<Eminescu-Felix> Why has Bulgaria received the permit to travel in Europe without visa? Why are they superior to us?

<Glaser1> Because they put immigration and border control reforms in place.



<Uldis> How big are Latvia chances to get in EU?

<Glaser1> Excellent if you carry on with your reforms.

<Descartes-Aleksandra> And Estonia' s chances?

<Glaser1> A bit better than Latvia's.

<MA-JonOrri> Would Iceland have to donate higher amounts to the EU than countries like Spain and Greece because of the high GNP per capita in Iceland?

<Glaser1> Yes, it's called solidarity and is one of the things the EU represents.

<Eminescu-Felix> Will national identity be preserved. How?

<Glaser1> How is up to you. But the EU doesn't want identities to disappear.

<Kristine> Will the English language be the main language in EU?

<Glaser1> Never officially. But as a working tool quite possibly.

<stpaulsjaviyemilio> for how long how can anyone be the president of the EU? What do you need to do to be so?

<Glaser1> Five years. You have to be proposed by your country and the other Member States have to agree.

<Eminescu-Felix> Do you consider Romania part of Europe or a bordering country?

<Glaser1> Culturally and historically it is a part of Europe. Technically and politically, it is in the process of reintegrating.

<Eminescu-Raluca> What are the advantages of Romania if she will be a EU member?

<Glaser1> Membership of a club of like-minded countries, sharing the same values, and with the richer helping the poorer. More weight in international discussions.

<Uldis> Mr. Glaser is your job very difficult?

<Glaser1> Yes, because the EU has restricted the number of hours in each day to 24! I could get a lot more done if there were 48.

<Eminescu-Camelia> Goodbye from Romania. And many thanks

<Inara> Best wishes for everybody!

<Descartes-Aleksandra> ok, bye,bye!!

<Dorin> Good bye! (Eminescu team in Baia Mare, Romania)

<Petru> Thanks, Estonia!

<Eminescu-Olivia> It was a great chat!

<Eminescu-Felix> Good bye! It was a pleasure to chat with you!

<Colegiul-Ramona> See you in the EU

<Petru> We all thank you!

<lupacovaczechmilan> Good bye and many thanks from Prague!



<Descartes-Katre> Thanks, bye from Estonia!

<Eminescu-Raluca> Good bye! We hope that the next chat will be as a EU members!

<MA-Fanney> Thank you for your answers Mr. Tom Glaser...

<MA-valdimar> Best thanks from Iceland, the sun is shining!

<Bengt> Thank you very much. We will download the transcript. (You will publish it I hope) See you next time and greetings from Sweden!

<Janis_T> It has been a nice experience to take part in this chat, thank you Mr. Glaser!

<Kristine> I like this chat! Thanks Mr. Glaser and Mr. Dumitru!

<Petru> Dear students and teachers, thank you for your participation! We also thanks to our guest, Mr. Tom Glaser. The chat script will be published on the site, so please check it next week.