

## 12. NATO enlargement

NATO's door remains open to any European country in a position to undertake the commitments and obligations of membership, and contribute to security in the Euro-Atlantic area. Since 1949, NATO's membership has increased from 12 to 28 countries through six rounds of enlargement. Albania and Croatia, which were invited to join NATO at the Bucharest Summit in April 2008, formally became members when the accession process was completed on 1 April 2009.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia<sup>1</sup> has, like Albania and Croatia, been participating in the Membership Action Plan (MAP) for a number of years to prepare for possible membership. At Bucharest, Allied leaders agreed to invite the country to become a member as soon as a mutually acceptable solution to the issue over the country's name has been reached with Greece.

A number of other important decisions concerning enlargement were taken at Bucharest. Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro were invited to start Intensified Dialogues on their membership aspirations and related reforms. Allied leaders also agreed that Georgia and Ukraine - which were already engaged in an Intensified Dialogue with NATO - will become members in future.

NATO's "open door policy" is based on Article 10 of its founding treaty. Any decision to invite a country to join the Alliance is taken by the North Atlantic Council, NATO's principal decision-making body, on the basis of consensus among all Allies. No third country has a say in such deliberations.

NATO's ongoing enlargement process poses no threat to any country. It is aimed at promoting stability and cooperation, at building a Europe whole and free, united in peace, democracy and common values.

### **Support for aspirant countries**

Countries that have declared an interest in joining the Alliance are initially invited to engage in an Intensified Dialogue with NATO about their membership aspirations and related reforms.

Aspirant countries may then be invited to participate in the Membership Action Plan to prepare for potential membership and demonstrate their ability to meet the obligations and commitments of possible future membership. In principle, participation in the MAP does not guarantee future membership, but it constitutes the key preparation mechanism.

Countries aspiring to join NATO have to demonstrate that they are in a position to further the principles of the 1949 Washington Treaty and contribute to security in the Euro-Atlantic area. They are also expected to meet certain political, economic and military criteria, which are laid out in the 1995 Study on NATO Enlargement.

### **1995 Study on Enlargement**

In 1995, the Alliance published the results of a Study on NATO Enlargement that considered the merits of admitting new members and how they should be brought in.

It concluded that the end of the Cold War provided a unique opportunity to build improved security in the entire Euro-Atlantic area and that NATO enlargement would contribute to enhanced stability and security for all.

The Study further concluded that enlargement would contribute to enhanced stability and security for all countries in the Euro-Atlantic area by encouraging and supporting democratic reforms, including the establishment of civilian and democratic control over military forces; fostering patterns and habits of cooperation, consultation and consensus-building characteristic of relations among members of the Alliance; and promoting good-neighbourly relations.

It would increase transparency in defence planning and military budgets, thereby reinforcing confidence among states, and would reinforce the overall tendency toward closer integration and cooperation in Europe. The Study also concluded that enlargement would strengthen the Alliance's ability to contribute to European and international security and strengthen and broaden the transatlantic partnership.

According to the Study, countries seeking NATO membership would have to be able to demonstrate that they have fulfilled certain requirements. These include:

- a functioning democratic political system based on a market economy;
- the fair treatment of minority populations;
- a commitment to the peaceful resolution of conflicts;
- the ability and willingness to make a military contribution NATO operations; and
- a commitment to democratic civil-military relations and institutional structures.

Once admitted, new members would enjoy all the rights and assume all the obligations of membership. This would include acceptance at the time that they join of all the principles, policies and procedures previously adopted by Alliance members.

### **Accession process**

Once the Allies have decided to invite a country to become a member of NATO, they officially invite the country to begin accession talks with the Alliance. This is the first step in the accession process on the way to formal membership.

The major steps in the process are:

***1. Accession talks with a NATO team***

These talks take place at NATO headquarters in Brussels and bring together teams of NATO experts and representatives of the individual invitees. Their aim is to obtain formal confirmation from the invitees of their willingness and ability to meet the political, legal and military obligations and commitments of NATO membership, as laid out in the Washington Treaty and in the Study on NATO Enlargement.

The talks take place in two sessions with each invitee. In the first session, political and defence or military issues are discussed, essentially providing the opportunity to establish that the preconditions for membership have been met. The second session is more technical and includes discussion of resources, security, and legal issues as well as the contribution of each new member country to NATO's common budget. This is determined on a proportional basis, according to the size of their economies in relation to those of other Alliance member countries.

Invitees are also required to implement measures to ensure the protection of NATO classified information, and prepare their security and intelligence services to work with the NATO Office of Security.

The end product of these discussions is a timetable to be submitted by each invitee for the completion of necessary reforms, which may continue even after these countries have become NATO members.

***2. Invitees send letters of intent to NATO, along with timetables for completion of reforms***

In the second step of the accession process, each invitee country provides confirmation of its acceptance of the obligations and commitments of membership in the form of a letter of intent from each foreign minister addressed to the NATO Secretary General. Together with this letter they also formally submit their individual reform timetables.

***3. Accession protocols are signed by NATO countries***

NATO then prepares Accession Protocols to the Washington Treaty for each invitee. These protocols are in effect amendments or additions to the Treaty, which once signed and ratified by Allies, become an integral part of the Treaty itself and permit the invited countries to become parties to the Treaty.

***4. Accession protocols are ratified by NATO countries***

The governments of NATO member states ratify the protocols, according to their national requirements and procedures. The ratification procedure varies from country to country. For example, the United States requires a two-thirds majority to pass the required legislation in the Senate. Elsewhere, for example in the United Kingdom, no formal parliamentary vote is required.

*5. The Secretary General invites the potential new members to accede to the North Atlantic Treaty*

Once all NATO member countries notify the Government of the United States of America, the depository of the Washington Treaty, of their acceptance of the protocols to the North Atlantic Treaty on the accession of the potential new members, the Secretary General invites the new countries to accede to the Treaty.

*6. Invitees accede to the North Atlantic Treaty in accordance with their national procedures*

*7. Upon depositing their instruments of accession with the US State Department, invitees formally become NATO members*

### Evolution of NATO's "open door policy"

NATO's "open door policy" is based upon Article 10 of the Washington Treaty, which states that membership is open to any "European State in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area".

The enlargement of the Alliance is an ongoing and dynamic process. Since the Alliance was created in 1949, its membership has grown from the 12 founding members to today's 28 members through six rounds of enlargement in 1952, 1955, 1982, 1999, 2004 and 2009.

The first three rounds of enlargement - which brought in Greece and Turkey (1952), West Germany (1955) and Spain (1982) - took place during the Cold War, when strategic considerations were at the forefront of decision-making.

The fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, signalled the end of the Cold War and was followed by the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the break up of the Soviet Union, ending the division of Europe. The reunification of Germany in October 1990 brought the territory of the former East Germany into the Alliance. The new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe were eager to guarantee their freedom by becoming integrated into Euro-Atlantic institutions.

NATO enlargement was the subject of lively debate in the early 1990s. Many political analysts were unsure of the benefits that enlargement would bring. Some were concerned about the possible impact on Alliance cohesion and solidarity, as well as on relations with other states, notably Russia. It is in this context that the Alliance carried out a Study on NATO Enlargement in 1995 (see above).

### *Post-Cold War enlargement*

Based on the findings of the Study on Enlargement, The Alliance invited the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland to begin accession talks at the Alliance's Madrid Summit in 1997. These three countries became the first former members of the Warsaw Pact to join NATO in 1999.

At the 1999 Washington Summit, the Membership Action Plan was launched to help other aspirant countries prepare for possible membership.

Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Slovakia and Slovenia were invited to begin accession talks at the Alliance's Prague Summit in 2002 and joined NATO in 2004. All seven countries had participated in the MAP.

### *Bucharest Summit decisions*

At the Bucharest Summit in April 2008, Allied leaders took a number of steps related to the future enlargement of the Alliance.

Several decisions concerned countries in the Western Balkans. The Allies see the closer integration of Western Balkan countries into Euro-Atlantic institutions as essential to ensuring long-term self-sustaining stability in this region, where NATO has been heavily engaged in peace-support operations since the mid 1990s.

- Albania and Croatia were invited to start accession talks to join the Alliance and joined NATO in April 2009..
- The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\* was assured that it will also be invited to join the Alliance as soon as a solution to the issue of the country's name has been reached with Greece.
- Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro were invited to start Intensified Dialogues on their membership aspirations and related reforms.

Allied leaders also agreed at Bucharest that Georgia and Ukraine, which were already engaged in Intensified Dialogues with NATO, will one day become members. In December 2008, Allied foreign ministers decided to enhance opportunities for assisting the two countries in efforts to meet membership requirements by making use of the framework of the existing NATO-Ukraine Commission and NATO-Georgia Commission - without prejudice to further decisions which may be taken about their applications to join the MAP.

*Timeline of key milestones*

<b>4 April 1949</b>	Signature of the North Atlantic Treaty by 12 founding members: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the United States. Article 10 of the treaty provides basis NATO's "open door policy".
<b>18 February 1952</b>	Accession of Greece and Turkey.
<b>6 May 1955</b>	Accession of the Federal Republic of Germany.
<b>30 May 1982</b>	Spain joins the Alliance (and the integrated military structure in 1998).
<b>October 1990</b>	With the reunification of Germany, the new German Länder in the East become part of NATO.
<b>January 1994</b>	At the Brussels Summit, Allied leaders reaffirm that NATO remains open to the membership of other European countries.
<b>28 September 1995</b>	Publication of NATO Study on Enlargement.
<b>8-9 July 1997</b>	At the Madrid Summit, three Partner countries - the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland - are invited to start accession talks.
<b>12 March 1999</b>	Accession of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, bringing the Alliance to 19 members.
<b>23-25 April 1999</b>	Launch of the Membership Action Plan (MAP) at the Washington Summit. (Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia join the MAP.)
<b>14 May 2002</b>	NATO foreign ministers officially announce the participation of Croatia in the MAP at their meeting in Reykjavik, Iceland.
<b>May 2002</b>	President Leonid Kuchma announces Ukraine's goal of eventual NATO membership.
<b>21-22 November 2002</b>	At the Prague Summit, seven Partner countries - Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia - are invited to start accession talks.
<b>26 March 2003</b>	Signing ceremony of the Accession Protocols of the seven invitees.
<b>29 March 2004</b>	Accession of Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.
<b>21 April 2005</b>	Launch of the Intensified Dialogue on Ukraine's aspirations to NATO membership and related reforms, at an informal meeting of foreign ministers in Vilnius, Lithuania.
<b>21 September 2006</b>	NATO foreign ministers in New York announce the decision to offer an Intensified Dialogue to Georgia.
<b>28-29 November 2006</b>	At the Riga Summit, Allied leaders state that invitations will be extended to MAP countries that fulfil certain conditions.
<b>2-4 April 2008</b>	At the Bucharest Summit, Allied leaders invite Albania and Croatia to start accession talks; assure the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* that it will be invited once a solution to

the issue of the country's name has been reached with Greece; invite Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro to start Intensified Dialogues; and agree that Georgia and Ukraine will become members in future.

**9 July 2008**  
**1 April 2009**

Accession protocols for Albania and Croatia are signed.  
Accession of Albania and Croatia.