

*These notes refer to the European Parliament (Representation)
Act 2003 (c.7) which received Royal Assent on 8 May 2003*

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT (REPRESENTATION) ACT 2003

EXPLANATORY NOTES

BACKGROUND

Changes in total number of United Kingdom MEPs

5. The Treaty of Nice (March 2001) provides for the enlargement of the EU to potentially include 12 new Member States to make a total of 27. As a consequence, it provides that there will be an enlarged European Parliament of a maximum 732 MEPs, with representation roughly divided between each member state according to its population size. Existing member states are obliged to make reductions in the number of their MEPs to make space so that accession states have fair representation in the European Parliament. The Treaty provides for the UK to have 72 seats - a reduction of 15 from the current 87 seats.
6. Currently it is expected that 10 new States will accede before the 2004 elections. The Accession Treaty signed in Athens provides for the UK to have 78 MEPs for the 2004 elections based on the accession of 10 States.
7. This Act:
 - establishes a mechanism by which the UK can adjust the number of MEPs;
 - provides for the Electoral Commission to undertake reviews and report their recommendations about the numbers of MEPs representing electoral regions in European Parliamentary elections; and
 - provides order-making powers to implement changes following their recommendations.