

EU drools at the prospect of swallowing Iceland

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It's dark in Reykjavík at this time of year, and the temper matches the season. So gloomy are Icelanders, so shocked at their sudden fall, that they are considering membership of the EU. The ruling Independence Party - which, in the way of these things, is being blamed for the collapse, but not thanked for the extraordinary growth of the previous 20 years - is debating whether to drop its foundational doctrine and renounce national independence.

The EU knows an opportunity when it sees one. Its leaders understand that, for an essentially prosperous and well-governed country such as Iceland, membership can only be [the result of despair](#). Icelanders, like all Northern peoples, are prone to moodiness. When they shake off their current depression, they will see that the EU is no solution: that membership would make them poorer, less democratic and less free. So Eurocrats want to act immediately. Brussels is buzzing with rumours. Apparently an accession treaty is already being secretly drawn up, which would allow Iceland to be fast-tracked before Croatia.

From Brussels' point of view, Icelandic accession would bring three advantages. First, it would carry fresh stocks into the depleted Common Fisheries Policy, opening vast waters to French, Spanish and Portuguese trawlers. Second, it would allow the institutional changes proposed in the ~~European Constitution~~ Lisbon Treaty to be smuggled through, so that the Irish wouldn't have to vote twice on them. Third, it would remove an irritant. Iceland's success has always annoyed the EU: if 300,000 Icelanders, inhabiting an icy scrap of tundra several hours' flight from the nearest city, can create a prosperous global economy, then the argument that success depends on being part of a big bloc suddenly seems ridiculous. Most MEPs have been [revelling in Iceland's collapse](#): they always disliked the way Icelanders, as they saw it, got the benefits of

European free trade without the costs of membership. Now, they hope to settle that problem once and for all.

I have argued before that Icelanders should remember what made them wealthy and successful in the first place. I have made that case in the [Icelandic press](#) and in [this blog](#). If Iceland joined, it would lock in its present troubles in perpetuity, and shut off the possibility of a full recovery. Don't do it, my friends.