

**Follow-up to the European Parliament non-legislative resolution
on the institutional consequences of the EU enlargement
negotiations**

- 1. Rapporteur:** Sandro GOZI (RENEW / FR)
- 2. References:** 2025/2041(INI) / A10-0177/2025 / P10_TA(2025)0247
- 3. Date of adoption of the resolution:** 22 October 2025
- 4. Competent Parliamentary Committee:** Committee on Constitutional Affairs (AFCO)
- 5. Brief analysis/ assessment of the resolution and requests made in it:**

The Resolution advocates the need for internal reforms to prepare the Union for enlargement, calling for a coordinated strategy to maintain the Union's effectiveness and democratic integrity. It argues that past enlargements have always been preceded by institutional reforms and stresses that enlargement should be seen as a long-term investment, in the context of geopolitical challenges including Russia's war against Ukraine. The Resolution highlights in particular the difficulty of reaching unanimity in Council in an enlarged Union.

Parliament calls, more specifically, for changes in the composition of the Parliament and the Commission. It suggests attributing full co-legislative powers to the Parliament as regards the EU budget, including the adoption of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), and ensuring that the future EU budget supports enlargement. It also calls for reforming the Rule of Law mechanism. The Resolution suggests bolstering democratic legitimacy by empowering Parliament with greater legislative rights, including a proper right of initiative and by strengthening the European dimension of European elections, especially by making progress on the Parliament's proposal for a reform of the European Electoral Law.

The Resolution notes that reforms can be achieved through using existing mechanisms in the EU Treaties, including passerelle clauses and the enhanced cooperation mechanism. It also calls for differentiated integration approaches, for instance using Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) to implement a European defence system, and suggests targeted amendments to the EU Treaties.

Finally, the Resolution calls on the Commission and the Council to communicate the findings of the Commission's pre-enlargement policy reviews and to develop, in cooperation with Parliament, a roadmap for implementing necessary institutional reforms in conjunction with the enlargement process.

6. Response to requests and overview of actions taken, or intended to be taken, by the Commission:

The Commission welcomes the resolution of the European Parliament on the institutional consequences of the EU enlargement negotiations.

The Commission agrees that both the EU and future Member States should be ready at the time of accession. The Union should work on both strands in parallel. The EU must widen as it deepens.

In her Political Guidelines 2024-2029, President von der Leyen stated that **an ambitious reform agenda is needed to ensure the proper functioning of a larger Union**, to ensure the Union is equipped to tackle its geopolitical challenges and to improve democratic legitimacy, in particular through citizens' participation. Following up on the European Council's roadmap for future work on internal reforms from June 2024, the Commission will present its pre-enlargement policy reviews and will put forward proposals to enhance Europe's capacity to act, including for a larger Union. In doing so, the Commission intends to focus on what can already be done now and on those areas where a broad consensus is emerging.

The Commission is of the view that reflections on internal reforms must take into account the **need to preserve the institutional balance** and the prerogatives conferred on each institution by the EU Treaties. As regards the **Council's voting rules** (paragraph 4), the Commission's longstanding position is that unanimity voting ought to be reconsidered in certain key policy areas if the Union wants to be able to act quickly, efficiently, and therefore strategically. As stated in its Communication on pre-enlargement reforms and policy reviews from March 2024¹, unanimity will be even more difficult to reach in a larger Union, with increased risks of decisions being blocked by a very few or only one single Member State.

On the Parliament's suggestion to **redefine qualified majority voting in the Council** (paragraph 11), so as to improve the balance between larger and smaller countries and to retain higher thresholds for the most important and politically delicate decisions, the Commission notes that such adaptations would require Treaty change.

As regards the **composition of EU institutions following enlargement** (paragraphs 8, 9, 10), the Commission notes that the EU Treaties are in principle 'enlargement proof', as it is possible to adapt EU institutions and bodies by adding the corresponding number of new members to each institution or body.

As regards the **Commission**, the Treaty on European Union (TEU) already provides for a smaller College of Commissioners, corresponding to two thirds of the number of Member States chosen on the basis of a

¹ COM(2024) 146 final.

strictly equal rotation system. It also allows the current system of one College member per Member State to be maintained, as the European Council has so far opted for. In line with the procedure laid down in the EU Treaty, it is for the European Council to decide whether to alter the number of members of the College, also in the context of enlargement.

As regards the **composition of the Parliament**, the Commission is of the view that it is for the Parliament to reflect on the best way forward, as the Commission does not have a formal role in the process². The Commission welcomes the ongoing reflections in the Parliament's Committee on Constitutional Affairs on a permanent system for the allocation of seats in the Parliament.

The Commission fully agrees that enforcement through infringement procedures and the **application of the Article 7 TEU mechanism** (paragraph 12) must continue to be used effectively, including in a future enlarged Union, as set out in the Political Guidelines for 2024-2029. As regards the concrete organisation of the procedure under Article 7 TEU, the Commission notes that this is the competence of the Council. Certain suggestions made by the Parliament would require Treaty change.

The Commission agrees that **the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2028-2034** (paragraph 15, 16, 17) will be crucial for preparing the candidate countries for accession. 'Global Europe', the proposed new external action financing instrument would enable the EU to step up support to enlargement partners, using its full range of tools, in particular technical assistance and financial support for delivering reforms and strategic investments. By doing so, the EU would help these countries progress on their path to join the EU and accelerate economic convergence before that, giving candidate countries and potential candidates powerful incentives to carry out the necessary reforms to prepare for accession and support capacity building to effectively implement the EU's body of law.

The Commission agrees that **the next MFF must be ambitious**, both in size and design. The Commission has thus proposed an MFF amounting to almost EUR 2 trillion (or 1.26% of the EU's gross national income on average between 2028 and 2034). This framework will equip Europe with a long-term investment budget matching its ambitions to be an independent, prosperous, secure and thriving society and economy over the coming decade.

The Commission also agrees that **new own resources are essential** to support a more ambitious long-term budget that responds effectively to the Union's strategic priorities. It has thus proposed five new own

² Under Article 14(2), second subparagraph, TEU, the decision on the number of seats for each Member State is taken by unanimity by the European Council on a proposal from the European Parliament.

resources, and adjustments to the existing own resources, which would generate a total of EUR 58 billion per year.

In line with the request expressed in the Resolution (paragraph 14), the proposal for the 2028-2034 MFF Regulation provides in Article 11 for a **mandatory revision clause** in the event of new countries joining the EU. The impact of enlargement on the MFF would depend on the outcome of the accession negotiations in the financially relevant chapters (particularly agriculture, cohesion policy and financial and budgetary provisions), including any transitional measures, based on a careful assessment of the impacts on various sectors.

The Commission is aware of the call of the Parliament for a **full right of legislative initiative**. In her Political Guidelines for 2024-2029, President von der Leyen recalled her pledge from her 2019 Political Guidelines to give the Parliament a stronger role in initiating and shaping legislation. Recalling that the Commission delivered on that commitment by responding to Parliament's Article 225 resolutions with legislative proposals in full respect of proportionality, subsidiarity and better law-making principles, President von der Leyen stressed that the Commission has strengthened its cooperation on Article 225 by asking Commissioners to take part in structured dialogues with Parliamentary committees on these resolutions. The terms of the commitment and cooperation on Article 225 have been set out in the revised Framework Agreement on relations between the European Parliament and European Commission voted in plenary on 11 March.

When it comes to the Resolution's call for a **more generalised direct right of initiative** (paragraph 20) of the Parliament, the Commission recalls that such a broader right would require Treaty change.

Concerning the **European Electoral law** (paragraph 23), the Commission recalls that it plays no formal role in the procedure set out in Article 223 TFEU. It has been closely following discussions in the Council on the 2022 proposal of the Parliament to reform the 1976 Electoral Act. Several elements of the Parliament's proposal are also reflected in the Commission's efforts to support democratic participation and free and fair elections. This includes enhancing the European dimension of elections to the European Parliament, preventing multiple voting, supporting voting accessibility for persons with disabilities, and fostering gender-balanced lists of candidates. Such topics are highlighted in Commission Recommendation (EU) 2023/2829 on inclusive and resilient electoral processes in the EU and the recently adopted Council Directive (EU) 2025/1788 on voting rights in elections to the European Parliament of EU citizens who reside in a different Member State than their state of nationality. They are also covered by the European Cooperation Network on Elections, with national electoral administrations regularly sharing expertise and practices on their technical implementation.

The **European Democracy Shield** presents measures to promote democracy and build collective democratic resilience, including to support EU candidate countries and potential candidate countries in

their efforts to strengthen and consolidate democracy. As part of this effort, to support free and fair elections, the Commission will prepare a repository of common references and standards for electoral processes to further enrich the common understanding of the fairness and integrity of electoral processes among Member States. The Commission will continue to support the legislator to make progress on the Parliament's proposals to reform the 1976 Electoral Act, including by making available, as needed and as relevant, its technical and institutional expertise on election-related matters.

The Commission agrees that **some reforms can be implemented swiftly** by using the full potential of the current Treaties. The Commission welcomes the Parliament's recommendations on the **need to activate the 'passerelle clauses'**³ (paragraph 25) in the EU Treaties, allowing for a shift from unanimity to qualified majority voting within the Council in key areas. To be activated, these clauses require a unanimous decision either from the Council of the European Union or the European Council. In 2018 and 2019, the Commission made proposals to that effect in the areas of foreign policy, tax policy, social policy, energy and climate policy, but these have not been taken forward. Since then, different solutions, such as new emergency brakes or the extension of constructive abstentions have been tabled. As already stated in the Communication from March 2024, the Commission believes it is possible to move away from unanimity without putting at risk Member States' strategic interests. This can be done by combining the activation of the passerelle clauses with appropriate and proportionate safeguards to accommodate strategic national interests. The Commission also recalls that except for a few policy areas⁴, where the Commission has the right of initiative, it is for the European Council or the Council to initiate the activation of the passerelle clauses.

With regard to the Parliament's suggestions on **differentiated integration** (paragraph 26), the Commission notes that the Treaties provide for certain specific mechanisms to allow for European integration at different speeds.

In line with the TEU, the **PESCO** (paragraphs 28_29) was activated by willing Member States resulting in 26 of them participating, with the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the European Defence Agency (EDA) ensuring its Secretariat. The Treaty does not give the Commission any competence to make proposals within PESCO, nor to propose to Member States to evolve PESCO into a European defence system.

³ The Treaties provide for two general passerelle clauses under Article 48(7) TEU and six specific passerelle clauses aimed at modifying decision-making in the following areas: CFSP (Article 31(3) TEU); family law with cross-border implications (Article 81(3) TFEU); social policy (Article 153(2) TFEU); environmental policy (Article 192(2) TFEU); MFF (Article 312(2) TFEU) and enhanced cooperation (Article 333 TFEU).

⁴ Family law with cross-border implications, social policy and environmental policy.

