



TEXTS ADOPTED

P10_TA(2025)0247

Institutional consequences of the EU enlargement negotiations

European Parliament resolution of 22 October 2025 on the institutional consequences of the EU enlargement negotiations (2025/2041(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Treaty on European Union (TEU), in particular Articles 31(3), 48 and 49 thereof,
- having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, in particular Articles 81(3), 83, 136, 153(2), 192(2), 312(2) and 333 thereof,
- having regard to the European Council conclusions of 23-24 June 2022, 29-30 June 2023, 26-27 October 2023, 14-15 December 2023 and 27 June 2024,
- having regard to the Granada declaration of the European Council of 6 October 2023,
- having regard to the Council Presidency Progress Report on the future of Europe of 10 June 2024,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 23 March 2024 on pre-enlargement reforms and policy reviews (COM(2024)0146),
- having regard to its resolutions of 16 February 2017 on improving the functioning of the European Union building on the potential of the Lisbon Treaty¹, and of 11 July 2023 on the implementation of the *passerelle clauses* in the EU Treaties²,
- having regard to the report of 9 May 2022 on the final outcome of the Conference on the Future of Europe and to its resolution of

¹ OJ C 252, 18.7.2018, p. 215.

² OJ C, C/2024/3996, 17.7.2024, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/3996/oj>.

4 May 2022 on the follow-up to the conclusions of the Conference on the Future of Europe³,

- having regard to its resolutions of 9 June 2022 on the call for a Convention for the revision of the Treaties⁴, and of 22 November 2023 on proposals of the European Parliament for the amendment of the Treaties⁵, including through the activation of Article 48 TEU asking the European Council to agree to call a Convention to reform the Treaties,
 - having regard to its resolution of 29 February 2024 on deepening EU integration in view of future enlargement⁶,
 - having regard to the report of 9 September 2024 by Mario Draghi entitled 'The future of European competitiveness', the report of 17 April 2024 by Enrico Letta entitled 'Much more than a market', and the report of 30 October 2024 by Sauli Niinistö entitled 'Safer Together – Strengthening Europe's Civilian and Military Preparedness and Readiness',
 - having regard to Rule 55 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs (A10-0177/2025),
- A. whereas 9 of the 10 countries currently aspiring to join the EU have candidate status, some of which have held this status for many years; whereas the candidate countries are at various stages of the accession process and negotiations; whereas Georgia unilaterally suspended EU accession negotiations on 28 November 2024;
- B. whereas Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and other ongoing geopolitical challenges, including a worrying shift in transatlantic relations, have given new geostrategic meaning and impetus to the EU accession process and European unification;
- C. whereas accession to the European Union must remain a merit-based process, based on an assessment of each applicant's fulfilment of the Copenhagen criteria and the implementation of the necessary reforms, in particular in the areas of 'fundamentals', adherence to the principles of democracy, the rule of law, human rights and good governance, as well as alignment with the EU's common foreign and

³ OJ C 465, 6.12.2022, p. 109.

⁴ OJ C 493, 27.12.2022, p. 130.

⁵ OJ C, C/2024/4216, 24.7.2024, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/4216/oj>.

⁶ OJ C, C/2024/6746, 26.11.2024, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/6746/oj>.

security policy, in order to ensure that enlargement strengthens rather than undermines the EU and its single market;

- D. whereas enlargement is a historic commitment, a key EU foreign policy tool, a strategic geopolitical priority and one of the EU's most successful policies, representing an investment in the future of the European continent;
- E. whereas accession countries should implement decisively the required reforms and achieve concrete and irreversible progress in core elements of the enlargement process; whereas the EU and the Member States should support the candidate countries with financial and technical assistance to achieve these criteria; whereas there cannot be shortcuts with EU values and fundamental principles;
- F. whereas an enlarged EU would gain greater political, economic and military power and leverage on the global stage while empowering shared democratic values across the EU enlargement region; whereas an enlarged single market is important to both the EU and the accession countries while making the EU an even more competitive economic player and attractive trading partner; whereas any failure to make progress in EU enlargement would undermine the EU's economic and security interests and could ultimately push non-EU countries on the European continent to align economically and politically with other blocs (e.g. Russia and China), potentially creating rival economic areas and reducing the EU's global economic influence, while creating opportunities for destabilisation efforts to be conducted from the immediate EU neighbourhood;
- G. whereas the countries that joined the EU in 2004 – and the EU as a whole – have experienced substantial economic growth and higher standards in several areas, including an increase in GDP per capita of 30 % on average; whereas, on average, all new Member States have experienced an additional 12 % of GDP growth compared to their projected growth if they had not joined the EU, and that this growth was discernible within five years of their accession; whereas, over the past 20 years, the EU's economy has grown by 27 %; whereas the countries that were already part of the EU at the time of the 2004 enlargement have also experienced growth and prosperity, with a clear causal relationship with expanded markets, connectivity and investment resulting from the enlargement; whereas every region experiences economic growth through enlargement, but the poorest regions experience the highest relative economic growth;
- H. whereas the GDP per capita of the Western Balkans, Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia remains around or below 50 % of that of the EU, although some candidate countries have demonstrated steady economic growth over recent years, which enables a merit-based and forward-looking approach; whereas the experience following all EU enlargements demonstrates the positive impact that EU membership

and membership of the EU single market and access to structural funds have on economic and social convergence; whereas studies show that the addition of 10 new Member States would shrink the GDP per capita gap between the EU and the United States by 10 %; whereas expanded access to, among other things, labour markets, industrial capacity, digital technologies, in particular AI, and critical rare earth minerals would enable the EU to accelerate the green, digital and just transitions while decreasing its costs, at the same time becoming more strategically autonomous from Russia, China and other systemic competitors; whereas scenarios combining substantial enlargement with strong convergence could add up to an estimated USD 10 trillion to the EU's GDP by 2035;

- I. whereas the pre-accession instruments play an important role as they provide valuable experience for designing modernised support tools tailored to specific country needs, as was the case with Phare (the Programme of Community aid to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe), SAPARD (pre-accession agricultural instrument) and ISPA (Instrument for Structural Policies for Pre-Accession);
- J. whereas some countries outside the EU are dealing with varying levels of political instability and whereas the implementation of EU membership-related reforms in these countries, as demonstrated in previous enlargements, should contribute to stability and the rule of law in the region; whereas the EU has at its disposal an extensive set of tools to enforce compliance with fundamental values in the Member States and safeguard the political stability of the European project as a whole; whereas this set of tools must still be reformed and strengthened, in particular through the consistent implementation of the rule of law mechanism and effective protection of the EU's fundamental values as enshrined in Article 2 TEU, including through setting out conditions in the current and next multiannual financial framework (MFF);
- K. whereas the Commission and Parliament should develop awareness-raising campaigns in Member States and candidate countries in order for citizens to be properly informed about the opportunities enlargement provides, while countering foreign information manipulation and interference from Russia and other countries designed to undermine public support for enlargement;
- L. whereas the EU's institutional framework, and in particular its decision-making processes, need to be strengthened and improved for the current European Union of 27 Member States; whereas preparing for enlargement requires internal reforms within the EU and whereas the enlargement process should be pursued in parallel with the institutional and decision-making reforms necessary to safeguard the EU's integration capacity; whereas the prospect of future enlargements makes the reform of the EU institutions, policies

and decision-making procedures more necessary and urgent than ever;

- M. whereas previous enlargements were often preceded or accompanied by internal institutional reforms concerning the governance of the EU and whereas those enlargement processes have usually provided a powerful spur for the development and the economic and democratic progress of the candidate countries;
- N. whereas, in its Granada declaration of 6 October 2023, the European Council acknowledged that the necessary acceleration of reform efforts in candidate countries should be matched by a parallel process of groundwork and reforms within the EU;
- O. whereas, in its conclusions of 27 June 2024, the European Council set out a roadmap for future work on internal reforms; whereas the European Council recognises that strengthening the EU and European sovereignty requires reforms enabling the EU to meet its long-term ambitions, achieve its policies and priorities, and respond to new geopolitical realities and challenges;
- P. whereas, according to those conclusions, internal reforms should advance in parallel with the enlargement process, so that policies are fit for the future and financed in a suitable manner and so that that EU institutions continue to function and act effectively; whereas the European Council has invited the Commission to present an in-depth policy review in 2025 focusing on four strands, namely values and the rule of law, policies, budget and governance;
- Q. whereas the perspective of an upcoming enlargement exposes the EU to a threefold challenge of ensuring efficient decision-making procedures (the efficiency challenge), gathering sufficient resources to deliver on its strategic objectives (the power and resource challenge) and safeguarding the democratic legitimacy and accountability of its actions (the democracy challenge);
- R. whereas pre-enlargement reforms of the EU's institutional framework imply a possible advancement of differentiated integration solutions whenever the Treaties allow; whereas procedures pursuant to Articles 20, 42 and 46 TEU on enhanced cooperation and on permanent structured cooperation (PESCO) allow willing Member States to deepen their integration and enhance their cooperation within the framework of the EU's non-exclusive competences;
- S. whereas *passerelle* clauses could be used immediately to switch from the requirement for unanimity to qualified majority voting (QMV) in specific policy areas; whereas the TEU establishes that the ultimate objective of the progressive framing of a common EU defence policy is the establishment of a common defence by unanimous decision of the European Council, which must be compatible with NATO;

- T. whereas, due to the limited flexibility of the Treaties, a more in-depth reform by means of targeted Treaty changes should be envisaged; whereas Parliament has activated the Treaty revision procedure and has submitted proposals for the amendment of the Treaties to the Council in accordance with Article 48(2) TEU;

The cost of not reforming the enlarged EU

1. Argues that the EU and candidate countries have always used enlargement as a policy and geopolitical tool to promote democracy, stability, security and prosperity across the continent; is of the view that EU enlargement represents a long-term geostrategic investment;
2. Stresses that Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and other geopolitical challenges accentuate the urgency of advancing the enlargement process; maintains that a successful and sustainable enlargement requires long-term political vision and bold decisions, aiming at promoting an efficient, powerful and democratic Europe;
3. Notes that experience shows that each new wave of enlargement brings new institutional and political challenges and opportunities that should be addressed in a timely manner, preferably before the candidate countries become Member States, in order to ensure the effective functioning of the EU and prevent institutional gridlock; points out that every enlargement in the history of the European project has been preceded or accompanied by the necessary internal institutional reforms;
4. Acknowledges that the aim of unanimity is to ensure that the legitimate concerns of all Member States are addressed; believes, however, that an enlarged EU will require more sophisticated coordination in addressing the challenges of the current enlargement process; underlines the importance of addressing the difficulties caused by unanimity in the Council, including the use of unanimity for intermediate steps in the enlargement process, which could slow down the EU accession of new members owing to bilateral issues; recalls that Article 49 TEU enables a move to QMV without requiring Treaty changes; takes note of the cumbersome and outdated structure and governance of the EU budget and the possible redistribution in the allocation of agricultural and cohesion funds; recalls that EU enlargement is an opportunity to recalibrate key EU policies in this respect; supports initiatives aimed at making the decision-making process more effective, which is key to enhancing the EU's competitiveness;
5. Reiterates its position that the deepening of the Union, its enlargement processes and European unification should proceed hand in hand; stresses that EU institutional and financial reforms are needed to face the challenges of the current enlargement process

and to ensure the EU's capacity to absorb new members and to promote their successful integration without destabilising the other Member States' economies or exacerbating social tensions;

6. Recognises that ad hoc solutions could serve as temporary fixes, but they lack the predictability, democratic transparency and accountability, and long-term sustainability that only structural reforms can bring about;

Objectives of the institutional pre-enlargement reforms: efficiency, power and democracy

7. Firmly believes that the EU institutional reforms, regardless of the decision-making procedure for their adoption, should increase the EU's ability to act in an efficient and timely manner; points out that the pre-enlargement reforms of the EU institutional framework should meet the objectives of improving the EU's efficiency, making the EU more powerful on the global stage and making the EU more democratic, legitimate and accountable;

The efficiency challenge

8. Underlines that, in order to improve the enlarged EU's efficiency, the composition of the EU institutions should be adapted, made more efficient and their functioning enhanced; suggests that the enlargement process should be supported by the early and close involvement of candidate countries in the functioning of the EU institutions, e.g. through observer status; notes that this could be successfully achieved in a similar manner as at the time of the 2004 enlargement; notes, as a positive example of such gradual integration, the Commission's efforts to involve candidate countries in the areas of security and defence, in particular through their being referred to in the white paper on the future of EU defence and in the internal security strategy;
9. Notes that institutional pre-enlargement reforms must address the implications of enlargement for the composition of Parliament; underlines that, while ensuring appropriate democratic representativeness, Parliament should remain a workable size; highlights the need to prioritise internal and interinstitutional work on the identification of a permanent seat allocation mechanism, capable of ensuring fair, transparent and durable demographic and geographical representation respecting the principle of degressive proportionality; recalls its position that Parliament's composition should be considered together with the voting system in the Council;
10. Notes that the current composition of the Commission must take enlargement into account; recalls, in this regard, the flexibility provided for in the Treaty of Lisbon; highlights that any reduction in the size of the College of Commissioners, as prescribed in Article 17(5) TEU, must continue to ensure a geographically,

demographically and gender-balanced composition of the Commission;

11. Recognises the need for reflection on the revision of the Council's functioning and decision-making process in view of enlargement; notes that qualified majority must be redefined to improve the balance between larger and smaller countries and to retain higher thresholds for the most important and politically delicate decisions; recalls, in this regard, its resolution of 22 November 2023 on proposals of the European Parliament for the amendment of the Treaties, in particular on voting majorities in the Council; calls for the utmost transparency and integrity of the Council's decision-making process in the context of enlargement;
12. Proposes strengthening and reforming the procedure in Article 7 TEU by ending unanimity in European Council decisions, by introducing a clear time frame and by making the Court of Justice of the European Union the arbiter of violations;

The power and resources challenge

13. Reiterates its call to revise the governance of the MFF, namely by attributing full co-legislative powers over the expenditure side of the EU budget, including the adoption of the MFF;
14. Is convinced that the current mandatory revision clause in the event of enlargement should be maintained in the next MFF and that national envelopes should not be affected; underlines that the next MFF will also have to put in place appropriate transitional and phasing-in measures for key spending areas, such as cohesion and agriculture, based on a careful assessment of the impacts on various sectors;
15. Considers that the next MFF will be crucial for preparing the EU for enlargement and the candidate countries for accession;
16. Recalls the Parliament position expressed in its resolution of 7 May 2025 on a revamped long-term budget for the Union in a changing world⁷ that the EU's long-term budget must move away from the historically restrictive, self-imposed level of 1 % of aggregated gross national income; stresses that the Draghi and Letta reports have shown that significant additional own resources are required for the EU to become more competitive, complete the just and green transition and be in a position to defend itself autonomously from Russian aggression by 2030;
17. Stresses that the post 2027 MFF and a more effective budget, including the new own resources package, should enable the EU to

⁷ Texts adopted, P10_TA(2025)0090.

move decisively towards enlarging while safeguarding current policies, programmes and priorities;

The democracy challenge

18. Stresses the importance of bolstering the democratic legitimacy of EU policies by reinforcing the decision-making and scrutiny rights, including a strong right of inquiry, of the European Parliament, which is the only directly elected institution representing EU citizens;
19. Underlines the key role that EU accession countries' parliaments play in the EU accession process, in particular by passing accession-related legislation, and emphasises the importance of parliamentary cooperation and consensus-building on EU accession matters in this regard; reiterates the European Parliament's readiness to use its political and technical resources to help parliaments in accession countries make progress on the EU-related reform agenda, including through democracy support activities; welcomes the progress made in a number of candidate countries, including through mediation activities and the Jean Monnet Dialogue process;
20. Stresses that reforming the EU decision-making processes requires the empowerment of Parliament by placing it on an equal footing with the Council; reiterates its call for Parliament to gain the full right of legislative initiative – the power to introduce, amend or repeal Union law; is convinced that a general and direct right of initiative would further strengthen the democratic legitimacy of the EU and empower EU citizens;
21. Recognises that Parliament's direct rights of initiative are far from sufficient to allow it to represent EU citizens, civil society and social partners within the European institutions, effectively leaving the Commission with a monopoly on legislative initiative;
22. Underlines that the Treaty of Lisbon already bestows direct rights of initiative on Parliament, acknowledging its competence to self-organise, its scrutiny function and its democratic legitimacy as the only directly elected EU institution;
23. Considers it essential to improve the transparency and democratic accountability of Parliament, by strengthening the European dimension of the elections and by laying down uniform electoral rules across the EU; calls on the remaining Member State to ratify Council Decision 2018/994⁸; calls on the Council to work on the

⁸ Council Decision (EU, Euratom) 2018/994 of 13 July 2018 amending the Act concerning the election of the members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage, annexed to Council Decision 76/787/EEC, Euratom of 20 September 1976 (OJ L 178, 16.7.2018, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2018/994/oj>).

suggestions put forward in Parliament's position of 3 May 2022⁹; reiterates its call for Parliament and the Council to make progress in discussions on the introduction of a permanent mechanism for the allocation of seats of the European Parliament;

Means of implementing institutional pre-enlargement reforms

24. Considers that the above objectives of the institutional pre-enlargement reforms can be implemented by various means, including by activating the flexibilities offered by the current Treaties through one or more targeted Treaty amendments;
25. Recalls that a number of flexibility instruments, such as *passerelle* clauses, enhanced cooperation, constructive abstentions, PESCO and opt-out mechanisms, are already possible under the current EU legal framework, as evidenced by the experiences of the Schengen area, one of the greatest achievements of the EU, and the single currency; recalls that phasing-in solutions, temporary derogations and transition periods can be negotiated for certain policy fields in the context of accession procedures;
26. Reiterates its position that differentiated integration should always take place within the Treaty framework, should maintain the unity of the EU institutions and should not lead to the creation of parallel institutional arrangements or arrangements that indirectly contravene the spirit and the fundamental principles of EU law, but should instead enable specific bodies to be established where appropriate, without prejudice to the competences and role of the EU institutions;
27. Highlights that flexibilities provided for by the current Treaties allow for more to be done to advance towards a European defence union, without requiring a comprehensive Treaty reform process; underlines that the establishment of a permanent European defence union will ultimately require a unanimous decision in line with Article 42(2);
28. Stresses that, in the field of defence, PESCO (ex Article 46 TEU) enables a group of Member States to move forward towards the creation of a European defence system; notes that, despite the fact that PESCO has mainly been used for industrial defence projects, it has the broader potential to enable willing Member States to

⁹ European Parliament legislative resolution of 3 May 2022 on the proposal for a Council Regulation on the election of the members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage, repealing Council Decision (76/787/ECSC, EEC, Euratom) and the Act concerning the election of the members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage annexed to that Decision (OJ C 465, 6.12.2022, p. 171).

institutionalise common defence without delay, even in the absence of unanimity within the European Council;

29. Underscores that, pursuant to existing Treaty provisions, a decision taken by qualified majority would allow the creation of a European defence system under Article 42(6) TEU and Article 1(b) of Protocol 10, while leaving the door open for other Member States to join at a later stage, as was the case with the economic and monetary union; calls, in this respect, on the Commission and on willing Member States to activate PESCO provisions to this end without delay;
30. Calls on the Commission and the Council to clearly communicate the findings of the policy reviews and to develop, in cooperation with Parliament, a realistic, sequenced roadmap for implementing the necessary institutional reforms in conjunction with the enlargement process;
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31. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.