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UNIVERSITEIT VAN AMSTERDAM



EU Enlargement and External Governance: Geopolitical Challenges, Policy Responses, and Legal Approaches

Conference Organisers

The University of Amsterdam / Jean Monnet Module on Enlargement and External Relations of the European Union (ENLARGEU) jointly with the Embassy of the Republic of Kosovo to the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Background

On 1 July 2025, the Danish Presidency of the Council of the European Union commenced, marking a decisive period for navigating geopolitical challenges and steering the EU's enlargement agenda. The Danish Presidency seeks to advance enlargement negotiations while ensuring candidate countries uphold EU fundamental values of democracy and the rule of law, in line with the Copenhagen criteria. At the same time, the Presidency recognises that enlargement must go hand in hand with internal EU reforms. Preparing the EU for new members involves reviewing the EU's institutional decision-making, budgetary frameworks, and strategic priorities to ensure the EU remains competitive, resilient, and capable of acting independently on the global stage.

Enlargement policy stands as a core priority of the EU, aiming to contribute to both regional security and the EU's future cohesion. Given the EU's influential role in regional and global affairs, the conference will critically assess enlargement's potential to strengthen regional stability, change the Union's geopolitical standing, and drive internal reforms necessary for effective integration. By addressing key challenges and fostering cooperation, the EU aims to provide a clear and credible path for aspirant states, strengthening their prospects within the broader European project. Discussions will focus on the progress of enlargement in the Western Balkans, particularly their reforms to consolidate democratic institutions, uphold the rule of law, and protect human rights, as well as on Eastern European countries with reference to Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia.

Objectives

- Discuss the importance of pursuing an enlargement policy for the stability of the region as well as the EU's global standing

- Assess the interplay between enlargement and internal reforms, focusing on the EU's absorption capacity, governance, and budgetary frameworks
- Evaluate the EU's enlargement toolkit and geopolitical imperatives, and its capacity to address rule-of-law challenges and foster gradual integration
- Discuss financial instruments, such as the New Growth Plan for the Western Balkans and the conditionality mechanism, in shaping the accession process
- Explore the role of communication and public engagement in shaping perceptions of EU enlargement within Member States and the broader European public

Speakers

- Mr. Saïd Fazili, Director for European Integration at the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Ms. Marie-Charlotte van Lamsweerde, Senior Administrator at the Directorate-General for General and Institutional Policy of the Council of the European Union
- Mr. Maarten Lemstra, Press & Strategic Communication Officer at the Directorate-General for Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood of the European Commission
- Mr. Wouter Zweers, Research Fellow of the European & Global Affairs Unit at the Clingendael Institute
- Mr. Hylke Dijkstra, Professor of International Security and Cooperation at Maastricht University
- Mr. László Marác, Senior Lecturer at the University of Amsterdam, Faculty of Humanities, Department of East European Studies
- Ms. Marijana Petrović, Policy Analyst and Team Leader at the Southeast Europe Division of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

Following a welcoming speech by H.E. Dren Doli, the conference will be held in the format of a panel discussion. The conference will conclude with a semi-formal reception. The session will be chaired by Dr. Zamira Xhaferri, Lecturer in EU Law and Jean Monnet Coordinator 'ENLARGEU', University of Amsterdam.

Venue

The Hague Humanity Hub, Fluwelen Burgwal 58, 2511 CJ Den Haag

Date and Time

Wednesday, 17 September, from 10:00 to 12:30 CET (followed by a reception from 12:30 to 13:30).

Programme

10:00 – 10:30	Arrival of the guests
10:30 – 12:30	Panel discussion and Q&A
12:30 – 13:30	Semi-formal reception