
















Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2023/2114(INI)	Procedure completed
Deepening EU integration in view of future enlargement		
Subject 8.20 Enlargement of the Union		

Key players			
European Parliament	Joint Committee Responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	 Constitutional Affairs		18/07/2023
	Foreign Affairs	 SILVA PEREIRA Pedro	18/07/2023
		 AUŠTREVČIUS Petras	
		Shadow rapporteur	
		 HÜBNER Danuta Maria	
		 LEGA David	
		 REUTEN Thijs	
		 GOZI Sandro	
		 DELBOS-CORFIELD Gwendoline	
		 WAITZ Thomas	
		 LACAPELLE Jean-Lin	
		 SARYUSZ-WOLSKI Jacek	
		 KOULOGLOU Stelios	
		 SCHOLZ Helmut	
	 Constitutional Affairs		
	Foreign Affairs		

Key events

12/07/2023	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
12/07/2023	Referral to joint committee announced in Parliament		
23/01/2024	Vote in committee		
30/01/2024	Committee report tabled for plenary	A9-0015/2024	Summary
28/02/2024	Debate in Parliament		
29/02/2024	Decision by Parliament	T9-0120/2024	Summary

Technical information

Procedure reference	2023/2114(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54-p4; Rules of Procedure EP 58
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	CJ20/9/12587

Documentation gateway

Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading	A9-0015/2024	30/01/2024	EP	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading	T9-0120/2024	29/02/2024	EP	Summary

Deepening EU integration in view of future enlargement

The Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on Constitutional Affairs jointly adopted an own-initiative report by Petras AUTREVIŪS (Renew, LT) and Pedro SILVA PEREIRA (S&D, PT) on deepening EU integration in view of future enlargement.

The report sets forward Parliament's position on reforms and a pathway towards the future functioning of an enlarged EU.

Enlargement has become one of the strongest EU policy and geopolitical tools. According to the Eurobarometer of June 2023, the majority of the EU's population is in favour of the future enlargement of the EU. However, a new impetus, commitments and vision are urgently needed to re-energise the enlargement process. The lack of engagement in previous years has created a vacuum, thus opening the space for Russia and China and other external actors.

As a reminder, nine of the 10 countries currently aspiring to join the EU have candidate status, some of them for many years. Those candidate countries find themselves at various stages of the accession process and negotiations.

In 2023, the European Council decided to grant candidate status to Georgia and to open accession negotiations with Ukraine, and the Republic of Moldova as well as with Bosnia and Herzegovina, once the necessary degree of compliance with the membership criteria has been achieved.

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and other ongoing geopolitical challenges have given new geostrategic meaning to the enlargement of the European Union. The stability, security and democratic resilience of the Western Balkans and the Eastern Neighbourhood are inextricably linked to those of the EU.

On accession procedures and the role of the European Parliament

Parliament is undoubtedly the most supportive EU institution when it comes to enlargement however its role remains extremely limited throughout the entire enlargement process and should be strengthened in order to increase democratic legitimacy and accountability.

Members noted that significant pre-enlargement reforms are needed to guarantee the efficient functioning of the enlarged EU and its capacity

to absorb new members and to promote their successful integration as well as to respond properly to the many challenges it currently faces. It is suggested that passerelle clauses could be used immediately to switch from the requirement for unanimity to qualified majority voting in specific policy areas.

The report acknowledged the historic opportunity and challenge facing the EU of meeting its commitments to the countries and the peoples of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia, and of Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia. It reiterated the view that Türkiye's EU accession process cannot be resumed in the current circumstances.

The Commission is called on to improve the consistency, efficiency and transparency of pre-accession assistance, clearly reflecting the priorities in the fundamental areas in the allocation of IPA III funding. The report also called for the introduction of stricter and more enforceable accountability with regard to spending and for improvement of the overall cycle of disbursement, implementation and scrutiny of pre-accession funding.

The report stressed that it could be useful to have a separate post of Commissioner for Enlargement.

On European institutional and financial reforms

The committee considers that the processes of preparing for enlargement should proceed in parallel in the EU and accession countries. It firmly believes that European institutional reforms should increase the EU's ability to act, and include simplified and more effective decision-making procedures, moving away from unanimity. Qualified majority voting should be implemented in areas such as the protection of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, the MFF, sanctions and other relevant foreign policy decisions, such as the start of EU accession negotiations and the opening and closing of individual negotiation clusters.

Pre-enlargement reforms must also address the implications of enlargement for the composition of Parliament according to Members.

The report stressed the need for a swift revision of the Council's functioning and decision-making process in view of enlargement. It is proposed to review the system of rotating presidencies of the Council. The calculation of qualified majority voting thresholds should also be reconsidered to improve the balance between larger and smaller states and to set higher thresholds for the most important decisions.

Stressing that enlargement is both a major financial challenge for the EU, Members stressed that this challenge requires a properly designed, prioritised and funded MFF and a more effective EU budget that enables the Union to take on new commitments while continuing to deliver on existing programmes and political priorities. Sufficient additional and genuine own resources are also needed to meet the enlargement challenge.

Deepening EU integration in view of future enlargement

The European Parliament adopted by 305 votes to 157, with 71 abstentions, a resolution on deepening EU integration in view of future enlargement.

While welcoming the aspiration of numerous European countries and their citizens to join the EU, Members believe that enlargement is of the utmost strategic importance for the EU, all the more so in the face of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and other common geopolitical challenges, requiring a long-term political vision and bold decisions.

Parliament welcomed the Commission's recommendations in the 2023 enlargement package and further welcomed the European Council's decisions to open accession negotiations with Ukraine and Moldova, to grant Georgia candidate status and to open accession negotiations with Bosnia and Herzegovina, once the necessary degree of compliance with the membership criteria has been achieved.

On accession procedures and the role of the European Parliament

Parliament acknowledges the historic opportunity and challenge facing the EU of meeting its commitments to the countries and the peoples of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia, and of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. However, it reiterated the view that Türkiye's EU accession process cannot be resumed in the current circumstances. Any improvement in EU-Türkiye relations must be based on tangible progress on human rights, democracy and respectful neighbourly relations.

The resolution underlined that accession to the EU must always be a merit-based procedure and that each applicant must be assessed on its own merit in terms of its meeting the Copenhagen criteria in their entirety. The rule of law, democratic reform, media freedom and respect for human rights, including the rights of minorities, should be put at the forefront of the accession process, with judicial independence, the fight against corruption and the empowerment of civil society being crucial preconditions for progress along the path to EU membership.

Given that there can be no fast-track or pre-defined deadlines for membership, Members consider that the next EU enlargement should take place as soon as all accession conditions are met in the candidate countries concerned and in parallel the necessary European reforms are agreed and implemented; expects that the first candidate countries will be ready to join the Union by the end of this decade.

Parliament called on the Commission to improve the consistency, efficiency and transparency of pre-accession assistance, clearly reflecting the priorities in the fundamental areas in the allocation of IPA III funding. It highlighted the need to ensure that EU funding provided to enlargement countries is in line with the EU's own strategic goals and interests. It also called for options to further strengthen protection of the rule of law and the EU's democratic values against backsliding for both existing and future Member States to be explored in the context of Treaty reform, ensuring that enlargement strengthens the EU and its single market.

Members believe that the challenge of an expanded EU requires an enhanced enlargement policy putting in place a clear incremental pathway towards EU membership, including gradual integration into common policies, such as the single market, for those countries that complete negotiations in a given policy chapter or that make substantial progress on EU-related reforms.

The resolution stressed the need for stronger, more effective and meaningful European Parliament decision-making and oversight of the EU's enlargement policy and its funding. It also stressed that it could be useful to have a separate post of Commissioner for Enlargement.

On European institutional and financial reforms

Parliament considered that the processes of preparing for enlargement should proceed in parallel in the EU and accession countries. It firmly believes that European institutional reforms should increase the EU's ability to act, and include simplified and more effective decision-making

procedures, moving away from unanimity. Qualified majority voting should be implemented in areas such as the protection of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, the MFF, sanctions and other relevant foreign policy decisions, such as the start of EU accession negotiations and the opening and closing of individual negotiation clusters.

Pre-enlargement reforms must also address the implications of enlargement for the composition of Parliament.

The resolution stressed the need for a swift revision of the Councils functioning and decision-making process in view of enlargement. It is proposed to review the system of rotating presidencies of the Council. The calculation of qualified majority voting thresholds should also be reconsidered to improve the balance between larger and smaller states and to set higher thresholds for the most important decisions.

Stressing that enlargement is both a major financial challenge for the EU, Members stressed that this challenge requires a properly designed, prioritised and funded MFF and a more effective EU budget that enables the Union to take on new commitments while continuing to deliver on existing programmes and political priorities. Sufficient additional and genuine own resources are also needed to meet the enlargement challenge.

Transparency				
AU?TREVI?IUS Petras	Rapporteur	AFET	10/01/2024	Turkish Permanent Delegate, Ambassador
SILVA PEREIRA Pedro	Rapporteur	AFCO	07/12/2023	European Movement International
AU?TREVI?IUS Petras	Rapporteur	AFET	24/10/2023	DG NEAR
AU?TREVI?IUS Petras	Rapporteur	AFET	28/09/2023	Spanish presidency
DURAND Pascal	Member	22/11/2023	Swiss Permanent Mission	