

REFORM / RESPOND / REBUILD

A New Momentum for EU Enlargement

The [Trans European Policy Studies Association \(TEPSA\)](#), in cooperation with [Carnegie Europe](#), co-organised the first meeting of the newly created **Expert Hub on EU Enlargement**.

Date: Monday, 2 December

Time: 10:00-12:00 (networking breakfast as of 9:30)

Location: Carnegie Europe - Rue du Congrès 15, 1000 Bruxelles

The meeting was held under the Chatham House Rule

ABOUT THE EXPERT HUB ON EU ENLARGEMENT

The Expert Hub gathers an exclusive group of distinguished EU and national policymakers and civil servants from the European Commission, EEAS, European Parliament, Council Secretariat, Permanent Representations and current/upcoming Presidencies of the Council of the EU, who work on EU enlargement and related issues.

It is created in the framework of the Horizon Europe project [InvigoratEU](#) – “**Invigorating Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy for A Resilient Europe**”, which sets out to explore the question of how the EU can invigorate its enlargement and neighbourhood policy to enhance Europe’s resilience.

In the next three years, we will organise a **series of closed-door discussions** bringing together Expert Hub members with researchers from the InvigoratEU project. These meetings will provide a forum for a structured dialogue about key research findings and policy advice on EU enlargement. Selected members of the Expert Hub will be invited to each meeting based on their specific expertise and its relevance to the topics discussed, and will have the opportunity to provide feedback and insights into the research process.

FORMAT AND LOGISTICS

The first Expert Hub meeting took place on **Monday 2 December 2024**. The event started at 9:30 with a networking breakfast, followed by a roundtable discussion from 10:00 to 12:00. The meeting was hosted at **Carnegie Europe**, located at [Rue du Congrès 15, 1000 Bruxelles](#).

The meeting took of a roundtable discussion, featuring concise and focused insights from our consortium’s researchers, followed by an open group discussion. Such a format allowed for transparent exchanges to address long-standing challenges with fresh perspectives. We enjoyed active and policy-oriented discussions following the evidence-based research. The meeting took place strictly upon invitation and under the Chatham House Rule.

CONTENT AND OBJECTIVES

With the InvigoratEU project in its early research phase and the new EU Commission set to begin its mandate in early 2025, this first Expert Hub meeting in December offered an ideal platform to launch the series. Grounded in a **“Triple R’s” approach — Reform, Respond, and Rebuild** — this session guided participants in discussing practical steps for revitalizing EU enlargement and improving neighbourhood policy.

- **Reform:** The EU’s enlargement policy has shifted significantly following Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Yet its credibility as the EU’s “most successful foreign policy tool” still suffers from damages incurred over the previous decade. How can the EU reform its enlargement policy to enhance Europe’s resilience and make future enlargement a success? Are the ‘modernisation logic’ and the ‘geopolitical logic’ of enlargement mutually exclusive or do they reinforce each other? **Prof. Frank Schimmelfennig** assessed changes that contribute to the effectiveness and credibility of the renewed enlargement policy, including the effectiveness of recently agreed ‘reform agendas’ supported by the EU through the Ukraine Facility and the Western Balkans Reform and Growth Facility.
- **Respond:** Russia’s full-scale war in Ukraine is only the most extreme form of exerting external influence on the EU’s neighbourhood. External actors have been active in the region for a long time, interfering politically, economically and militarily. How should the EU respond to other actors’ geopolitical ambitions in the enlargement and neighborhood regions? Is the EU’s values-based approach effective to keep Western Balkans interested and maintain the Eastern Neighbourhood on a democratic track? Is EU’s democracy support approach still relevant to face XXI century geopolitical struggles? **Prof. Richard Youngs** shared his insights.
- **Rebuild:** Credible security foundations are necessary for enlargement to happen. Building European resilience against external military threats requires robust capacity building and security and defense measures by the EU as well as building on the transatlantic cooperation within NATO. This covers a wide range of activities from hard security to more hybrid and human dimensions of it. **Aleksandra Palkova** discussed what kind of security foundations are necessary for Ukraine to be able to integrate into the EU and for Ukraine’s reconstruction to take place.

This inaugural session shaped an actionable agenda for EU enlargement and neighbourhood policy in a rapidly evolving geopolitical landscape.