

# EU ENLARGEMENT UNDER PRESSURE CONTINUING DEMOCRATISATION WHILE FIGHTING A WAR AND HYBRID INTERFERENCE

The [Trans European Policy Studies Association \(TEPSA\)](#), in cooperation with [Carnegie Europe](#), has the pleasure to invite you to the third meeting of the InvigoratEU Expert Hub on EU Enlargement.

**Date:** Tuesday, 25 November

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

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

*The meeting will be held under the Chatham House Rule*

## ABOUT THE EXPERT HUB ON EU ENLARGEMENT

The InvigoratEU 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 how the EU can invigorate its enlargement and neighbourhood policy to enhance Europe’s resilience.

Between 2024 to 2026, TEPSA is organising a series of closed-door discussions to bring together Expert Hub members and researchers from the InvigoratEU project. These meetings provide a forum for a structured dialogue about key research findings and policy advice on EU enlargement. Selected members of the Expert Hub are invited to each meeting based on their specific expertise and its relevance to the topics discussed and can provide feedback and insights into the research process.

## FORMAT AND LOGISTICS

The third Expert Hub meeting will take place on **Tuesday, 25 November 2025**. The event will start at 9:30 with a networking coffee, followed by a roundtable discussion from 10:00 to 12:00. The meeting will be hosted at Carnegie Europe, located at Rue du Congrès 15, 1000 Brussels.

As a distinguished member of the Expert Hub on EU Enlargement, we believe your knowledge will greatly enrich the discussion and provide our experts with valuable input into their research. The meeting will take the form of a roundtable discussion, featuring concise and focused insights from our consortium’s researchers, followed by an open group discussion. Such a format will allow for transparent exchanges to address long-standing challenges with fresh perspectives. We are looking for active and policy-oriented discussions based on evidence-based research. The meeting is strictly upon invitation and will take place under the Chatham House Rule.

## CONTENT AND OBJECTIVES

The European Union's enlargement policy has been one of its most successful tools for promoting stability, prosperity, and democratic transformation in Europe. At its heart, enlargement has always been about modernisation: strengthening the rule of law, democratic institutions, and market economies in candidate and potential candidate countries.

Yet today, the drive for modernisation is unfolding in a volatile security environment, particularly with regards to the Association Trio (Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova). Russia's war of aggression, regional instability, and shifting global power dynamics underscore that democratisation does not take place in a vacuum. Security and stability are the necessary conditions for reforms to take root and endure. Without credible security guarantees and a sense of belonging to a wider community of peace and safety, democratic progress risks reversal.

On the one hand, modernisation is the core logic of enlargement. Democratisation, economic reforms, and institution-building remain indispensable for sustainable accession and EU membership. On the other hand, security is the enabler of modernisation. The two reinforce one another: enlargement should not be framed as a choice between geopolitical urgency and values-based transformations. Instead, credible security frameworks are what allows democratisation to flourish, while democratic resilience in its Neighbourhood in turn strengthens the EU's wider security.

**Prof. Dr. Giselle Bosse** (Full Professor in EU External Democracy Support and Jean Monnet Chair in EU Foreign Policy, Maastricht University) will explore how the EU can place modernisation and democratisation at the centre of enlargement, while recognising the essential role of security in making reforms sustainable. Two case studies will be presented: **Elene Panchulidze** (Research Coordinator, European Partnership for Democracy) will look into the causes of democratic backsliding which plummeted Georgia from hopeful candidate to a frozen accession process; and **Olexiy Melnyk** (Co-Director, Foreign Relations and International Security Programmes, Razumkov Centre) will present the efforts made in Ukraine to continue its democratisation process while fighting a war for its survival. Completing the views from the Association Trio will be **Elena Marzac**, Co-Founder and Director of the Platform for Security and Defence Initiatives.

The event will bring together researchers, practitioners and policymakers with the aim of answering the following questions:

*How can candidate countries be supported in deepening reforms even in fragile geopolitical contexts? Which practical mechanisms can the EU use to maintain the credibility of the accession process, while responding to urgent security challenges in its neighbourhood? How can the EU ensure that the enlargement policy serves as both a driver of democratic transformation and a pillar of European security?*