

VISIONING SCENARIOS FOR 2035

INVIGORATEU EXPERT HUB WORKSHOP EDITION

The [Barcelona Centre for International Affairs \(CIDOB\)](#) and the [Institut für Europäische Politik \(IEP\)](#), with the support of TEPSA and Carnegie Europe, have the pleasure of inviting you to the **Workshop Edition** of the InvigoratEU Expert Hub on EU enlargement.

Date: Tuesday, 24 March

Time: 13:50-16:00 (networking coffee as of 13:30)

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 policy-makers 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 fourth Expert Hub meeting will take place on **Tuesday, 24 March 2026**, at **Carnegie Europe** (Rue du Congrès 15, 1000 Brussels). **Networking coffee** will be served from **13:30**, followed by the workshop from **13:50 to 16:00**.

We believe your knowledge will greatly enrich the discussion and provide our experts with valuable insights for their research. After concise input from our consortium’s researchers, this meeting will take the form of two **focus group** discussions, culminating in **an open exchange** of views among all participants. 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 is at a crossroads. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has triggered a shift in European thinking and revived the enlargement process that had been stagnating over the last two decades. The geopolitical logic, driving this new momentum of the EU enlargement process, currently seems to trump the logic of modernisation, which underpins the accession criteria established in Copenhagen in 1993.

At present, in its geopolitical awakening, the EU has opted to reactivate its prime instrument of regional influence – access to the EU members 'club' – rather than explore other association alternatives. By doing so, and by proposing accelerated integration timeframes, the EU is giving greater weight to the geopolitical factor in its relations with the Western Balkan states and the Association Trio (Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia).

This workshop aims at developing **a set of visions** for the EU's political agenda towards the countries of the Western Balkans, and the Association Trio:

What will EU enlargement look like in 2035?

This set of visions will provide strategic direction regarding the most urgent areas of integration and cooperation in the enlargement process. They will inform InvigoratEU's research and set direction for enhancing the EU's foreign policy arsenal and agenda towards the region.

Víctor Burguete, Senior Research Fellow in the area of Global Geopolitics and Security at CIDOB (Barcelona Centre for International Affairs), will briefly present **the main drivers affecting EU enlargement** identified in the project, including public opinion, politics, economics, social and demographic trends, security concerns, external interference and bilateral disputes. After the focus group and plenary discussion, **Dipl.-Pol. Julian Plottka**, Scientific Senior Project Manager at IEP Berlin, will provide concluding remarks on the **visions for the EU's political agenda** towards the region.

The event will bring together researchers and policy-makers with the aim of answering the following questions:

What is the future of EU relations with the Western Balkans and the Association trio?

Which areas of integration and cooperation are most urgent?

Given the complexity and length of the procedure of obtaining full membership, what challenges need to be considered?