



European Union Expansion

If not us, then who? If not now, then when?

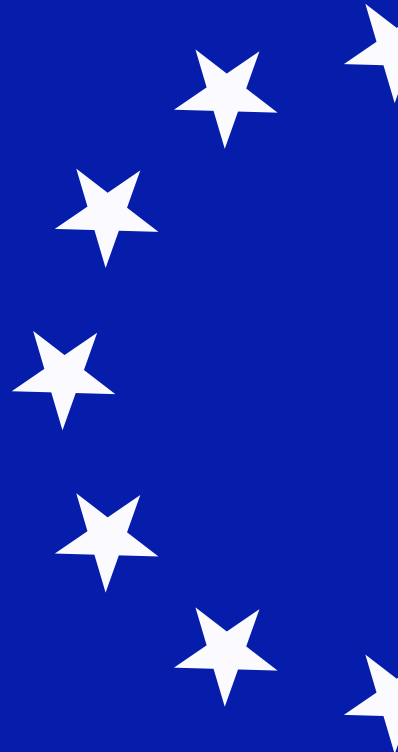


Introduction

The last country to be accepted in the EU was Croatia in 2013. This was more than 10 years ago.

In a world with increased major power competition, the EU must expand now once more to remain credible and relevant.

Were the European Union doesn't expand, another power will, and later might be too late.



Why should the EU expand now? ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

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Geopolitical
reasons

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reasons

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Moral
imperatives

01

Geopolitical reasons



Russia and China are expanding their influence in the countries of the Western Balkans which are current candidates to EU membership

ex. Between 2012 and 2021, China's companies have invested or allocated more than 2 billion euros in projects in Serbia

Ukraine after the war will need reconstruction. If the EU doesn't expand, this leaves room for China to profit from the situation as it has done in Syria

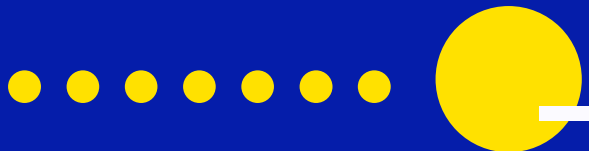
Moldova's pro-EU wave came because of increased fears of Russian aggression and the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Once the war is over, if EU enlargement stalls, pro-Russian sentiment might see a resurgence





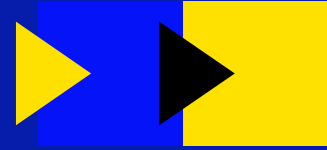
“If the EU will not run to catch us,
believe me, many ‘multi’ problems can
restart and then it will be much more
costly to marry us later”

–Edi Rama, Prime Minister of Albania



02

Economic reasons



Skilled labor shortage

The 2004, 2007 and 2013 expansions led to an influx of skilled workers in Western European countries, covering some of the gap in the healthcare and IT sector. EU enlargement would continue to decrease that gap.



Innovation

In the past 20 years the European Union has achieved numerous research breakthroughs and creative innovations, with the collaboration of academics and professionals from newer members



Increased bargaining power

The larger the European Union is, the more bargaining power it has when negotiating trade agreements with third parties





03 Moral imperatives

The EU has made hefty promises to the candidate countries. The credibility of the European Union would be seriously harmed if the enlargement process would be permanently postponed, especially when some member countries such as Hungary already have bigger issues with the rule of law and some candidates.

In terms of protecting the environment, an EU member would be much more pressed to respect environmental standards than a non-member

Current situation



How to facilitate enlargement?

1. Transnational lists for EU elections

One consideration which might make EU members reluctant to admit a country with a large population is that said country would have more political power in the parliament. Switching EU-wide lists with candidates from European political parties instead of elections for national representatives will alleviate this concern

2. Revising accession criteria

It is harmful to the credibility of the EU if the accession criteria are so stringent that the behavior of current members cannot meet their demands

3. Financial investments and incentives

The EU should continue to invest in Ukraine and should give incentives to European businesses to relocate in candidate countries from China in order to help candidates fulfill economic criteria



Resources

Photo:

- [Exit Europe 3d Illustration Open Door Stock Illustration 2054806754 | Shutterstock](#)

Bibliography:

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