

26

NOV  
2025

IN-PERSON EVENT

11:00-12:30

📍 WMCES HQ, Rue du Commerce 20, 1000 Brussels

Policy Dialogue

# Will Enlargement Make the EU More Competitive?

## ABOUT THE EVENT

The debate on Europe's competitiveness has taken on new urgency. With the 2025 update of the Draghi Report warning of persistent productivity gaps, skills shortages, and weak innovation, the EU faces a strategic dilemma: can enlargement help address these challenges - or will it create new economic and fiscal strains?

The next wave of enlargement, encompassing the Western Balkans, Ukraine, Moldova, and potentially Georgia, could reshape the Union's economic geography. Integrating these economies would expand the Single Market by more than *60 million consumers*, diversify supply chains, and potentially contribute to the renewal of Europe's human capital through labour mobility and upskilling.

Yet important questions remain. The inclusion of less-developed economies could temporarily *reduce the EU's average GDP per capita and increase cohesion policy* spending by an estimated 0.4–0.7% of EU GDP under the next Multiannual Financial Framework.

This policy dialogue will explore whether and under what conditions enlargement can become a net contributor to Europe's competitiveness and will assess the potential gains and trade-offs of integrating new member states. We will discuss how to design enlargement so that it strengthens, rather than dilutes, Europe's long-term economic resilience.

## PROGRAMME

11:00 Registration and Coffee

11:30 Welcome Remarks

11:35 Panel Discussion

12:10 Q&amp;A

12:30 Light networking lunch

## SPEAKERS

Welcoming Remarks:

**Tomi Huhtanen**

Executive Director, Martens Centre

Discussants:

**Maria Åsenius**

Advisor on Economic Development, Enlargement Strategy and Coordination, DG ENEST

**Marija Mirchevska**

Senior Researcher, Institute for Democracy Societas Civilis

**Teona Lavrelashvili**

Research Associate, Martens Centre

Moderator:

**Dimitar Lilkov**

Senior Research Officer, Martens Centre



Wilfried  
**Martens Centre**  
for European Studies

Stay tuned via our WhatsApp Channel, scan the QR code



This event is organised by Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies with the financial support from the European Parliament. Sole liability rests with the organiser, the European Parliament is not responsible for the activity.