

THE FUTURE OF EU ENLARGEMENTS: CHALLENGING ILLIBERAL TRENDS AND DEMOCRACY SUPPORT

In the context of Poland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2025, the Polish Academy of Sciences in Rome, in collaboration with the Institute of European Studies of the Jagiellonian University, the Future Democracy Lab operating within the Faculty of International and Political Studies of the JU (Excellence Initiative of the JU), the Faculty of Political Science and International Studies of the University of Warsaw, and Justus Liebig University Giessen, is pleased to announce an International Conference entitled **"The Future of EU Enlargements: Challenging Illiberal Trends and Democracy Support"**.



The conference will be held on **7 November 2025 at the headquarters of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Rome, located at Vicolo Doria 2**. This international event will provide forum for the multidisciplinary reflections on future of the EU enlargement with particular emphasis on key dimensions and legacies of Poland's leadership within the EU.

In addition to this, the event will also serve as an occasion to conclude and evaluate the Horizon Europe Project [*SHAPEDEM-EU: Rethinking and Reshaping the EU's Democracy Support in its Eastern and Southern Neighbourhoods*](#).

CONFERENCE OBJECTIVES

The conference aims to provide an interdisciplinary platform for scholars, experts, and practitioners, reflect on one of the most pressing challenges facing contemporary Europe: the future of EU enlargement in the context of rising illiberal trends and global challenges. As the enlargement process remains vital for ensuring stability, security, and prosperity across the continent, it is increasingly threatened by geopolitical competition, declining trust in democratic institutions, and the spread of authoritarianism and disinformation. This event will examine how the EU can uphold its commitment to promoting democracy, human rights, and the rule of law in aspiring member states while addressing these multifaceted threats. Participants are invited to offer innovative solutions and forward-looking perspectives to navigate these challenges and ensure the EU's continued role as a force for stability and progress.

KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND THEMES

We are pleased to invite original contributions addressing (but not limited to) the following themes:

EU ENLARGEMENT AND DEMOCRACY SUPPORT

What political and institutional mechanisms can the EU use to effectively support democratic development in candidate countries?

How does EU enlargement influence internal democratic reforms in member states, especially with rising political challenges?

ILLIBERAL TRENDS, AUTOCRACY, AND THEIR IMPACT ON EU ENLARGEMENT

What factors contribute to the rise of illiberalism in Central and Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and beyond?

How can the EU balance its normative commitments to democratic values with the challenges posed by illiberal regimes in its neighbourhood?

REGIONAL AND COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES ON EU ENLARGEMENT

How do regional perspectives on EU enlargement differ (e.g., Western Balkans, Eastern Partnership, Southern Europe) and what are the potential implications of further EU expansion for both existing and prospective member states?

What can be learned from past enlargement processes to inform future strategies?

GLOBAL CHALLENGES AND EU ENLARGEMENT

How do global challenges such as climate change, migration, and the revival of 'great power politics' intersect with the EU enlargement process?

What is the role of civil society, media, and grassroots movements in promoting democratic resilience in candidate countries?

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

We invite submissions from a wide range of disciplines, including but not limited to political science, international relations, law, sociology, and economics.

Proposals should be submitted in English by 31 May 2025 to the following email address: mfijal@pan.pl and should include the following information:

- full name,
- institutional affiliation,
- title of paper,
- abstract (max. 300 words),
- short bio (max. 150 words),
- and contact information.

Registration will be free, and the conference will be held in person and in English. Contributions should be 15-20 minutes long and selected papers will be considered for a book project.

ORGANISING PARTNERS

Scientific Centre of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Rome

Institute of European Studies, Jagiellonian University

Future Democracy Lab, Excellence Initiative of the Jagiellonian University

Faculty of International and Political Studies of the Jagiellonian University

Faculty of Political Science and International Studies, University of Warsaw

Justus Liebig University Giessen

ORGANISING COMMITTEE

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For more information, submission details, or questions, please contact

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Join us in shaping the future of Europe!

