



CHAPTER 1

European Integration in a Time of War: Can the EU Gear Up to Face Unprecedented Internal and External Challenges?

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Russia's unprovoked and illegitimate invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 was a rude awakening for the EU. The war has forced the Union

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to face a set of complex challenges which necessitates action in order to reinstate stability in the wider Eastern European region. Yet, the difficulty of such a task has brought pertinent and urgent questions to the fore about the EU's ability to take a prominent role in the stabilisation of the European neighbourhood (Bakardjieva Engelbrekt, 2024). Doubts abound whether the EU will show itself capable of decisive action in the shorter term to provide direct military, political, economic, and humanitarian support to Ukraine in its war effort and in the longer term show the necessary unity to build a new European security order to restore a sense of security and resilience and ultimately shoulder the responsibilities which come with it.

Nonetheless, since the outbreak of the war, the EU has shown unparalleled unity in its support for Ukraine, which, according to the European Council in repeated statements since 2022, will continue for as long as it takes (European Council, 2022, 2023, 2024). This support has taken several forms: strategic military support in the form of weapons systems, financing of munitions, and training of the Ukrainian army; financial support through macroeconomic aid and promises of funding for Ukraine's reconstruction; and humanitarian aid through the activation of the Temporary Protection Directive for Ukrainians to facilitate the reception of people fleeing the war (Council of the EU, 2022; Kiel Institute for the World Economy, 2024). The support of the EU has also been political in the form of repeated condemnations of Russia's actions, the adoption of multiple, far-reaching packages of sanctions, and various diplomatic *démarches*. Perhaps most important of all, politically speaking, are the clear signals from the EU since the onset of the war that it already considers Ukraine, Moldova, and perhaps Georgia to be part of the European security architecture, thereby frustrating Russian President Vladimir Putin's goal of incorporating these countries into the Russian sphere of interest.

The war in Ukraine has resulted in the EU and its member states having had to take on an inescapable responsibility for the future peace and development in Europe, which in principle can only take an enduring and concrete form by enlarging the EU to include these countries. Ursula von der Leyen summed up this momentous task, when launching the European Commission's report on the enlargement of the EU in October 2023, holding forth that "[C]ompleting our Union is the call of history, it is the natural horizon of the European Union" (Von der Leyen, 2023). In December 2023, the European Council took the first steps in this

historical mission by endorsing the Commission's proposal to open accession negotiations with Ukraine and Moldova. By the end of 2024, the EU had opened negotiations for EU memberships with six countries: Montenegro (2012), Serbia (2014), Albania (2022), North Macedonia (2022), Ukraine (2024), and Moldova (2024). In addition to these negotiations, the European Council agreed to open accession talks in March 2024 with Bosnia and Herzegovina as soon as a negotiating framework is in place. Georgia received candidate status in December 2023, but negotiations have yet to be opened. Meanwhile, the negotiations with Turkey have stalled since 2016, with little prospect of being resumed any time soon (European Commission, 2024).

After many years of enlargement fatigue, the war in Ukraine thus acted as a trigger for the EU to once again consider in earnest the prospect of enlarging the Union. To this effect, the EU in 2024 set in motion a comprehensive and complex enlargement process which, at its completion, is expected to result in a Union consisting of up to 35 countries. According to the European Commission's (2023) own assessment, many of the countries in line to become members of the EU are far from fulfilling the membership criteria regarding their level of economic and democratic development and capacity to apply the EU's laws and regulatory frameworks. These countries face major challenges in terms of consolidating democracy and their political systems, combating endemic corruption, managing border disputes, strengthening a deficient public administration, and, in some cases, adopting a foreign policy orientation that is in line with that of the EU. A more numerous and heterogeneous membership constitutes an obvious challenge to the EU which needs to be addressed before enlargement on a great scale can be envisaged. The European Council meeting in Granada in October 2023 underlined that the Union "needs to lay the necessary internal groundwork and reforms" in order to "make the EU stronger" in a manner that will "enhance European sovereignty" and to draw up a road map for enlargement at its meeting in July 2024 (European Council, 2023, npn). The fact that the European leaders raise the necessity of strengthening the EU's structures and functioning in parallel to widening can be seen as an attempt to learn from the experiences of the Eastern enlargement in 2004 and 2007. Since then, the EU's internal cohesion has been challenged by a few member states that steadfastly deny some important principles of integration, for instance, by refuting the supranational nature of EU legislation, systematically favouring national interests to those of the EU, and

regularly opposing policy measures, common stances, and reform initiatives (Sedelmeier, 2014, 2024). The enlargement in 2004 and 2007 was not the only trigger for contestation within the Union as Euroscepticism and right-wing populism are present in all current EU member states. Nevertheless, the specific brand of political culture with autocratic leaders disregarding rule of law, human rights, and democratic values is seen as a very real threat to European unity and the endurance of integration in the EU. Therefore, and in light of these challenges, it is important to reflect on the preconditions which need to be in place in order to ensure that the EU is not weakened by allowing many more states to become members of the Union. For this reason, European leaders are obliged to consider what parameters need to be in place in order for the EU to successfully conduct yet another round of enlargement and how intractable problems associated with widening versus deepening the Union are to be handled.

DEEPENING AND WIDENING IN PERSPECTIVE

It is somewhat of a paradox that the EU is facing perhaps its most complex enlargement ever just a few years after the United Kingdom (UK), as the first country ever, decided to leave the EU in 2020. The withdrawal process, commonly referred to as Brexit, proved to be more complex and protracted than its proponents had claimed in the June 2016 referendum campaign, and has had predominantly negative consequences for both the UK and the EU. As Nicholas Aylott shows in his chapter in this volume, although the UK retook formal legislative power when leaving the EU, it lost in the access to the EU's internal market and the right to participate in EU programmes in the process, on the balance putting the UK in a worse position than before Brexit. Ironically, Brexit also resulted in an expansion of bureaucracy in the UK, and problems still abound at the border for goods entering and leaving the country (Cheung, 2018; Speed, 2024). Initially, Brexit initiated a debate about whether the UK's decision to leave the EU in 2016 would be copied by other countries, and whether this would ultimately lead to the dissolution of the EU (Schelkle et al., 2024). The Brexit negotiations turned out to be much more difficult than predicted by the Brexiteers as the EU member states presented a united front throughout the process and the negotiating team, headed by Michel Barnier, was better prepared than the counterpart. The outcome of the Brexit negotiations, which left the UK with a limited free trade agreement with the EU, put the spotlight

on the principles and values enshrined in the preamble of the Treaty on the EU (TEU). These can be regarded as a commitment by the member states towards the Union and therefore stipulate the basic building blocks of integration which need to be respected in order to keep the Union together. In this sense, the preamble delineates the principles which have guided the many rounds of enlargements in the past and, along with the requirements of the *acquis communautaire*, will make up the cornerstone of the EU's approach to future enlargements. A first important principle is that EU membership should not be undermined by allowing non-EU countries to have an influence over the shaping of EU policy, or to obtain undue advantages by participating in some policy areas but not others, without assuming their fair share of the responsibilities which come with membership. A second principle is that membership entails rights and obligations that balance out over time and between policy areas, although not necessarily in every decision. A third principle is that membership has clear legal boundaries, that is, there are no degrees of membership. In the current debate on the forthcoming enlargement negotiations, these three principles are increasingly in the spotlight, as the complexity of the task to integrate a great number of countries, many of which are beset by important economic, social, and strategic challenges, without watering down the level of integration in the EU is indeed daunting. The old dogma of EU enlargement is being challenged by voices from within the EU member states which ask whether the time has not come to organise an enlarged EU according to degrees of integration with implications for the boundaries of membership for individual countries (see Chapter 11 in this book).

The question of the relationship between the widening and deepening of the EU, or rather whether an enlargement of the EU necessitates a deepening prior to the accession of new members, was not raised in earnest until the Eastern enlargement taking place in 2004 and 2007, when the EU almost doubled its membership with 12 new members (Michalski, 2014). In the accession rounds preceding the Eastern enlargement, new members were incorporated into the existing structures without any major adjustments to the EU institutions, decision-making procedures, or extension of competences. Even so, these enlargements also called for internal discussions prompted by fears that problems regarding the functioning of the Union would be exacerbated in the event of additional members, along with perceived injustices in EU policies and political priorities caused by enlargement, and whether and how

the new members would affect the EU's internal balance. A well-known historical example of how such a multifaceted dilemma was resolved is the reform package that surrounded the enlargement to include Portugal and Spain in 1985. In addition to reforming the rules governing the co-decision procedure, this package included establishing a new Cohesion Fund, a deepening of foreign policy cooperation, and a formalisation of the deliberations of the heads of state and government. Taken together, the reforms not only enabled the enlarged Community to include Spain and Portugal, but also laid the foundation for the completion of the EU's internal market by rendering the decision-making surrounding the internal market more efficient (Noël, 1989). Important to remember in the current context is that even this rather modest enlargement to countries whose economic development admittedly was on a lower level than the then member states and whose transition to democracy was very recent, still provoked a reform of the treaties in order to make the decision-making processes more efficient, enhance the political dimension of integration, introduce new policy areas into the Community's remit, and increase the overall size of the European budget.

The prospect of Eastern enlargement in the mid-1990s prompted afresh a broad debate on how the Union would be affected by an expansion of its membership to countries whose socioeconomic development was not only at a much lower level than the existing member states, but also shaped by a completely different political and economic model. Moreover, for decades, Eastern European countries had been ruled by authoritarian communist regimes, which meant that their national democratic institutions and practices were nascent, and their political values not yet firmly established. Alongside these issues, the EU was also concerned that the national administrations of the Eastern European countries lacked the capacity to act in the EU's multi-tier system, where national administrations have a major responsibility for implementing Union legislation. Also the national administrations' role in managing the considerable financial transfers that the new member states were expected to receive from the EU's structural funds and agricultural policy raised concerns about a possible state capture on behalf of national political elites (Innes, 2014). There were also concerns about systemic corruption, ethnic discrimination and tensions, unresolved border disputes, an unpredictable political culture, and an unstable relationship with the former hegemony of the Russian republic.

These concerns and their possible consequences fed into a discussion of when, how, and under what conditions the EU's enlargement to the east would take place (see, among others, Avery, 2009; Börzel et al., 2017; Cremona, 2003; Hughes et al., 2004; Williamson, 1998). Similar arguments can be identified in the debate of the mid-2020s and therefore it appears important to repeat them here. The EU's starting point for the 2004 and 2007 enlargement to the east was the principle that the candidate countries must have incorporated the EU *acquis* (its laws, regulations, and foreign policy statements) before they could become members. However, this requirement was considered not to be adequate given the extent of the economic, social, and political transformation that Central and Eastern European countries were going through. Therefore, the European Council decided to make the conditionality for EU membership stricter by adopting the so-called Copenhagen criteria in 1993 (see, among others, Grabbe, 2005; Schimmelfennig, 2008). These criteria stipulate that candidate countries must also be functioning market economies robust enough to withstand the competitive conditions in the internal market; have a functioning state governed by the rule of law; and be able to uphold democratic values and democratic governance. The extent and precariousness of the necessary changes resulted in some arguing that the alignment should happen before the countries joined the EU, even if it were to take a long time. Others argued that the alignment did not have to be perfect at the time of accession but that the general direction of national reforms ought to show that the countries were moving in the right direction. Derogations, at least temporary such, should be granted and the pre-accession period should therefore be relatively short, according to this view. On the question of how accession to the EU should be organised, the member states had differing opinions as to whether candidate countries should be granted accession when they were found to be ready on an individual basis, or whether they should be grouped together. The member states could not agree on this issue because they had different preferences in relation to individual candidate countries and varied appreciations of the danger of letting candidate countries linger in a drawn-out and uncertain trial period. In turn, the countries seeking membership in the Union strongly opposed a logic of competition between them, which they argued would arise if entry on individual merits were to be applied. Ultimately, the issue of the terms and conditions for the enlargement—besides each candidate country's alignment—came down to the EU's own capacity to function with many

more member states. This factor was referred to as the EU's absorption capacity. Even before the start of the enlargement negotiations, three principles had been established in the European Commission's *Agenda 2000* report published in 1997 (European Commission, 1997). The first of these was that the EU's institutional decision-making capacity must not be impaired following the incorporation of many more members. The second principle was that certain important policy priorities, such as the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and the introduction of the euro, should not be jeopardised by the enlargement. The third principle applied concerned the absorption capacity of the candidate countries in economic terms with regard to financial aid from the EU, which was set at 4 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP). The first of these principles in particular meant that the EU's institutions and decision-making procedures would need to undergo reforms before the accession of new members, and that these reforms would take into account an expansion of the EU's areas of competence through the transfer of further powers to the EU's institutions in new and existing policy areas.

WIDER BUT ALSO MORE DIVERSE

Subsequently, the Eastern enlargement of 2004 and 2007 resulted in a deepening of the EU's institutional structure, a streamlining of decision-making procedures, and an increase in the EU's areas of competence, including a deepening of several policy areas. It also resulted in a higher degree of diversification of the degree of integration in different areas. The Eastern enlargement was not, of course, the only driver of this development, but an increased membership resulted in greater pressure from the existing member states that wanted to achieve deeper integration, and this highlighted differences in their ambitions in relation to the EU. Diversification in member states' participation in different policy areas has manifested in a variety of ways and is just as much about existing member states not wanting to participate in certain policy areas as it is about protecting certain policies against members who do not fulfil the requirements, going beyond those set for EU membership. One example is the third stage in the EMU, in which the euro replaces national currencies, and another is the Schengen Agreement, in which internal borders are dissolved. Not all EU members participate in these policy areas, and the Schengen Agreement also includes non-EU countries (Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Switzerland). Participation in Permanent Structured

Cooperation (PESCO) is also voluntary in the area of defence, and the member states decide for themselves whether they want to participate in PESCO at an overarching level, and to what extent they wish to participate in PESCO joint projects. The same logic of diversification applies to the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO). These forms of cooperation are usually referred to as differentiated integration, and are permitted within the framework for Enhanced cooperation (Article 20 of the TEU and Title III of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union [TFEU]).

Another type of differentiation is the type that arises from an enlargement, where derogations are granted at the request of the candidate country. Most often, this concerns areas where compliance with the EU *acquis* would be costly and time-consuming, for example in environmental policy. Derogations have also been requested by existing member states to mitigate the effects of enlargement on certain sectors and for specific groups. Prior to the Eastern enlargement, existing member states were permitted to apply a seven-year derogation on the free movement of labour, and the application of the EU's common agricultural policy in the Eastern and Central European countries was protracted, even after the accession of these countries. Certain permanent derogations have been granted in limited areas with restrictions, such as the sale of *snus* (oral snuff) that is permitted in Sweden but is prohibited in other EU countries. However, the basic principle for derogations from alignment with the EU *acquis* is that they should be temporary. In cases where the EU has been particularly concerned about the candidate country's capacity to align itself to EU membership, a special monitoring of the implementation of EU laws and regulations has been applied. This was the case when Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU in 2007. They were subject to a monitoring mechanism in certain areas that was in force until 2023, when these countries' memberships were finally fully completed. This form of integration can be described as a gradual approach to full membership, where the country becomes a member, but with time-limited restrictions applied to its participation in specific policy areas. However, these restrictions can also be without time limits and instead depend on the member states fulfilling specific criteria. This is the case in the transition to the third stage of the EMU when an EU member state adopts the euro as its currency. This transition is subjected to ongoing monitoring on behalf of the European Commission according to a set of convergence criteria set out in TFEU, art. 140, para. 1.

These forms of differentiated integration are frequently used in the EU and are based on decisions taken within the framework of the treaties and involve the EU institutions, including the Court of Justice of the European Union. Most of them are based on temporary and limited derogation from the rights and obligations of membership, although some are dependent on the ability of the acceding member state to fulfil the criteria. On balance, therefore, they do not fundamentally challenge the formal definition, content, and boundaries of EU membership. Other forms of differentiated integration have been discussed at various times but, unlike variable and gradual integration, they constitute different statuses when it comes to membership (see Chapter 11 in this book).

INTERDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES ON THE SIZE AND DEPTH OF THE EU

In the eighth edition of the *Interdisciplinary European Studies*, researchers highlight questions about the size and depth of the EU in terms of its members, policy areas, and security in a time of upheaval and war. How has the UK's withdrawal from the EU affected the political dynamics of the Union, and what lessons can be learned from Brexit? What do the contours of a larger Europe potentially look like, and what premises will apply for the accession of new members? Does European solidarity require a collective defence of the EU? How will new refugee flows to the EU be handled under the shadow of a hostile neighbourhood? What should EU citizenship entail, and how can solidarity between workers be framed? How is the future of the EU's labour market dynamics being shaped in light of artificial intelligence?

In the following chapters, scholars from economics, law, and political science reflect on various challenges that arise from the widening and deepening of the EU policies from the vantage point of their respective fields. They pay attention to the issue of deepening the EU's competences and scope of policy in areas which are under strain due to external pressures, such as migration, the integration of refugees on labour markets, and the widening of EU citizenship. The way in which the EU chooses to solve the conundrum of a larger and more diverse EU from the perspective of key principles of integration, such as subsidiarity, the rights and obligations conferred to member states, and the balance between flexibility and centralisation in various policy areas, will have a decisive impact on the shape that the larger Union will take towards the end of the 2020s.

Mats Öhlén concentrates in his chapter on the prospects of a widening of the EU based on an analysis of past accession rounds and the EU's handling of the existing candidate states since the early 2000s onwards. He argues that the EU's future enlargement process has gained new momentum in a time of great insecurity, and that the central question is how the EU can, and should, handle the dilemma of the risks and opportunities that a future enlargement entails. Building on perspectives from political science, Öhlén discusses the various driving forces of EU's enlargement: economic, geopolitical, and normative. On that basis, he maintains that the EU's enlargement process has changed over time and become increasingly protracted due to new member states' uncertain administrative and democratic qualities, which need to be evaluated before membership can be considered.

Further, Öhlén goes on to analyse two regions where the issue of enlargement of the Union has been raised recently: the Western Balkans and the countries in the Eastern Partnership. These two entities include countries which differ quite substantially in terms of the challenges that they give rise to in relation to EU enlargement, making a comparison relevant. Moving on, Öhlén discusses the EU's own capacity to widen its circle of members, which is particularly relevant in light of the enlargement fatigue that occurred after the Eastern enlargement of 2004 and 2007. In this context, Öhlén refers to the proposals for reforms of the EU's institutions that have been highlighted in connection to future enlargements and discusses existing proposals about how to render the EU more flexible so that it can handle a more heterogeneous membership. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the dilemmas facing the EU and how the EU ought to address these. Öhlén's key message is that a successful handling of the problems surrounding enlargement must be based on the EU internally getting behind the fundamental issue, which is that the member states and the institutions must agree on whether or not an enlargement of the Union is desirable, and if so, showing patience and perseverance with the process. Only then will the EU be able to credibly pursue the process moving forward, while the applicant countries will have a greater incentive to enforce the necessary reforms.

In the third chapter of the book, *Ester Herlin-Karnell* discusses whether the EU has adequate mechanisms for collective self-defence. She does this through an analysis of two main treaties of the EU, more precisely, the solidarity clause in the TFEU and the provision of mutual assistance in the TEU. Herlin-Karnell holds forth that the design of the

EU's rules stems from the international regulatory framework and that in some respects it shares some traits of regional military alliances, such as NATO. In this respect, she shows that Kant's legacy has shaped the rules on self-defence in the UN Charter, and explains how this insight can help us understand the limits of using self-defence within EU law. According to Herlin-Karnell, this Kantian legacy is relevant at many levels in EU law, as the EU is in part a peace project and in part based on the idea that trade promotes peace. Both of these ideas have their origins in Kantian ideas.

Furthermore, Herlin-Karnell compares self-defence in situations of war with the rules of self-defence in criminal law as it is generally designed in most countries, as this comparison is often made in political theory concerning "the just war". The author then discusses the particular role and capacity of the EU in collective self-defence, and security questions in a broader sense. Herlin-Karnell concludes that Kant's categorical imperative can act as a compass for EU security cooperation and when it comes to the question of collective self-defence, the EU and its member states should behave in the way they themselves would like to be treated.

In Chapter 4, *Pehr-Johan Norbäck* takes a historical look at the UK's complicated relationship with Europe. The chapter shows how the debate on the UK's participation in the European integration process started already in the early 1950s when the UK chose not to join the predecessor of the EU, the European Coal and Steel Community. According to Norbäck, the explanation for the UK's initial reluctance to participate in the European integration project can be traced back to the country's unique historical and constitutional development—that, as an island nation, it has never been defeated or occupied by a foreign power—and to the UK's past as an imperial power. Norbäck argues that the UK was more or less forced to seek membership in the then European Economic Community to reverse a downward spiral of weak economic growth and diminished political influence in the world. To that extent, the UK's accession was more the result of a cost–benefit analysis than of any genuine passion for European integration. This may have facilitated its decision to leave the EU when Euroscepticism increased during various crises and economic and technological shocks.

What, then, can the EU learn from Brexit? Norbäck reminds the reader that the UK differs in so many ways from other EU countries and that it is therefore difficult to draw general conclusions on why a country might want to leave the Union based on Brexit. The Brexit process shows how difficult and costly it is for a member state to leave the EU after

many years of membership, but at the same time highlights that the main lesson of Brexit is not to be found in how “imprudent” it is to leave the Union. Instead, he stresses that Brexit has become a reminder to the remaining EU members of the value of protecting the internal market and the EU decision-making process, and how this created a willingness and determination to unite and act effectively. Although there were major differences in how the different member states would be impacted, and despite the fact that in many member states there were groups that wanted to follow the lead of the UK’s withdrawal, they managed to stick together throughout the long and complicated Brexit process. Furthermore, Norbäck argues that the unity and cohesion after Brexit has given the EU greater confidence to act in subsequent crises, which is in stark contrast to how the euro crisis, for example, was handled in 2012. The EU weathered the COVID-19 pandemic and was able to present an (almost) united front in relation to Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine, with joint sanctions packages and even jointly funded military aid to Ukraine. Norbäck therefore concludes that the EU’s most important lesson from Brexit is what the Union can achieve when it is united.

In Chapter 5 of the book, *Nicholas Aylott* also analyses Brexit, but from a different angle. The chapter asks how Brexit has affected the development within the Union. The answer to that question is, of course, complicated by everything else that has happened in and around the EU during the period, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia’s war against Ukraine. Therefore, and with the preferences of the actors in mind, Aylott chooses to ask the counterfactual question: What would have been different if the UK had still been a member of the EU during these crises?

The chapter’s overall argument is that Brexit has accelerated integration between the remaining EU member states. Aylott shows that, without the British naysayers, the EU managed to agree on a comprehensive recovery fund after the pandemic, partly financed by the sale of the EU’s own bonds on the international financial markets. It is unlikely, according to Aylott, that the UK would have agreed to such a transfer of economic policy power to the EU institutions. In the case of Russia’s invasion in 2022, the UK probably would not have opposed the strong support the EU has given to Ukraine, as the UK’s own support has been no less clear. On the other hand, as a member state, the country probably would not have accepted the strengthening of the EU’s own instruments

in order to channel resources to Ukraine. These include, for example, the European Peace Facility and the Union's renewed ambition to strengthen its role in world politics.

According to Aylott, Brexit strengthened the EU in yet another way. Some feared that the UK referendum would trigger a wave of Euroscepticism in other member states as well. At first, there were signs of precisely that. However, in the turbulence of the Brexit process, the voices most critical of the EU were silenced and support for the Union has increased slightly among its citizens. The most likely explanation for this is that the constitutional crisis provoked by the UK referendum has had a deterrent effect on EU citizens. The chapter concludes with a warning that Brexit's accelerating effect on European integration will not necessarily last. In the long term, the UK's economic growth may experience an upturn, while the Union may face very major challenges.

In the book's sixth chapter, *Katarina Hyltén-Cavallius* writes about the opportunities for and limitations of deepening the meaning of Union citizenship, while expanding access to the free movement of people to third-country nationals residing in the EU. The main questions of the chapter are the legal meaning and effect of citizenship of the Union, and who should be covered by its status or alternatively access its associated rights. In her chapter, Hyltén-Cavallius describes the link between the status of Union citizenship and the free movement of people. She points to the trends in the case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union and other developments in the law which show that this link already exists and may continue to be disengaged under primary legislation. This would allow more people to be granted the right to exercise freedom of movement within the EU and thus to benefit from the protection of fundamental rights in the EU Charter, which are channelled through free movement. She also points out that there is already a trend in EU law that is chiselling out a distinctly legal content in the status of being a Union citizen and what this status means—wholly outside of the context of free movement.

In this context, Hyltén-Cavallius highlights EU law's protection of the political rights of Union citizens, the protection against a Union citizen being forced to leave the EU's territory, and the protection against the loss of Union citizenship when an individual's national citizenship is revoked by a member state. In concrete terms, Hyltén-Cavallius proposes that EU law should continue to develop new constitutional depth concerning the status of Union citizenship, such as protection for

the EU's values. She also suggests that the EU legislator should adopt the European Commission's proposal to amend Directive 2003/209/EC in order to strengthen access to rights in the internal market for third-country nationals who are long-term residents of the EU.

In Chapter 7, *Ann-Christine Hartzén* reflects on the importance of the EU continuing to promote improved living and working conditions for its citizens without jeopardising competition between workers from different member states. The discussion of this problem is grounded in the importance of social progress to ensure that its citizens will continue to support the EU, and the set of problems that arise when EU law is confronted by the different levels of and regulatory models for social protection in the member states. The chapter begins with Hartzén presenting the problem area by highlighting how differences within the EU have increased during the 2000s, and how these differences have led to conflicts and tensions that have spawned a breeding ground for EU scepticism, with Brexit as a concrete result of this. Hartzén then discusses the background to and design of the Minimum Wage Directive as an example of how the EU can address citizens' needs for social improvements. In the chapter, Hartzén highlights the Minimum Wage Directive's specific regulatory model as a clear recent example of how the EU can reconcile the need for initiatives that improve conditions for its citizens, without also risking undermining existing regulatory frameworks and national social protection schemes. In conclusion, Hartzén argues that this form of regulatory technique may be a way forward for the EU in the future when it comes to increasing opportunities for strengthening solidarity between workers in different member states.

In the eighth chapter of the book, *Özge Öner* and *Hans Seerar Westerberg* analyse how well the EU member states have succeeded in integrating refugee immigrants into the labour market. Öner and Seerar Westerberg begin by showing that there is variation in the EU in how refugee immigrants are seen in different member states, and over time. The strains of a common migration policy for the EU are then discussed against the background of the Union's fluctuating and sometimes inconsistent approach to migration.

Öner and Seerar Westerberg emphasise that, since the refugee crisis in 2015, refugee immigration has been debated in many member states, and that these discussions often raise the problems associated with the social and economic integration of newly arrived migrants. In addition, Öner and Seerar Westerberg conclude that work and being able to support

oneself are key adjustment mechanisms for successful integration. In order to gain a more detailed insight into the labour market integration of individuals who have immigrated to Europe, where their need for asylum or protection has been the main reason for migrating, Öner and Seerar Westerberg analysed statistics from Eurostat. More specifically, they present figures on how many refugees are in work, how many are unemployed, and how many remain completely outside the regular labour market. Furthermore, they analyse how refugee immigrants fare on the labour market in comparison to the general population in general in a specific national setting. To conclude, they argue that the EU must make better use of the diversity of untapped capabilities and skills among refugee migrants and promote an inclusive labour market. This could potentially improve the EU's economic competitiveness and innovation capacity.

In the book's ninth chapter, *Andrea Spehar* highlights the motley development towards a common asylum and migration policy. The overarching question discussed in the chapter is to what extent the new pact on migration and asylum negotiated in 2023 solves the fundamental problems of the EU's common migration policy. Spehar argues that the main reasons why the EU finds it difficult to live up to and maintain a humane, legally certain, and sustainable migration policy are the abiding lack of EU policies that deal with different forms of migration and the lack of solidarity between member states. In addition, Spehar believes that the EU's handling of the refugee crisis in 2015 in particular confirmed these two shortcomings. On the one hand, a few member states took responsibility for the great majority of asylum seekers, and on the other hand, asylum seekers are not treated equally in all EU member states. This meant that asylum seekers sought out some member states over others.

Spehar then discusses the EU's objective of reducing the number of refugees reaching the EU's external borders, as well as the desire to curb irregular migration. This has been expressed in both a strengthening and externalisation of the EU's external border. Spehar argues that instruments such as trade agreements and aid policies have increasingly shaped the EU's handling of migration since 2015. As part of this, a considerable number of its policy and economic initiatives have targeted states and areas outside the EU's borders. Spehar argues that the new pact on migration and asylum reinforces the image of the EU as "fortress Europe" where borders and security are of paramount importance. She argues that, despite the European Commission proclaiming a fresh start,

the new pact on migration and asylum is primarily a pragmatic reformulation of old ideas. However, there are some innovative additions, intended to convince reluctant states to remain part of the EU's common migration policy. The requirement of solidarity between states and what this is deemed to mean continues to be a stumbling block.

In conclusion, Spehar recommends that the EU should review its labour immigration policies and establish additional legal pathways to access the EU labour market—not only for highly skilled third-country workers, but also for medium- and low-skilled workers. Furthermore, she argues that the EU should increase the number of safe routes to international protection. For persons in need of protection, legal pathways could include resettlement programmes for quota refugees, other types of humanitarian admission and reception programmes, and opportunities to apply for a humanitarian visa.

In the tenth chapter of the book, *Robin Teigland* and *Mikael Wiberg* investigate the implications of artificial intelligence (AI) and digitalisation for the EU labour market and the consequences this may have for the depth and size of the EU. Digital technologies and AI, in particular generative AI such as ChatGPT, raise many questions related to tomorrow's labour market, and there is considerable uncertainty as to where this development will lead in the long term. In their chapter, Teigland and Wiberg raise a number of questions. What will Europe look like in a decade? What role will digital technologies play, also taking into account the development of AI? And what alternative ways forward can be discerned?

In order to answer these questions, they use a method called disciplined imagination—a way of working with scenarios with the aim of analysing the future. Teigland and Wiberg draw up a scenario matrix and take the reader with them to 2035. There, they explore how four distinct yet plausible scenarios for how the EU and the world, as well as the nature of technology and the labour market, might develop. In developing these four scenarios, they questioned many assumptions about technology, the labour market, and even society and its development that are considered self-evident—both within the EU and in relation to other countries in the world. Thus, these four scenarios allow the reader to break free from the situation in 2024—a current situation marked by significant concerns and an uncertain development.

Although none of these scenarios can be seen as more likely than any other, a number of policy recommendations are proposed at the meta

level. Teigland and Wiberg also present ideas on the regulation of AI that could help the EU move towards what they consider to be the most desirable scenario for the Union—which they call “A transformed world. The sky is the limit”. To get there, Teigland and Wiberg argue that the EU needs to implement policy measures along both axes of the scenario matrix, that is, along what they call technology for exploration and a high willingness to integrate. If the right questions are asked about the future and appropriate measures are taken, they argue that the EU could be well placed to move towards a sustainable future labour market.

In the concluding chapter of the book, the editors draw together the various strands of the EU’s development discussed in the previous chapters, each providing an important part of the puzzle of the EU’s ability to prepare for the future and deal with the challenges of enlargement. The future enlargement will set the tone for the political dynamism in the EU for many years to come and many thorny questions about the Union’s institutional structure, competences, and decision-making will have to be settled. Nonetheless, as highlighted in the previous analyses, the EU’s economic competitiveness and capacity to adopt new technologies play a major role in the financial frameworks within which the Union acts. Another major question is how the ongoing strong pressure of immigration is handled by the EU and its member states, where failure would inevitably lead to increased political tensions within the EU. Other questions related to security, European citizenship, and the labour market’s capacity to integrate the labour force also affect the EU’s ability to respond to internal and external challenges. Besides the EU’s enlargement and scope of policy, security threats, increased tensions between the great powers, attempts by external powers to influence the EU, the inroads made by Eurosceptic parties, and many other challenges all play a major role in what the depth and size of the EU will be in the future. To conclude, the ability of the EU to meet these internal and external challenges will be weighed against the specific issues that the accession of new members entails feeding into various future scenarios regarding the size and depth of the Union in terms of competences, institutional frameworks, and decision-making capacity.

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