

(English version)

Question for written answer E-004702/25
to the Commission
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(26 November 2025)

Subject: EU Enlargement Forum: boundary between the drive for enlargement and foreign influence

On 18 November 2025, the Commission held the EU Enlargement Forum. According to the Commission, EU enlargement is essential to promote its values, including beyond its borders, to advance Brussels' vision of administrative and rule of law reforms, and to strengthen the EU's global role ⁽¹⁾.

1. It was implied in Panel III that scepticism towards EU enlargement, both in Member States and in candidate countries, is mainly due to a lack of knowledge. In other words, opponents of EU enlargements are portrayed as dumb. Will this kind of demonisation of opponents feature as a central element of the EU's campaign to obtain the necessary democratic support in the candidate countries?
2. Panel IV, entitled 'Getting to YES!', discussed how to secure 'the necessary public support' after the conclusion of accession negotiations. As the EU is still a foreign power for these candidate countries until further notice, how does the Commission argue that such questions do not fall under the definition of foreign interference?
3. Does the Commission also support civil society organisations in candidate countries that are sceptical about EU accession, so as to foster a democratic debate in which different opinions are heard, which is after all a core value of the EU?

Submitted: 26.11.2025

Answer given by Ms Kos on behalf of the European Commission
(9 February 2026)

On 18 November 2025, the Commission held the EU Enlargement Forum as a flagship initiative to elevate the conversation on EU enlargement as a shared political, societal, and generational project.

After discussions on the geopolitical imperative for enlargement and the perspective of Member States, Panel III focused on EU enlargement from the perspective of citizens.

It brought together voices from civil society to reflect on how the EU is perceived beyond its borders and how those perceptions are shaped by experience, aspiration, and identity.

It also provided a platform for citizens in candidate countries to discuss their perceptions of the EU and their countries' accession prospects, and how mutual understanding can be improved, noting that opinion polls in Member States and candidate countries show that citizens do not feel sufficiently informed about enlargement.

The final panel of the Forum 'Getting to YES!' reaffirmed the current momentum for enlargement, discussed shared priorities and candidate countries' ambitions to conclude accession negotiations and join the EU and the importance of public support as one of the necessary elements for EU enlargement.

Applying for EU membership is a sovereign decision that only the candidate can take; in doing so, candidate countries and potential candidates have voluntarily chosen an EU path aligning with the EU's priorities, policies and shared values.

EU support for civil society in candidate countries and potential candidates as well as in the Eastern Neighbourhood is an explicit objective of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance Regulation ⁽¹⁾, with a view to fostering an enabling environment that allows for a plurality of views to be heard, which is in turn vital for an open democratic debate.

¹ https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/eu-enlargement-forum_en.

⁽¹⁾ Regulation (EU) 2021/1529 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 September 2021 establishing the Instrument for Pre-Accession assistance (IPA III).