

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# The long march towards the EU: candidates, neighbours and prospects for enlargement

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Konrad Niklewicz

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This paper discusses the future of EU enlargement policy in the context of past and current accessions. After seven consecutive enlargements, the EU is proceeding with its eighth wave of expansion towards the Western Balkans and Turkey. Furthermore, while no Eastern European countries have requested membership so far, the EU cannot pretend that this will never happen. A clear strategy for the EU's eastern neighbours is needed. This paper considers three alternative scenarios for the future of EU enlargement policy: a definitive stop to enlargement; a third way, tentatively called 'membership minus'; and last but not least, the continuation of enlargement.

This paper recommends the third option, with one string attached: the already developed verification mechanism must be further strengthened. Thorough verification is a must, even if it translates into decades-long enlargement processes.

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**Konrad Niklewicz** is currently the managing director of the Civic Institute, a Civic Platform think tank; senior fellow of the demoseUROPA foundation; and a guest lecturer at the University of Warsaw.