

“INSTITUTIONAL REFORM NEEDS OF THE EU IN THE CONTEXT OF ENLARGEMENT TO 30+ MEMBER STATES”

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"Is the EU institutionally equipped for 30+ members?"

INITIAL SITUATION – EXPANSION PERSPECTIVE

Current candidate countries: Ukraine, Moldova, Western Balkans

Political objective: Expansion by 2030

Thesis: Expansion without reform jeopardizes the ability to act

"What specific institutional challenges arise?"

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Challenges of an EU with 30+ members

Decision-making processes: Blockage through unanimity

Commission structure: Overburdening & representation conflicts

Household distribution: increasing number of net recipients

Rule of law: Heterogeneity & commitment to values

Parliamentary Representation: Legitimacy & Efficiency

"How can the EU meet these challenges?"

Overview of reform proposals

Reform proposal	Content / Goal	Feasibility (1–5)	Political support (1–5)
Abolition of unanimity in key areas	Transition to qualified majority in tax, social and foreign policy	3 – Contract amendment required	3 – Resistance from small states
Introduction of "Super-qualified majority"	80% of the population + 80% of states for sensitive decisions	2 – complex implementation	2 – hardly any consensus so far
Downsizing of the EU Commission	Not every state appoints a commissioner.	4 – politically feasible	3 – smaller states are skeptical
Rotating Commissioners / Cluster Formation	Several states share departments.	3 – organizationally possible	3 – Representation conflicts
New EU own resources	CO ₂ tariffs, digital taxes, plastic levies to finance	4 – technically feasible	4 – broad support
Reform of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)	Focus on European public goods, crisis resilience	5 – regularly adjusted	4 – growing consensus
EU Commissioner for the Rule of Law	Monitoring and sanctions for violations	4 – legally possible	3 – Resistance from some states
Transnational lists in European elections	Strengthening European public sphere	3 – Change to the electoral law is needed	4 – Approval in Parliament
Reform of the seat allocation in parliament	Proportional to the population with minimum guarantees	4 – technically possible	3 – smaller states are skeptical
Convening an EU Convention	Treaty amendments pursuant to Article 48 TEU	2 – lengthy process	2 – politically risky
Differentiated integration ("core Europe")	Intensified cooperation between individual groups	5 – already practiced	4 – pragmatic solution

"Let's delve deeper into some key reforms."

Reform 1 – Abolition of unanimity

Goal: Increase efficiency

Means: Passerelle clauses, contract amendment

Assessment: politically controversial, but necessary

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Reform 2 – Commission structure

Suggestions: reduction in size, rotation, clustering

Goal: Efficiency & Representation

Assessment: organizationally feasible, politically sensitive

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Reform 3 – Differentiated Integration

Concept: “Core Europe” & flexible coalitions

Examples: Defense, digital policy

Assessment: high feasibility, pragmatic solution

"What scenarios arise from these reform paths?"

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Future scenarios

Scenario A: Reform union with treaty amendment

Scenario B: Core Europe with differentiated integration

Scenario C: Status quo with increasing risk of blockade

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Conclusion & Discussion

Reforms are a prerequisite for expansion

Differentiated integration as a transitional strategy

Open questions: Treaty reform, political majorities

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Sources & Literature

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[Available online at: <https://www.swp-berlin.org/dossiers/eu-reformagenda>]