

Committee: European Parliament – Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET)

Delegation: Kingdom of Spain



I. ENLARGEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION – YES, NO AND HOW?

The European Union has expanded on several occasions through history by the accession of new member states; therefore, consistent enlargements are at its very core. In the past, this has served as a tool of stabilisation, cooperation in the region, and democratic consolidation in Europe. Recently, new opportunities have emerged—looking at the potential membership of Turkey, Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova, along with further expansion into the Western Balkans¹.

As a member of The Left in the European Parliament, the Kingdom of Spain supports quality enlargement of the Union, provided that the accession of new members is based on full adherence to the Copenhagen criteria and serves as a means of long-term stabilisation in the region. But it should not be used to escalate the military tension and deepen the rifts in Europe. The fundamental values of the European Union: the rule of law, human rights, and democracy, must lead the way through the entire accession process. Spain has been at the forefront of calling for conditional, goal-based accession in the Committee on Foreign Affairs and actively promoting the commencement of accession negotiations with Ukraine and Moldova during its 2023 Council Presidency. Furthermore, as emphasized by our foreign minister, Mr. José Manuel Albares, more than 30 member states could not function under the current rules. Social and democratic reforms within the Union are essential to ensure that enlargement does not deepen inequality and that the EU institutions continue to function effectively²³.

The delegation of Spain therefore, proposes an enhanced accession framework based on the Copenhagen criteria to ensure that enlargement leads to stability and progress rather than destabilization and inequality.

First, a strict conditionality mechanism with clear and measurable criteria, addressing relevant issues based on the unique position of each individual candidate member state. Second an independent EU body, by which progress would be regularly monitored. In addition, in case of regressions on key reforms, action should be taken, such as the suspension of negotiations and limitation in access to EU programs. This would enhance the accountability of candidate member states by ensuring that only those with a serious, long-term commitment are granted membership status. Such a framework would protect the Union's stability while also benefiting member states through increased predictability, guidance provided by the independent EU body, and effective feedback on the reform process.

II. THE ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION IN THE GOVERNANCE OF ANTARCTICA

¹ 2023 European Union enlargement policy, EUR-Lex. (2023, November 8). Europa.eu. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/2023-european-union-enlargement-policy.html>

² EUROPEAN ELECTIONS MANIFESTO 2024. (n.d.). Retrieved November 24, 2025, from https://www.european-left.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/2024-Manifesto-English-European-Left.pdf?utm_source

³ Spain's foreign action strategy 2025-2028 foreign policy with. (n.d.-c). https://www.exteriores.gob.es/es/PoliticaExterior/Documents/EAE_2025-2028/Estrategia Acción Exterior Inglés.pdf

The governance of Antarctica is based on international law, including the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS), established in 1959. This treaty forms the basis of international cooperation on the continent, allowing valuable scientific research to take place while keeping at the forefront the preservation and protection of its ecosystems. The continent plays a crucial role in the planet's environment and is an important medium for scientific research due to its unique climate. Additionally, it serves as a symbol of cooperation, by nations prioritising the collective good over their individual interests. Therefore, Antarctica is a highly relevant topic for this committee, especially regarding the role that the European Union already plays, as well as new possibilities for its involvement in the region.

The delegation of Spain supports a possible EU overarching policy regarding the governance of Antarctica, despite some member states already participating in the ATS as claimant, consultative, and non-consultative parties⁴. Spain currently has two permanent scientific stations in Antarctica and already actively promotes the preservation of unique marine living resources in Antarctica by being a contracting party to the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR). In line with the commission, we strongly support the creation of Marine Protected Areas. Moreover, in February of 2025, Spain ratified the Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction – BBNJ Agreement, reaffirming our commitment to preserving the biodiversity in the area⁵. Spain was also one of the original signatories of the Madrid Protocol in 1991, hosting the final diplomatic session in Madrid⁶.

In line with Spain's current involvement in the region, we endorse the European Union's efforts to enhance its participation in this matter, especially as it is closely related to its dedication to combating climate change (noting the Paris Agreement (2015), the European Climate Law (2021), the European Green Deal (2019))⁷⁸⁹. We propose that the EU increase its engagement in two steps. Firstly, starting with a framework linking together national Antarctic programmes of those Member States that are Parties to the Antarctic Treaty and actively engaged in scientific research on the continent. A joint program will facilitate the creation of a funding system (second step), in the form of different research missions, each focusing on a different relevant area of the European Union (biodiversity, climate, etc.). Consequently, the European Union will be able to enhance its role in the ATS without needing to change its structure or needing to implement changes in the treaty itself.

Lastly, we encourage the EU to actively promote and emphasise the ban on mineral resource activities in Antarctica, established in the Madrid Protocol, which is key to a peaceful and cooperative international environment on Antarctica.

⁴ *Antarctica: What role for the European Union?: Think tank: European parliament*. Think Tank | European Parliament. (n.d.).

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EXPO_IDA%282023%29702589?utm_source

⁵ *EU leads global efforts to Protect High Seas Biodiversity with landmark BBNJ treaty ratification*. EEAS. (n.d.).

https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/un-new-york/eu-leads-global-efforts-protect-high-seas-biodiversity-landmark-bbnj-treaty-ratification_en?s=63&utm_source

⁶ Lamoncloa. (n.d.-b). <https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/serviciosdeprensa/notasprensa/transicion-ecologica/Documents/2021/041021-DeclarationofMadridAntarctica.pdf>

⁷ Paris Agreement to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Dec. 12, 2015, T.I.A.S. No. 16-1104

⁸ European Commission. (2019). *The European Green Deal* (COM/2019/640 final). <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/>

⁹ European Parliament & Council of the European Union. (2021). *Regulation (EU) 2021/1119 establishing the framework for achieving climate neutrality* (European Climate Law). *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 243, 1–17.