



DELEGATION: Republic of Croatia (European People's Party Group)

COMMITTEE: European Parliament - Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET)

DELEGATE: Milica Bajić

TOPIC 1: Enlargement of the European Union - yes, no and how?

As the most recently joined member state (MS) of the European Union (EU), the Republic of Croatia has first-hand experience of how challenging but beneficial the accession process can be. Croatia views the further EU enlargement as a strategic investment in the security and stability of Europe, especially in its neighbouring region of South-East Europe. The enlargement of the EU to these countries directly affects Croatia's economy, security and people, since there is a risk for the instability to spill across borders, but at the same time can support trade, investment and the relations in the region. For EPP and Croatia, enlargement is seen as essential, but only in a careful, rules-based and realistic way that is led by Copenhagen criteria, reinforcing the rule of law and protecting the EU's decision-making capacity. (Vasiljević, 2022)

It is not only Croatia's political leadership that openly supports enlargement, but also its public, as seen in an Eurobarometer survey conducted in 2025, showing that 61% of Croatian citizens support further EU enlargement, above the EU average (56%). In addition, 74% of Croatians favour Bosnia and Herzegovina joining the EU, and similar support is seen for Ukraine and Montenegro. (Thomas, 2025) Prime minister Andrej Plenković has pointed out that enlargement has returned to the political agenda after the Russia - Ukraine aggression, suggesting that "the slower the enlargement of the EU, the more influence other actors will have in the Western Balkans". (Plenković, 2025) At the Berlin Process Summit 2025, Croatia emphasized the support for its neighbors on this path, while insisting that candidates need to "seize the opportunity" and fulfill criteria of the *acquis* and obligatory institutional reforms. (Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2025)

Still, Croatia and the EPP are not in favour of any kind of “second-class” membership, where a MS would join without full voting rights. As the prime minister mentioned, a MS is only respected if it has equal rights. (Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2025) Croatia believes that enlargement should follow three main principles. Firstly, remaining merit-based, meaning that candidates must meet the conditions on democracy, rule of law, minority rights and economic readiness. Secondly, the EU must adapt its budget and decision-making to maintain effectiveness with more members; Croatia therefore supports a debate on institutional reform, including the use of qualified majority voting in some external policy areas, but keeping unity on core issues. Lastly, enlargement needs to include stronger support for reforms in candidate countries, such as technical assistance or funding for public administration reform.

In incoming negotiations, Croatia will pursue the objectives to enforce enlargement as a strategic priority, while securing clear and credible guidelines and interim benefits for candidates that deliver reforms. (Cosic & Dimich-Louvet, 2025) Special attention should be given to a realistic debate on internal reforms necessary for securing an effective, larger EU. Croatia will work closely with other MSs, alongside with the European People’s Party to ensure that enlargement benefits everyone equally.

TOPIC 2: The role of the European Union in the Governance of Antarctica

Even though the EU is not an official party to the 1959 Antarctic Treaty and Croatia is not an Antarctic Treaty Consultative party, they still share important interests in the region. (Secretariat of the Antarctic Treaty, n.d.) The EU actively participates in the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), responsible for protecting the fragile ecosystem of the region. (European Commission, 2023) Croatia strongly supports the Union’s effort to promote environmental sustainability, sustain international law and reinforce collaboration.

Croatia’s national interest on this topic arises from its major maritime orientation, commitment to climate action and advocacy for multilateral environmental agreements. Antarctica is the key to global climate stability, since changes in polar ecosystems affect sea levels and marine biodiversity, which are highly relevant for Croatia as a coastal state.

Croatia believes that the Union should continue reinforcing the science-based marine protected areas in the Southern Ocean and the strict control measures against illegal fishing.

Moreover, major support is given to closer coordination between the member states that have consultative status in the Antarctic Treaty, so the EU shows a unified environmental position. Croatia also believes that the EU should expand support for scientific research in order to contribute to decision-making within CCAMLR and other relevant frameworks. (European Commission, 2023)

A stronger EU role in Antarctic governance is not only about sustainability, but also protecting the rules-based international order. Croatia will be in favor of resolutions promoting strict environmental protections under the Antarctic Treaty system, keeping the ban on mineral source exploitation and improving regulation of tourism, Croatia aims to ensure that Antarctica stays protected for future generations.

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