



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on September 25, 2023

EU Report Promotes Tiered Memberships, Suggests Taking U.K. Back

A report, titled "[Sailing on High Seas: Reforming and Enlarging the EU for the 21st Century](#)," from the Franco-German working group on EU reform and expansion and published on September 18 and positioned as "a follow-up to the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE)" lobbied for ending the unanimity rule in the EU founding treaty, giving more power to the European Parliament, promoting tiered memberships, and also the possibility of taking the U.K. back into the bloc.



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The 60-page report, authored by 12 specialists who were requested to offer suggestions to deal with the challenges of EU expansion and possible inclusion of countries such as Ukraine and Moldova, laid out the difficulties and attempted to provide solutions to EU enlargement.

The EU first has to overcome a few internal challenges among the 27 member states, the authors alleged, including the issue of some members questioning "the rule of law" and "the primacy of EU law over national law and the shared values outlined in the EU treaty."

Moreover, the sample report quoted "institutions and decision-making mechanisms" that impede EU strategic decisions.

"They were not designed for a group of up to 37 countries and as they are currently constituted, they make it difficult even for the EU27 to manage crises effectively and take strategic decisions," the report declared.

Additionally, the paper noted what could be considered as a mix of economic stagnation and weak socialism at the crux of the EU's problems.

"Delivering public goods to citizens has become an increasing challenge for the EU and its Member States' governments and has made democracy vulnerable," it read.

The report's suggestions would alter the significance of the EU as a grouping of equal sovereign countries that function via diplomacy. Instead, the paper called for the EU to operate like a federation with party interests and politics.

"Before the next enlargement, all remaining policy decisions should be transferred from unanimity to QMV [qualified majority vote]. Additionally, except for in CFSP [common foreign and security policy], this should be accompanied by full co-decision with the EP [European Parliament] (through the OLP [ordinary legislative procedure]) to ensure appropriate democratic legitimacy," the paper stated.



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Only decisions pertaining to treaty amendments, welcoming new members, or adapting the EU institutions should be done through unanimity, based on the authors' suggestions.

Furthermore, the report called for a tiered membership in which some countries have more say than others, suggesting four types of EU member states:

"1. The inner circle; 2. The EU; 3. Associate members; 4. The European Political Community [a loose association of European leaders that meet twice a year to talk]."

Importantly, EU countries that desire change and cannot achieve bloc unanimity should set up their own parallel European platform through a "'supplementary reform treaty' signed by willing Member States."

All these suggestions were possible within the next commission mandate, the authors asserted, as they set 2030 as the target for EU enlargement, insisting that the next Commission "should commit to the goal of 2030 and agree how to make the EU enlargement ready by then."

To boot, the authors recommended a larger EU budget, EU payouts to abide more strictly by rule-of-law conditions, as well as a new watchdog that would investigate the financial integrity of people employed by EU institutions.

"The last 30 years of history shows that those skeptical about the prospects of major EU reforms are always proven wrong," Olivier Costa, director of political studies at the College of Europe and one of two co-rapporteurs on the paper, told [Politico](#), stating that "it's a bit early in the process" for the countries in the Council to get behind tangible EU reform proposals.

Also, the same report would see the ever-expanding EU welcoming "associate members," and officials apparently have included the U.K. in such a list.

The report's publication coincided with U.K. Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer's meeting in Paris with French President Emmanuel Macron. One Brussels diplomatic source was subsequently [cited](#) in *The Times* saying the plan "had been crafted to appeal to a future Labour government."

Previously, Sir Keir vowed to establish better relations with Brussels should he win the next election, and has drafted a plan to halt illegal Channel crossings, which depends on collaboration with the EU.

EU "associate members" would be [expected](#) to contribute to the bloc's annual budget and to be governed by the European Court of Justice (that has sparked a backlash in past Brexit deals). Britain, if it participates in this tier, would also "participat[e]" with the single market without joining it fully. The paper detailing the plan [put forth](#):

"Associate members would not be bound to 'ever closer union'.... The core area of participation would be the single market.... Countries would join out of their own political will, either because they withdrew from the EU or because they had no intention of joining in the first place."

Businessman and former Brexit Party MEP Ben Habib, opined in an interview with *The European Conservative*:

In 2019 Keir Starmer promised Labour would, if elected, negotiate an excellent trade deal with the EU, put it to a referendum with a choice to remain, and then campaign for remain. Apart from being an idiotic idea, it revealed his complete commitment to taking the UK back into the EU. His ideology has not changed. If he could get away with it, he would take us straight back in now. So, we should be prepared for a Labour government completely to kill



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Brexit. Whether that comes in the form of re-joining, associate membership or a new deal is frankly academic. He prefers Davos to Westminster. He would rather Parliament be a regional council than the United Kingdom's legislature.

Habib continued that Sir Keir "holds the people of this country and our democracy in contempt."



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