

Which missions for which institutions? The Enlargement of the EU and the new stability of the Continent

***Alison Weston
President of the Young European Federalists (JEF)***

The putting together of these two panels offers the opportunity to tackle the two sets of issues together: to speak about Enlargement as a Mission for the European Union

- to argue that Enlargement – not only the current one to the ten, and the future ones to Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, but also to the countries of the Western Balkans, is a fundamental part of the overall European project
- it is a mission which, like all the others, has major institutional implications
- but institutions are there for a reason, not to exist for their own sake but to achieve goals and objectives

The Enlargement project is one which takes us back to the original vision, the original mission, of the European integration process

- It will require all the energy, commitment, political will, imagination, and vision of the original founding of the European project 50 years ago
- It is a project which requires the commitment of our governments and institutions, the resolve of the Convention, and the efforts of all the governments represented here this week

The Enlargement project cannot be seen as only a financial and technical challenge – it is above all a political project

- as such, we cannot afford for it to fail

Why do I say that? For three reasons:

1. Enlargement is a moral imperative

- Western Europe made promises to the countries of the former Eastern bloc, and now it is time to fulfil them
- Western Europe owes it to those peoples who found themselves on the wrong side of history to give them the opportunity to participate in the new European future

2. Enlargement is a practical necessity

- for security, stability, and prosperity, we cannot leave a large part of the European continent on the outside, shut out from the political and economic benefits of integration and marginalised from the European centre

3. Enlargement poses a major challenge to the European model

- if the European model of integration cannot meet the challenges posed by Enlargement then it raises questions about the fundamental value and overall basis of our political project

The European Union's greatest achievement: to be a living, working example of peoples living together in peace, according to democratic principles, and according to the rule of law, on the basis of reconciliation, mutual respect, shared values, and a common vision of a different future.

Can we extend this model, this different future, to other parts of Europe, to the most troubled corners of our continent? This is the mission for the Union posed by Enlargement, one which will require political and economic generosity, but above all, the vision and the courage to make Enlargement a success.

In conversations with young people from South Eastern Europe, I have found that many of them look to the Union as a symbol of hope that another future is possible, that the ideal at the heart of our European project truly can work

- it is to respond to this challenge that the Union needs most of all to stand united, to have the institutions and instruments necessary to make this European vision come true for all Europeans
- to create a Europe able to rise to this challenge – in the first place this responsibility falls to the members of the Convention – and this is a heavy challenge indeed, but one which they must not fail.