

## New Horizon Europe project Preparing Europe for the future

**With Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, the number of official candidate countries for accession to the European Union has grown to ten. This means that EU enlargement is once again a key strategy for contributing to greater stability and prosperity throughout Europe in times of new geopolitical challenges. From 1 January 2024, InvigoratEU\* - a new Horizon Europe project coordinated by the EU Chair at the University of Duisburg-Essen together with the Institute for European Politics in Berlin - will examine how the EU can structure its relations with its eastern neighbours and the Western Balkan states in the future. The consortium will initially receive around three million euros in funding from the EU over the next three years.**

How can the EU strengthen its enlargement and neighbourhood policy? Can it ensure Europe's future viability beyond its borders? The InvigoratEU project, coordinated by Prof Dr Michael Kaeding, Professor of European Integration and European Policy at the University of Duisburg-Essen (UDE), aims to find answers to this question. To this end, the more than 50 researchers from various EU and non-EU countries are pursuing three objectives:

**1. New strategies for a strong Europe:** In view of the geopolitical turning point, the researchers want to investigate above all how the enlargement and neighbourhood policy needs to be reformed, how to respond to the political, military and economic ambitions of Russia, China, the USA and Turkey in the Eastern Neighbourhood and the Western Balkans and how the EU's foreign policy arsenal needs to be restructured with a view to a new era of military interventions. New data sets will be created - e.g. a public opinion survey, an external influence index and a social compliance scoreboard.

**2. development of a future-oriented vision:** new institutional framework conditions are to be designed - both for politics and for teaching at schools and universities. To this end, the researchers will develop scenarios, visions and strategies and organise so-called youth labs, workshops for young professionals and political debates throughout Europe. The aim is for the young Europeans to develop policy recommendations for European and national political actors, which will be presented in Brussels and European capitals at the end of the project.

**3. broad communication of the results:** A CDE strategy ("Communication, Dissemination and Exploitation") is central to achieving the project's goal - the recommendations derived from the research results must be communicated, disseminated and utilised.

"The project," explains Kaeding, "comes at the right time. We need good answers as to how we can integrate the countries of the Western Balkans, Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia into the EU in order to prepare Europe for the future." What makes InvigoratEU special is that it consists of a consortium that takes into account Europe's diversity and political perspectives. Seven of the 18 members come from Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and the Western Balkans (North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia). These are complemented by a network of civil society actors with nine representatives from all Western Balkan countries, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

*\* InvigoratEU stands for Invigorating Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy for a Resilient Europe and is a consortium of 18 partners. It is already the third Horizon Project coordinated by the EU Chair at UDE. It joins the ongoing ActEU project, which is focussing on regaining societal trust in democracy in the run-up to the 2024 European elections. It also builds on the already completed SEnECA project, which focussed on relations between the EU and the Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan).*

**Further information:** <https://invigorat.eu/>

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