
FOREWORD

The relations between the European Union and its neighbouring countries have been at the heart of the T.M.C. Asser Institute's activities for more than twenty-five years. In the 1970s, the T.M.C. Asser Institute was one of the first academic institutions in Western Europe to establish close contacts with universities in Central and Eastern Europe: first with the so-called Hague-Zagreb-Ghent Colloquia on the Law of International Trade, and later, at the end of the eighties, when the political divide between the two blocks in Europe began to fade away, with a post-graduate training and research programme called 'Asser College Europe'. This programme brought intensive academic cooperation between universities from almost all the European Union's neighbouring countries in Central and Eastern Europe.

Furthermore, since the nineties, the Institute has been active in consultancy and legal advice activities in these countries, under the auspices of such programmes as Matra, Phare, Tacis, OBNOVA and CARDS. Experts from the Institute have been advising governments as well as the European Commission on various issues, including problems relating to the adoption and implementation of the *acquis* in the European Union's neighbouring countries, especially those countries with a membership perspective. In the growing tradition of its EU enlargement publications, with *EU Enlargement: The Constitutional Impact at EU and National Level* (edited by Alfred Kellermann, Jaap de Zwaan and Jenö Czuczai) and *Handbook on European Enlargement: A Commentary on the Enlargement Process* (edited by Andrea Ott and Kirstyn Inglis) as the most prominent exponents, the T.M.C. Asser Institute has now published *The European Union and its Neighbours: A Legal Appraisal of the EU's Policies of Stabilisation, Partnership and Integration*, edited by Steven Blockmans and Adam Łazowski.

Both editors have built up extensive experience in consulting and teaching EU law in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. As representatives of one of the 'old' and one of the 'new' Member States, they share the vision of a strong European Union which is currently redefining its position in a wider Europe, indeed the world. With the support of a multinational team of experts drawn from the Institute's extensive network of contacts, the editors have compiled a comprehensive and well-structured overview of the political and legal developments of the relations between the European Union and each of its current neighbours. By choosing a methodology which holds the middle ground between a handbook, which necessarily implies precision and simplicity, and a critical academic analysis, Blockmans and Łazowski have made sure that this book will continue to be useful, despite the constant developments on the international scene which render any book on the external relations of the European Union outdated before it is even published. *The European Union and its Neighbours* should prove a valuable

tool for anyone seeking a better legal and political understanding of both the overall and the specific relations between the Union and its neighbours.

I congratulate both editors with the publication of this highly interesting book, which forms a perfect addition to the Asser Institute's enlargement publication 'series'.

I recommend it with pleasure to anyone interested in the legal and political relations between the European Union and its neighbours.

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