

Preface

This volume brings together the results of research conducted by a number of scholars in the context of EU-CONSENT – a ‘Network of Excellence’ funded under the European Union’s 6th Framework Programme for Research and Development. EU-CONSENT brings together researchers from some 50 institutions from across Europe to share their research output on the question of ‘Wider Europe, Deeper Integration?’ The activities of the network, which is led by Wolfgang Wessels at the University of Cologne, are organized around a number of different ‘work packages’ focusing on theoretical questions, sectoral studies and institutional dimensions of the relationship between EU reform and enlargement. This present volume publishes the research output of those who have been working together in ‘Work Package IV’, which addresses the evolution of the EU’s institutional system in the context of enlargement. This work package, which is coordinated at the European Institute of Public Administration (EIPA) in Maastricht, is made up of four teams which are, respectively, looking at the role of national governments in Council and comitology (led by Edward Best and Thomas Christiansen), the European Commission (John Peterson), the European Parliament (Brendan Donnelly) and the bodies representing sub-state authorities and organized civil society at European level (Simona Piattoni). Each team has examined the way in which the enlargement process and the arrival of the representatives from the new member states has, or has not, changed the institutional mechanisms in those spheres. This book is the first joint effort by those active in this work package, and the editors are grateful to the contributions and the active support from the team leaders and their co-authors in making this publication possible. In addition to the contributions from scholars in the different teams in Work Package IV, we also commissioned additional chapters on two key bodies that would otherwise not have been covered – the European Court of Justice, and the European Central Bank – and we are glad to have found leading experts in their field to contribute the chapters on these institutions.

The budget of EU-CONSENT, as a ‘Network of Excellence’, does not pay for additional research time, but only funds meetings bringing together scholars who are already working on these issues in order to allow them to share their results and collaborate in the presentation and publication of

completed research. Given these limitations, we have been impressed by the dedication of the contributors to this book to produce original work and to respond to the common framework and set of questions that we developed in order to provide a systematic account of the interaction between institutional dynamics and the process of enlargement. Drafts of the chapters published here were presented at a number of different workshops and conference panels, and we are grateful for all the useful feedback and comments received from participants on these occasions. Our special thanks go to several colleagues at EIPA: Sonia Piedrafita and Araceli Barragán for their help in managing the work package and organizing the workshops; Sarada Das and Johanna Oettel for the research assistance they kindly provided for several of the chapters; and Moritz Reinsch for his help in putting together the final manuscript. At Edward Elgar, Alex O'Connell has been an incredibly friendly, efficient and supportive editor, and Suzanne Mursell has been equally helpful during the production process.

Just like EU enlargement itself, this book has been a long time in preparation, and we are grateful that our contributors responded so constructively to our suggestions for revisions, while remaining patient during periods of silence from the editors. We are glad that this volume is now being published – as the first text in the newly launched EU-CONSENT book series – at a time when both institutional reform and EU enlargement remain important issues for debate, and we hope that our readers will find this useful in furthering our understanding of these processes.

The Editors
Maastricht and Brussels, December 2007