

Summer University 2026

CLUNY DECLARATION 2040

In the heart of Cluny – one of Europe's oldest places of dialogue, learning and reconciliation – we, the participants of the 25th Cluny European Summer University, believe that the future of Europe will depend not only on the agreements it reaches, but on the way those agreements are negotiated.

Every major stage of European integration has required the capacity to transform differences into cooperation, conflicts into compromise, and diversity into a shared political project.

Today, Europe faces a new historical moment. War has returned to the continent. Democratic trust is under pressure. Artificial intelligence is transforming decision-making. Climate change, technological disruption, migration and geopolitical instability challenge our institutions. At the same time, the prospect of a wider European Union requires us to rethink how Europe negotiates its own future.

Future enlargement is therefore more than an institutional process. It is a democratic choice.

It is a negotiation about the kind of Europe we wish to build by 2040. For this reason, we, on this on the 12th July 2026, share the following principles. These values and principles should be revised periodically to remain current.

Principle 1 – Negotiation as a European Public Good

Negotiation is not only a diplomatic tool. It is the dance that links citizens to the concrete decision of their future.

Negotiation is therefore an essential capability of Europe, acting as the core of its integration.

Principle 2 – Negotiation: A Means, Not an End

Negotiation is a means to achieve a higher goal – its value lies not only in the moment of signature, but in its long-term impact.

Principle 3 – Fairness and Trust

Trust depends on procedures that are perceived as fair, transparent, and consistent. Procedural fairness includes equal treatment, clearly defined criteria, meaningful opportunities for participation, and consistent application of agreed standards. Effective advocacy requires adequate representation, as well as meaningful access to the structures in which decisions are discussed and made.

Principle 4 – Diversity and Unity

EU enlargement should recognise both the benefits of diversity and the importance of political cohesion. Europe can remain united while accommodating different national perspectives, identities, interests, and starting points, provided that all parties agree on and uphold a shared set of fundamental European values and principles.

Europe should simultaneously seek to adhere to these values and principles in messaging and action.

Recognising diversity also means acknowledging that candidate countries differ in their institutional capacities, economic conditions, political circumstances, and reform needs. Pre-agreed and clearly defined exceptions may be applied during periods of crisis, provided that they remain temporary, proportionate, and consistent with the principle of fairness. At the same time, the EU should strengthen weaker sectors and institutions while recognising and building upon the specific strengths and progress of each candidate country.

Principle 5 – Shared Responsibility

The governments should ensure that the participatory process includes – but it's not limited to – youth, women, minorities, and marginalised groups. These same groups should have a proportional representation in the decision-making process. It is crucial to systemise the inclusion of civil society perspectives and voices from both candidate countries and member states in all steps of the enlargement process, and to institutionalise the allocation of funds to trainings, simulations, cultural diversity on the topic of intercultural Europe.

Principle 6 – Thinking Beyond the Present

Collective negotiation should strengthen Europe's capacity to respond to future challenges such as digital security, external threats, climate change, and AI. The goal is to monitor the development of future oriented inclusive practices around the world, with the aim of better preparing the future of an intercultural Europe. It is a priority to ensure current leaders are held accountable – as well as next generations – for the future of a sustainable Europe, as well as to committing to fair and equal resources.

Principle 7 – Learning Continuity

Europe's capacity to negotiate should be continuously improved by previous negotiations. This is ensured through multi-level and comprehensive learning approach. Ongoing improvement should be accomplished by analysing past negotiations.

Principle 8 – Artificial Intelligence and Human Responsibility

If used during the negotiation process, AI should be governed by human responsibility and ethical principles.

Principle 9 – Negotiation and Peace

Negotiation remains Europe's primary instrument for preventing conflict and strengthening democratic resilience, while promoting peace within and outside Europe. It will draw together European countries to be more reliant on each other, as well as integrated for common defence.

Principle 10 – The Common European Future

The purpose of enlargement is not simply to increase the number of member states, but to strengthen the European political communities' unity, capacity to act, and communicate better across sectors. This will enhance multi-level governance and broaden the scope of enlargement, considered not only as full membership but as any form of interaction with stakeholders.