

## **Abstract**

This study examines the impact of the European Union's eastward expansions on trade between the EU and China, leveraging bilateral trade panel data from 170 countries spanning 1996 to 2021. Utilizing fixed effects models and Poisson Pseudo-Maximum Likelihood (PPML) based on the gravity model, our analysis reveals that the EU's expansions have generally promoted trade both within the EU and with third-party countries. Moreover, China's accession to the WTO and improvements in EU institutional quality have positively influenced trade dynamics. Notably, the expansions have boosted overall trade flows between the EU and China. The analysis also highlights the role of indirect exports from the V4 (Visegrád Group) countries to China via advanced EU nations like Germany, within the framework of global value chains. Disaggregated sector-specific data reveal trade diversion effects particularly in the textiles and agriculture sectors post-EU enlargement. The study also highlights the EU's significant reliance on China for advanced technological components and materials critical to sectors like digital infrastructure, renewable energy, advanced manufacturing, and batteries. Finally, the varying impacts of different stages of EU expansion on China-EU trade are demonstrated.