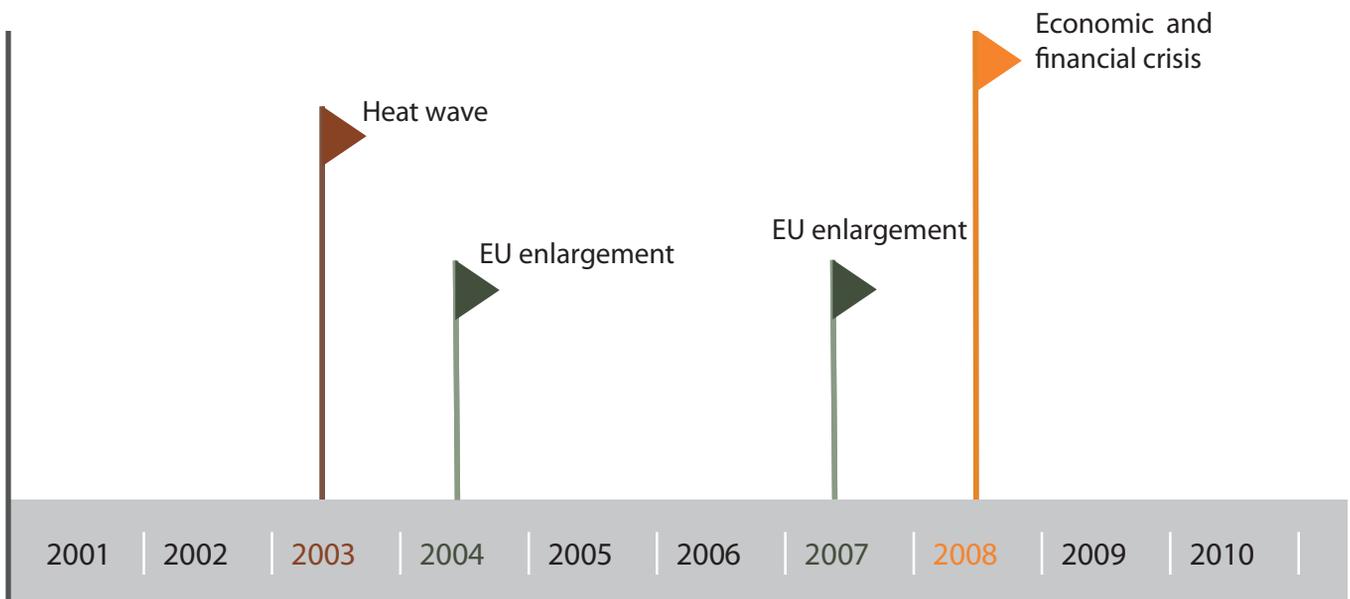


Shocks and stressors

During the last three decades a series of shocks and stressors have manifested throughout the European continent. It should be noted that the notion of “shock” does not necessarily carries a negative connotation. Although most of the times, the term “shock” refers to negative occurrences (terrorists attacks, economic and financial crises, natural disasters), the term has a wider meaning, covering phenomena which could be better described as important historical events (EU enlargement, NATO enlargement, Euro currency introduction, the fall of the Berlin wall, Brexit referendum) or social movements (refugee waves of 2015–2016, Yellow Vests movements from France). These types of events cannot be classified as “good” or “bad” changes, but rather as radical transformations in the ordinary manner in which things used to work used to work or used to be.

While the number of shocks and stressors affecting Europe (either locally or at a continental level) is extensive, the atlas sought to list only the most important ones. Even though the shocks vary in intensity, duration, affected area and, most important, length of the recovery period, they have in common, nevertheless, a prominent effect upon the European territory, most of them with repercussions that are still visible today. Moreover, through the severity of their impact and the territorial reactions, these shocks have considerably shaped the national and European policies.

Shocks included in the current atlas



In order to ensure a comprehensive approach on the territorial resilience, a wide diversity of shocks and stressors is covered within this atlas. While previous researches have focused exclusively on the economic events to analyse resilience performance, our intention was to cover as many disrupting events as possible. Therefore, our preliminary list included natural disasters or natural occurring phenomena (heat waves, volcanic eruptions, storms, droughts), financial or economic events (Asian financial crisis of 1997, Global economic and financial crisis of 2008-09, the adoption of Euro currency in 2002), geopolitical events (NATO enlargement, EU enlargement, the fall of the Berlin wall, annexation of Crimea), health-related shocks (SARS, H1N1 Flu, COVID-19), or social movements (Yellow Vests in France, the rise of illiberal democracies in CEE).

Two very important aspects must be considered before concluding this chapter. First, while the shocks are presented as individual events, it should be noted that some of them share similar origins, or they are even causing each other (for example the Ukraine's Euromaidan protests, the annexation of Crimea, and the EU sanctions on Russian Federation). Therefore, for a better understanding of their implications, it is necessary to keep in mind interconnections that exist between them.

Secondly, while the list gathers the most important shocks affecting the European continent during the past three decades, due to editorial space reasons, it was decided to focus our efforts on the most impactful shocks in terms of territorial repercussions and reshaping of the economic, geopolitical and societal background. For these reasons, the 2008-09 economic and financial crisis and the EU enlargement received a larger share of consideration and of the analyses compared with other, less impactful shocks.

