European Commission - Press release

2026 Enlargement Package shows that reform commitment delivers progress towards EU membership

Brussels, 4 November 2026

Today, the European Commission adopted its annual Enlargement Package, taking stock of progress made by the enlargement partners over the past year and setting out reform priorities for the way forward.

Enlargement is one of the EU's most consequential policies anchoring peace, stability and prosperity across the continent. Firmly built on the principle of merits, a credible enlargement policy is increasingly an investment in Europe's collective security.

This year's package demonstrates that sustained reforms efforts translate into concrete progress to EU membership, as evidenced by Montenegro, Albania, Moldova and Ukraine. The four countries have advanced their accession negotiations, with clusters opening and chapters being provisionally closed at an unprecedented pace. This year the Commission has presented the financial package for Montenegro's accession and the work on the accession treaty is well underway. Taking this work forward, and as announced by President **von der Leyen** in her 2026 State of the Union address, the Commission is presenting today **indicative roadmaps** for these four most-advanced negotiating countries, setting out concrete milestones for the year ahead.

Ursula **von der Leyen**, President of the European Commission said: *"The significant progress achieved by some candidates over the last year allows us to turn the promise of enlargement into reality. We are now proposing a set of indicative roadmaps for the most advanced negotiating countries - Montenegro, Albania, Ukraine and Moldova. A clear path for the year ahead and a firm anchor for the upcoming negotiations. Step by step, we are building a more complete, stronger Union."*

The reports show that the pace of reforms, particularly in the areas of democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights, alongside political choices on security and defence, as well as progress towards economic convergence, directly shapes the speed of the accession process for each partner. Reforms, investments and the gradual integration of enlargement partners are already strengthening the Union's capacity to protect its interests, reduce vulnerabilities and create new opportunities. To maximise these benefits ahead of accession, the Commission is also presenting today a **common framework for gradual integration** to further deepen integration in strategic sectors, such as energy, transport, digital and defence. This will make gradual integration more structured and coherent.

As enlargement partners advance on their reform paths, the EU must be ready to welcome them and match the pace of their progress. With the recent Communication "Preparing for a wider Union", the Commission has laid the groundwork for ensuring that a larger Union is also stronger, more resilient and more effective.

Main conclusions

Montenegro has made remarkable progress toward EU accession, having provisionally closed 21 chapters to date. Subject to Member States' agreement, Montenegro could provisionally close the remaining chapters by the end of this year. The ongoing work on Montenegro's accession treaty, alongside the adoption of Council Conclusions on the financial package for the country's EU accession, confirms that Montenegro is close to the final stage of its accession process. Sustained reform efforts and broad political consensus remain essential for the country's EU future.

Albania continues to make progress towards EU accession. During the reporting period, it opened the last remaining cluster, met the interim benchmarks on the rule of law chapters, paving the way for

the provisional closure of four chapters. Continued efforts are now needed across all remaining chapters. Reaching Albania's ambitious but achievable objective of concluding accession negotiations by 2027 requires maintaining reform momentum and fostering inclusive political dialogue. Keeping up the momentum will require swift delivery on high-quality EU-related reforms. At the same time, the reporting period saw the country's largest civic mobilisation since its democratic transition. EU accession is a whole-of-society approach that requires constructive dialogue.

Moldova has continued to make steady progress on its EU accession path, having opened four clusters over the past year. The Commission's assessment remains that Moldova has met the conditions required to open all remaining clusters. Moldova has intensified the alignment of its legislation with the EU *acquis* across all chapters and made further progress on key rule of law reforms. It has also made very substantial progress towards meeting the interim benchmarks under the fundamentals cluster. It is now important that Moldova continues to maintain the current pace of reforms to allow the country to pursue its ambitious but achievable objective of closing accession negotiations by early 2028.

Ukraine remains committed to its EU accession path despite the challenges caused by Russia's war of aggression, having opened four clusters over the past year. The Commission's assessment remains that Ukraine has met the conditions required to open all remaining clusters. Ukraine has continued to advance on key sectoral reforms. Its institutional framework for combating corruption remains effective, with specialised anti-corruption institutions continuing to operate overall independently and effectively. The focus should now be on meeting the interim benchmarks under the rule of law, as well as delivering on the roadmaps concerning the rule of law, the functioning of democratic institutions and public administration reform, and on the action plan on national minorities. It is important that Ukraine continues to accelerate the pace of reforms, to put the country in a position to meet its ambitious objective to close accession negotiations by the end of 2028.

Serbia did not make any substantive progress in accession negotiations. The reporting period was marked by increasing societal polarisation, including in the pre-electoral context. While Serbia advanced the work on the alignment with EU *acquis* and technical standards, negative trends related to the fundamentals of the accession process ran counter to the authorities' declared objective of EU accession and the values underpinning Serbia's EU path. Alignment with the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) remained low. Serbia also needs to implement all obligations stemming from the EU-facilitated Dialogue, which remains an integral part of its European perspective. The recent parliamentary elections in Serbia provided the newly elected government with a strong mandate for reforms. Progress towards EU accession will depend on the incoming government's efforts to reverse the negative trends, prioritise the fundamentals, including democratic criteria, the judiciary and fundamental rights. It will need to restore respectful democratic dialogue, demonstrate a clear and unambiguous commitment to EU values, including as regards alignment with the EU's foreign and security policy and efforts towards reconciliation, good-neighbourly relations and normalisation.

North Macedonia continued work on the opening benchmarks for the fundamentals cluster. This includes the adoption of the roadmap for public administration reform and continued work on the roadmap for the rule of law, alongside the accompanying action plan on minorities. North Macedonia has yet to adopt the necessary constitutional amendments, which it committed to undertake. Further efforts are needed to reinforce the rule of law. The country made significant progress in implementing reforms under its Reform Agenda, making it one of the top performers under the Reform and Growth Facility. Intensified efforts to adopt the necessary constitutional changes and address opening benchmarks remain essential to move the accession process forward.

Bosnia and Herzegovina continued to publicly declare its commitment to EU integration as a strategic goal, while increasingly disengaging from its EU path. Political posturing, divisive rhetoric and anti-EU narratives increased ahead of the general elections. Following the elections, Bosnia and Herzegovina should swiftly proceed with setting up of all executive and legislative bodies and demonstrate a renewed commitment to delivering on EU reforms. Bosnia and Herzegovina also needs to urgently proceed with the necessary steps to fully benefit from the Reform Agenda adopted under the Reform and Growth Facility.

Kosovo saw its EU-related reform process stall amid a prolonged institutional crisis, which was alleviated by a political agreement on the election of the President. While some progress was recorded in the area of serious and organised crime, and full alignment with the CFSP, concerning

developments were noted as regards the functioning of the judiciary and the respect for fundamental rights. Following the transfer of local governance in northern Kosovo, the Commission lifted its measures against Kosovo, re-engaging through the Stabilisation and Association Process Dialogue and resuming the delivery of financial assistance. While the support for European path remains strong, Kosovo needs to step up with the reform process and implement all obligations stemming from the EU-facilitated Dialogue, which remains an integral part of Kosovo's European perspective. The Commission stands ready to prepare an Opinion on Kosovo's membership application if requested by the Council.

Türkiye remains a candidate country and a key partner for the EU. The EU has continued to advance relations with Türkiye in a phased, proportionate and reversible manner, engaging in areas of mutual interest. However, legal actions brought against elected officials, opposition figures and civil society have intensified, raising growing concerns about Türkiye's adherence to core democratic principles. The gap between Türkiye's declared objective of joining the EU and its backsliding on the fundamental political criteria for EU accession has widened further. The underlying factors that led to the standstill in the accession negotiations in 2018 remain unaddressed.

Georgia's EU accession process remains *de facto* halted, and the Commission's assessment of Georgia as a candidate country in name only remains valid. Georgia continues to fall short of the nine steps set out in the Commission's recommendation for candidate status, as the ruling party has continued to undermine democratic principles, the rule of law, fundamental rights and civic space, while enabling further state capture. Unless Georgian authorities change course and recommit to the fundamental principles underpinning EU accession, Georgia will continue to miss out on the benefits of candidate status and the pre-accession process. The EU's longstanding support for Georgia's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity remains unwavering, as does its support for the European aspirations of the Georgian people.

Clear roadmaps towards EU accession

In the light of the progress achieved by Montenegro, Albania, Moldova and Ukraine, the Commission presented today indicative roadmaps with concrete milestones and targets for the year ahead. Building on past experiences, in particular from the 2004 and 2013 enlargements, they will help organise the next stages of preparation in a more structured and transparent manner, supporting the work of both candidate countries and EU institutions and Member States. The Commission may adjust the roadmaps, depending on progress made in meeting the required conditions, and will update them regularly, based on the progress made. The Commission stands ready to put forward similar roadmaps for other candidate countries once they have reached a similar level of advancement, pace and engagement in the accession negotiations.

Getting ready for membership through gradual integration

The Commission's recent Communication *"Preparing for a wider Union",* highlights the need to reinforce the gradual integration of accession partners as they advance towards EU membership. To this end, the Commission presented today a mapping of existing instruments providing a basis for identifying opportunities to deepen integration in strategic sectors, including energy, transport, digital and defence. Upon conditions, the reinforced gradual integration will further boost growth, competitiveness and security, while remaining an integral part of the accession process. The mapping aims to ensure greater coherence, predictability and reversibility, allowing for a more structured integration that brings clear benefits for enlargement partners and the EU. Over the next six months, the Commission will launch **dialogues on gradual integration** with the enlargement partners to take stock of existing measures and their financing and identify more tailored opportunities for each partner.

Next steps

It is now for the Council to consider today's recommendations of the Commission and take decisions on the steps ahead in the enlargement process.

Background

Enlargement is a merit-based process, based on the objective progress of each enlargement country. The EU supports the strengthening of institutions, democratic governance and public administration reforms across these countries.

In the recent Communication "Preparing for a wider Union", the Commission presented the pre-enlargement policy reviews, as well as the policy orientations and actions needed to prepare the Union for future enlargements. It showed that preparing the EU institutions, adapting the Union's policies to new realities, and ensuring that the EU budget reflects our shared ambitions. The Communication also outlined that future accession treaties should also contain safeguards to ensure that key commitments made during negotiations continue to be upheld after membership.

Gradual integration enables enlargement countries to prepare for membership through earlier participation in EU policies. Partners can benefit from broader access to EU programmes and agencies, connectivity, as well as participate in expert groups and committees, even before accession. Furthermore, initiatives like the €6 billion Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, the €1.9 billion Moldova Growth Plan, and the €50 billion Ukraine Facility, allow for wider single market integration and establish stronger connection with the EU, such as through gradual integration and the participation in SEPA and "Roam Like at Home".

Each enlargement has made our Union stronger. When ten countries joined the EU in 2004, it marked the Union's largest ever expansion. In the two decades since, newcomers have seen living standards double, unemployment fall by nearly half, life expectancy rise from 75 to 79 years, poverty and social exclusion drop sharply, and 6 million new jobs created. For the existing members, trade has multiplied more than fivefold ever since, while 20 million jobs have also been created. For the EU as a whole, the Single Market gained 74 million new consumers at the time, and the EU economy has expanded by 27% despite global crises.

For more information

2026 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy

Gradual integration strands across the accession chapters

Factsheet on the EU accession process

Factsheet on the accession negotiations state of play

Factsheet on gradual integration

Communication "Preparing for a wider Europe"

Website on the EU Enlargement Forum 2026

For detailed findings and recommendations

Albania: Report; Factsheet

Bosnia and Herzegovina: Report; Factsheet

Georgia: Report; Factsheet

Kosovo: Report; Factsheet

Moldova: Report; Factsheet

Montenegro: Report; Factsheet

North Macedonia: Report; Factsheet

Serbia: Report; Factsheet

Türkiye: Report; Factsheet

Ukraine: Report; Factsheet

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Quote(s):

"The significant progress achieved by some candidates over the last year allows us to turn the promise of enlargement into reality. We are now proposing a set of indicative roadmaps for the most advanced negotiating countries - Montenegro, Albania, Ukraine and Moldova. A clear path for the year ahead and a firm anchor for the upcoming negotiations. Step by step, we are building a more complete, stronger Union."
Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission

"Enlargement is not just about making the European Union bigger but about making us safer and stronger. Many candidate countries already contribute to our security. They provide military expertise in drone warfare and modern battlefield technologies. Some candidate countries support EU operations in the Western Balkans and beyond. They strengthen the security of our energy supplies and help counter foreign information manipulation. Every time a country has joined the European Union it has benefitted our continent. Enlargement is a direct investment in Europe's security."
Kaja Kallas, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission

"We have seen remarkable progress by those countries most advanced in the accession process. Today, we are merely a short time away from completing the process of Montenegro's integration into the EU. An enlarged Union also becomes tangible with the other three frontrunners, as Albania, Moldova and Ukraine could join the European Union in the coming years if they sustain the reform efforts. It is also essential that EU Member States continue supporting enlargement."
Marta Kos, Commissioner for Enlargement

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