

THE EU ACCESSION PROCESS

Step-by-step

#EUEnlargement

October 2024

Every year, the Commission adopts an **Enlargement Communication**, which outlines its **recommendations** regarding the Enlargement process, and dedicated reports, which provide a **detailed assessment** of the state of play and the **progress made by the candidate countries and potential candidates** on their respective paths **towards the European Union**.

These assessments are accompanied by **recommendations and guidance** on the reform priorities.

Main steps to EU accession



1 Country submits an **application** to the Council (EU Member States).



2 The Commission submits an **Opinion** on the application.



3 EU Member States decide unanimously to grant the country **candidate status**.



4 After conditions are met, Member States (unanimously) agree to **open the accession negotiations**.



5 The Commission proposes a draft **negotiating framework** as a basis for the talks. Accession negotiations formally start once Member States agree on the negotiating framework.



6 During negotiations, which are structured according to **clusters and chapters**, the country prepares to implement EU laws and standards.



7 Once negotiations on all areas are finalised, the Commission gives its **Opinion on the readiness** of the country to become a Member State.



8 Based on this Opinion, EU Member States decide unanimously to **close the accession negotiations**. The European Parliament must also give its consent.



9 All EU Member States and the candidate country **sign and ratify an Accession Treaty** which enables the country to become an EU Member State.

Negotiating chapters are divided in six thematic clusters:

Clusters of negotiating chapters

- 1 Fundamentals
- 2 Internal market
- 3 Competitiveness & inclusive growth
- 4 Green agenda & sustainable connectivity
- 5 Resources, agriculture & cohesion
- 6 External relations



Negotiations on each cluster open as a whole. Negotiations on the Fundamentals' cluster open first and close last; progress under the Fundamentals' cluster determines the overall pace of negotiations.