

EU accession process

step by step

October 2021
#EUenlargement

A credible enlargement policy is a geostrategic investment in **peace, stability, security** and **prosperity** in Europe. It is based on fair and rigorous conditionality and the principle of own merits. It requires candidate countries to implement complex reforms in many areas such as the rule of law, the economy, the fight against corruption and organised crime. Reconciliation, good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation are of utmost importance.

Main steps to EU accession



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



2 Commission submits an Opinion on the application.



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



4 After conditions are met, the accession negotiations are opened with the agreement of all Member States.



5 Commission proposes a draft negotiating framework as a basis for the talks, which then needs to be agreed by the Member States.



6 During negotiations, which are structured according to clusters and chapters, the country prepares to implement EU laws and standards. All EU Member States must agree that all requirements are met in each case.



7 Once negotiations on all areas are finalised, 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 negotiation process. 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.

Clusters of negotiating chapters

Following the introduction of the **revised methodology for the accession negotiations** in February 2020, negotiating chapters are now divided in **six thematic clusters**:

- 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** – after the country fulfils the opening benchmarks. Each chapter will be dealt with individually with respect to its provisional closure. Negotiations on the **fundamentals open first and close last**; progress under the fundamentals' cluster will determine the overall pace of negotiations. If there is sufficient progress on reform priorities, this should lead to closer integration with the European Union, through accelerated integration and increased investments and funding.