



## INTERPARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE FOR THE COMMON FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY AND THE COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

### SESSION I: THE FUTURE EUROPE AND THE COUNTRIES WISHING TO JOIN THE EU

Pursuant to [Article 49](#) of the Treaty on European Union, any European State which is committed to respecting and promoting human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and the human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, may apply to become a member of the Union. The most important accession criteria for applicant countries were established by the European Council in 1993 ([Copenhagen criteria](#)).

In its 2023 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy [[COM\(2023\) 690 final](#)], the European Commission stresses the need for alignment with the common foreign and security policy and the importance of good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation in the Western Balkans for the enlargement process.

According to the European Parliament's Recommendation of November 2022 on the EU's new strategy for enlargement [[P9\\_TA\(2022\)0406](#)], enlargement is one of the EU's most effective foreign policy and geopolitical instruments and one of its most successful policies. The EU should therefore accelerate the enlargement and accession processes, taking into account the commitment of each country to EU values and interests. In order to preserve the geostrategic and geopolitical strength and credibility of the Union, it is necessary to enhance not only the integration of Member States, but also cooperation with candidate and potential candidate countries in the field of common foreign, security and defence policy. During enlargement, it must be ensured that unresolved bilateral and regional disputes do not block the accession process of candidate countries. The document underlines the need to take a strategic and proactive approach to counter hybrid threats and to prevent third party interference in the political and electoral processes of the accession countries.

In its 2023 report on the implementation of the common foreign and security policy, the

European Parliament stresses that the Russian war against Ukraine is destabilising the Eastern Neighbourhood and the Western Balkans, as well as their security, thus also threatening the security of the Union. For this reason, the EU should pay particular attention to reforming its neighbourhood policy and accelerate the enlargement process in parallel with the institutional and decision-making reforms needed to preserve its integration capacity [[P9\\_TA\(2024\)0104](#)].

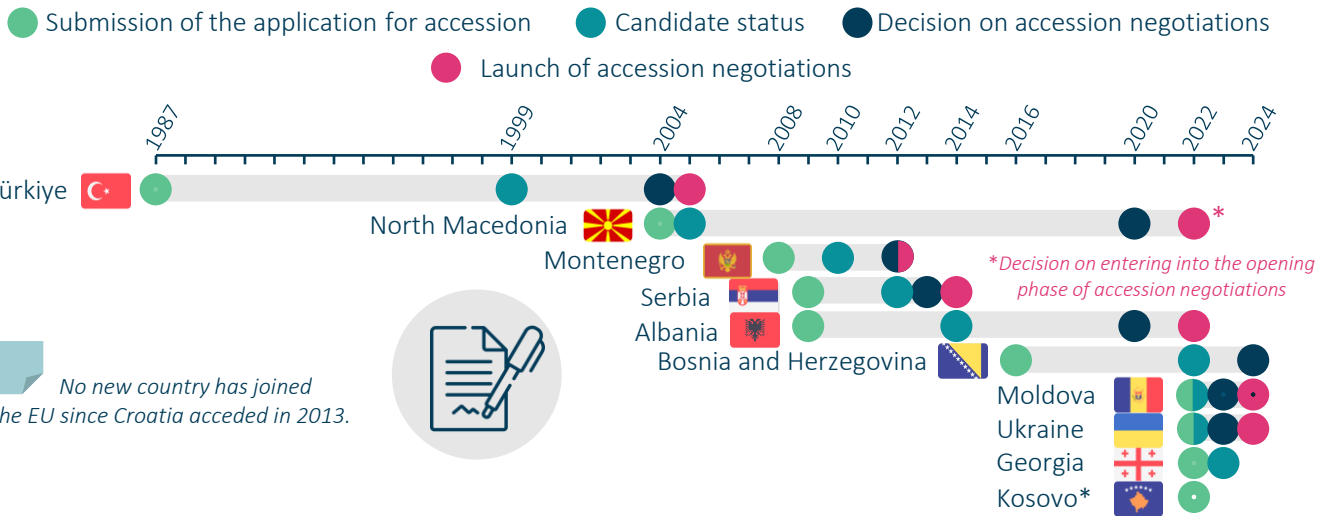
Russia's war against Ukraine as well as its geopolitical and enlargement implications are regularly discussed by the European Council. According to its conclusions of 22 March 2024, the EU remains committed to the independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine. In addition, the EU will continue to provide Moldova and Georgia with all the necessary support to address the challenges posed by Russia's war against Ukraine and to strengthen their resilience, stability and territorial integrity ([EUCO 7/24](#)).

Regarding the accession countries, the monitoring of alignment with the EU's common foreign and security policy has recently gained in importance. The European Commission's latest assessment [[COM\(2023\) 690 final](#)] concludes that Albania, North Macedonia and Montenegro already fully align with all EU foreign policy decisions and in case of the other countries it highlights areas for improvement. The document notes that the accession countries have made valuable contributions to the common security and defence policy missions and operations.

In 2024, significant progress has been made in three of the accession countries. In March 2024, it was decided to open accession negotiations with Bosnia and Herzegovina ([EUCO 7/24](#)).

Accession negotiations with Moldova and Ukraine were launched in June ([EUCO 15/24](#)). ◆

## CHRONOLOGY OF THE ACCESSION PROCESS FOR CANDIDATE AND POTENTIAL CANDIDATE COUNTRIES



## THE ENLARGEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND GEOPOLITICAL CHALLENGES



\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244(1999) and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

### SOURCES

- 1 Council of the EU: [EU enlargement policy](#), [EU opens accession negotiations with Ukraine](#) (25 June 2024), [EU opens accession negotiations with Moldova](#) (25 June 2024) | 2 European Commission: [Strategy and Report](#); European Parliament: [P8\\_TA\(2018\)0266](#), [P9\\_TA\(2023\)0372](#), [P9\\_TA\(2024\)0104](#); European Council: [EUCO 7/24](#)