DOCUMENTS

Grant EU Candidate Status to Ukraine and Moldova, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) demand

June 23, 2022

EU leaders must live up to their historical responsibility and give a clear political signal to Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, confirming their European perspective.

With 529 votes to 45 and 14 abstentions, Parliament adopted on Thursday 23 June 2022 a resolution calling on the Heads of State or Government to grant EU candidate status to Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova "without delay". They should do the same with Georgia "once its government has delivered" on the priorities indicated by the European Commission.

In the context of the brutal Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, this move would equate to showing leadership, resolve and vision, say MEPs. They insist that there is no 'fast-track' for EU membership and that accession remains a merit-based and structured process, which requires EU membership criteria to be fulfilled and is dependent on the effective implementation of reforms.

Proud and committed members of the European family

Parliament invites the authorities of Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia to "unambiguously demonstrate their political determination to implement the European ambitions of their people", accelerating reforms in order to effectively fulfil the criteria for EU membership as soon as possible.

Ukrainians, Moldovans and Georgians deserve to live in free, democratic and prosperous countries that are proud and committed members of the European family, MEPs state, urging the European Council to take an important first step towards fulfilling the legitimate aspirations of the citizens of these three countries.

No alternative to EU enlargement, for the EU's own sake

The resolution stresses that there is no alternative to enlargement, which is "more than ever a geostrategic investment" in a stable, strong and united EU. The prospect of full EU membership for the countries striving to become member states is in the European Union's own political, economic and security interests. MEPs demand that the enlargement process be "re-energised" and unblocked as regards the Western Balkans.

Background

As established in Article 49 of the EU Treaty, any European country that respects the values referred to in Article 2 and is committed to promoting them may apply to become a member of the European Union. The decision on new EU membership is taken unanimously by the Council, after consulting the Commission and getting Parliament's consent.

Ukraine (on 28 February), the Republic of Moldova and Georgia (both on 3 March) applied for EU membership in the wake of the Russian attack against Ukraine. On 17 June, the Commission published opinions on the three applications, recommending that the Council confirm Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia's perspectives of becoming member states of the EU.

EP President Metsola spoke also on climate, energy, inflation and the war's social and economic impact. European Parliament President Roberta Metsola remarks at the European Council of 23 and 24 June 2022, Brussels.

These months have not been easy. We are facing an aggressive Russia that has ripped up the rules of the game. Every State - every leader - is under unprecedented pressure with:

- inflation at previously unheard of levels;
- an energy crisis that means dwindling supply and rising costs
- food shortages meaning a real possibility of global famine;
- the social impact on the most vulnerable in our societies - only just coming out of a two-year pandemic - growing heavier by the day;
- fluctuating markets fuelling uncertainty;
- Russian disinformation pushing populism, nationalism and isolationism,

EU membership will not come overnight, we have always been honest about that, but candidate status will mean an impetus for an unprecedented reform agenda, it will mean access to programmes, and most significantly it will mean that the hope of those suffering in Ukraine, of those worried in Moldova, will translate into tangible progress. And we should be clear this is not simply some symbolic act, this will strengthen the EU and it will strengthen Ukraine and Moldova. It will show our people, as well as theirs, that our values matter more than rhetoric. That hope can mean results. And other countries waiting - those in the Western Balkans - also need to see hope lead to results. It is time.

War fatigue

It would also be wrong to assume that public opinion will continue to drive our actions in support of Ukraine or to underestimate the extent of Russian influence. We have to acknowledge that inflation-fuelled fatigue is setting in, that we are seeing many cases where the resilience of our citizens to the social and economic impact is waning and we need to push back harder. We need to counter the Kremlin's narrative not feed into the fears it spreads.

It is not the Green Deal pushing prices up or causing inflation to hover at close to 20% in some cases. It is not our sanctions that impact purchasing power. It is because the Kremlin wants more influence. It is because they want the comfort of vassal States. It is because they think democracy is a frail concept and weakens States. We know the opposite is true.

Climate and Energy

It would be a wrong decision to backslide on our medium and long-term climate goals. We absolutely need to break free from Russian energy, end European energy islands and secure our energy independence - what is strategic autonomy without it? - Equally, we cannot pushback a promise we made to a generation. It is about security as well as the environment. So my appeal is to ensure that immediate, short-term measures do not become the new normal in the medium-term.

Inflation, Social and economic impact

It would be a wrong decision to dismiss concerns on rising costs and inflation as a passing phenomenon or to assume it will not get worse. In many States we have not reached the peak yet. We need a steady, clear

and united approach that shows that we are all in this together. There is no one-state solution to the social and economic impact we are facing. Nothing should be off the table.

Sanctions and aid to Ukraine

Concurrently, we need to speed up delivery of military, humanitarian and financial aid to Ukraine. And we need to advance on sanctions.

Sanctions are a useful tool if implemented properly, and here we need to start the next package, close loopholes of extend were necessary. And it *is* necessary, because Russia is gambling on us blinking first. They bet that the pressure that they fuel within our societies will break our unity and they will be able go back to the future of iron curtains and spheres of influence. Of "us" versus "them", of "might is right". Europe has come too far to let that happen now, and pressure is growing on Russia too.

Food security

We must push back against false and cynical Russian propaganda blaming the looming food security crisis on Ukraine's actions or EU sanctions. The blame is squarely with the aggressor.

Here, let me commend the efforts of the Commission and Member States concerning the Solidarity Lanes initiative. We should increase them and address logistical bottlenecks.

Migration

We are facing the East but we cannot underestimate the impact this war will produce on our southern neighbourhood too. We need to be ready to help and we cannot be caught unaware when migration flows pick up again. I am worried that we will soon be facing a situation that is entirely predictable and yet one that will once again find us entirely unprepared. There are options on the table that could help us in this reality of omni-crisis, with vulnerable people used as pawns in geo-political games.

Future of Europe

On the Future of Europe: We must be ambitious. We can enhance the Union's capacity to act in vital areas such as health, energy, defence and fundamental values. The Parliament is ready to act as our two resolutions attest to. They should not be ignored. The next natural step is having a

convention. I know some here are reluctant, but this is how we can keep the conversation on our EU project going. We must be ready to look at how we operate and see where we can do better.

The European Parliament stands ready to face our challenges. And is ready to do it with jointly with the Institutions and Member States.

Source: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20220616IPR33216/grant-eu-candidate-status-to-ukraine-and-moldova-without-delay-meps-demand

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20220623IPR33715/it-s-time-eu-candidate-status-will-strengthen-ukraine-and-europe-metsola



European Commission

EU Cohesion Policy: Partnership Agreement with Finland for 2021-2027

12 May 2022 Brussels

The Commission adopted its Partnership Agreement with Finland, laying down Finland's €2 billion cohesion policy investment strategy for the period 2021-2027. The funds will support Finland in promoting economic, social and territorial cohesion, with a focus on key EU priorities such as the green and digital transition. The funds will also contribute to the country's competitive, innovative and sustainable growth.

A smarter economy

In line with regional smart specialization strategies, about €523 million will improve research and development (R&D) and innovation. Investments will also foster digitalisation, accelerate small and medium-sized businesses' growth and increase productivity. Sustainable urban development is strategically connected to smart specialization and implemented through a so-called ‘Integrated Territorial Investment' focused on a common goal of innovative eco-systems in 16 urban areas. This approach will also allow Finland to support successful projects such as the ‘RANTA' or ‘Climate Street' projects, improving concretely the life of its citizens.

A greener economy

Finland has planned for 40% of its investments to support the green transition. The funds will be used to improve energy efficiency, climate change adaptation and resource efficiency. Moreover, measures to address and mitigate the negative social, economic and environmental impacts of the halving of peat production in Finland will be introduced. The funds will therefore support the country's goal to achieve carbon neutrality by 2035.

More social cohesion

The European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) in Finland will promote social cohesion, with about €580 million allocated to this goal. The ESF+ will help people in Finland to invest in their skills and lifelong learning, the adaptability of the workforce and the employability of those facing

difficulties to enter the labour market. The ESF+ will also help tackle material deprivation, intergenerational poverty and social exclusion.

A resilience fisheries and aquaculture sector

The European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) for Finland will focus on a resilient fisheries and aquaculture sector, with strong support for innovation and investment and adaptation to climate change. The Finnish EMFAF programme will also continue the positive experiences and further reinforce the Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs) - bottom-up initiatives that aim to sustainably develop the local fisheries sector - with stronger national and regional cooperation.

Innovation and skills programme for Finland 2021-2027

The greatest share of the Finland Partnership Agreement will improve innovation and skills, with a dedicated programme worth €1.4 billion. It will support different priorities, ranging from R&D and innovation to greening the economy, enhancing sustainable mobility in the northern sparsely populated region, combating material deprivation, and improving the employment of young people. This programme will also dedicate more than 8% of the European Regional and Development Fund to sustainable urban development.

The Partnership Agreement with Finland paves the way for cohesion specific operational programmes to be implemented on the ground. It covers 3 programmes, of which two cover the whole country and one concerns the Åland region. Moreover, it establishes the eligibility and implementation of the Just Transition Fund in the regions with the most carbon-intensive industrial facilities to help them face the challenges of the transition to climate neutrality.

The Partnership Agreement also reflects Finland's strong commitment to the coordinated use of the cohesion policy funds with the Recovery and Resilience Facility.

Under cohesion policy, and in cooperation with the Commission, each Member State prepares a Partnership Agreement, a strategic document for programming investments from the cohesion policy funds and the EMFAF during the Multiannual Financial Framework. It focuses on EU priorities, laying down the strategy and investment priorities identified by the

Member State, and it presents a list of national and regional programmes for implementation on the ground, including the indicative annual financial allocation for each programme. The Partnership Agreement with Finland is the fifth agreement for the 2021-2027 funding period, following those of Greece, Germany, Lithuania and Austria.

Source: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_2886



European Commission

European Commission EIB Agreement on Enable Further Investments Worldwide

10 May 2022 Brussels

Today, the European Commission and the European Investment Bank (EIB) signed an ambitious Guarantee Agreement through which the European Commission will support up to €26.7 billion of EIB financial operations to enable crucial public investments in sectors like clean energy, digital and transport infrastructure, health and education over the next seven years, rolling out Global Gateway worldwide.

Commissioner for Neighborhood and Enlargement, Olivér Várhelyi, said: "*Today's landmark guarantee agreement with the European Investment Bank will enable us to finance the implementation of our Economic and Investment Plans for the Western Balkans, the Southern and Eastern Neighborhood. We launched these three substantial investment plans to support their post-COVID socio-economic recovery and to speed up the closing of their development gap with the EU. We worked together with the region to identify the key bottlenecks of their development. Although each investment plan is individually designed for the region it aims to build faster and more sustainable road, rail and digital connections, decarbonise the economies, ensure safe energy supplies, create sustainable business opportunities and put conditions in place that make the young generation stay in the region. In the next years together with the EIB we will be able to deliver in the Western Balkans, the Southern Neighbourhood, and the Eastern Partnership countries these much needed and awaited investments, bringing growth and jobs directly and on a larger scale than ever before.*"

Commissioner for International Partnerships, Jutta *Urpilainen, said: "The EU's new Global Gateway strategy will help us connect Europe and partners across the globe, with investments in sustainable and high-quality infrastructure. Now more than ever, we need stronger partnerships, supported by ambitious financial instruments such as today's guarantee agreement. We count on the European Investment Bank as our key strategic partner as we roll out the Global Gateway strategy. Through our*

powerful tool, the European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus, our guarantees will leverage billions of investments – both from the public and private sectors. This is Team Europe in action, working together to create a transformational impact for our partners."

President of the European Investment Bank, Werner Hoyer, said: "*The agreement signed today is an essential tool to implement the Global Gateway strategy and support a green, digital and inclusive recovery worldwide. Today's challenges require unprecedented levels of investment. Partnerships, multilateral cooperation, and mobilizing private capital are preconditions for success. With EIB Global, our new arm for international partnerships and development finance, we aim to enhance the impact of EU investments across the world, through closer cooperation in a "Team Europe" approach. This will help us all enhance the impact of Europe's efforts in all our partner countries*."

This Guarantee Agreement will be the largest guarantee agreement signed in the framework of the new European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus ("EFSD+"), established by the NDICI – Global Europe regulation. It will support the green and digital transitions in EU partner countries and the implementation of the Global Gateway strategy, including the Global Gateway Africa-Europe Investment Package.

This Guarantee Agreement will enable the EIB to finance the implementation of key investments identified in the EU's Economic and Investment Plans for the Western Balkans and the Southern and Eastern Neighborhood regions. More than two thirds of this guarantee cover is planned for investments in enlargement and neighborhood countries. It will also contribute to financing Ukraine's post-war reconstruction. The remaining part will be used for EIB loans for projects in Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean.

The EFSD+ Guarantee Agreement for EIB sovereign lending represents an important part of the implementation of the new European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus ("EFSD+") established by the regulation Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument ("NDICI – Global Europe"), which entered into force in June 2021. The EFSD+ also covers the pre-accession countries.

The EFSD+ is NDICI- Global Europe's integrated financial arm supplying financing capacity in the form of budgetary guarantees, loans, equity, technical assistance and grants worldwide to support investments supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and promoting socio-economic and environmental resilience in partner countries, with a particular focus on the eradication of poverty.

Investment support through the EFSD+ includes up to €40 billion of guarantee cover from the EU's External Action Guarantee. Of this amount, €26.725 billion is the part of the External Action Guarantee covering investments by the EIB.

The rationale behind the EU budgetary guarantee is to cover the risk of EIB loans outside the EU and thus enable the Bank to finance projects in support of EU policy in higher risk environments. The EU guarantee enables the EIB to undertake public sector investments such as rehabilitation and construction of railways, roads, schools, hospitals or water and sanitation infrastructures, in riskier environments outside the EU.

With the EU guarantee, the EIB will be able to provide loans with longer payback periods, grace periods, and low interest rates. The financing operations undertaken by the EIB thanks to the EU guarantee will respond to EU policies and specific policy priorities of EU cooperation with the partner countries.

In addition to this guarantee specifically reserved for the EIB, the Commission will provide under the EFSD+ open architecture up to €13 billion guarantee cover until 2027. This will be deployed by a range of implementing partners, i.e., International Financial Institutions (including the EIB) and European development finance institutions aiming to mobilize private investments in support of our partner countries achieving the SDGs.

Source: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_2870



European Commission

EU Cohesion Policy: Partnership Agreement with Germany 2021-2027

19 April 2022 Brussels

The Commission adopted today its Partnership Agreement with Germany, laying down Germany's investment strategy for more than €20 billion in cohesion funding for the period 2021-2027. The cohesion funds will continue to support German regions in promoting economic, social and territorial cohesion, supporting key EU priorities such as the green and digital transition. The funds will contribute to the country's competitive, innovative and sustainable growth.

The Partnership Agreement covers 3 cohesion policy funds: the European Regional and Development Fund (ERDF); the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+); the Just Transition Fund (JTF); as well as the European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF).

The Partnership Agreement with Germany paves the way for 52 operational programmes to start implementation on the ground: 31 regional, 2 national and 19 INTERREG programmes. Each of the 16 federal states (“Bundesland”) in Germany manages a separate ERDF and ESF+ programme, with the exception of Lower Saxony, which has opted for a combined ERDF/ESF+ programme. Moreover, two programmes will be implemented at the federal level: the EMFAF programme and a separate nation-wide ESF+ programme.

The new Partnership Agreement also covers the eligibility and implementation of the JTF in the regions which are most negatively impacted by the climate transition.

Finally, the Partnership Agreement reflects Germany's strong commitment to the coordinated use of the cohesion policy funds with the Recovery and Resilience Facility.

A greener economy

Priority will be given to strategic investments in energy efficiency and the reduction of carbon emissions to achieve climate neutrality in Germany by 2045. Support will also go towards climate change adaptation, including funding for flood protection, urban mobility initiatives, environmental protection and pollution reduction. Finally, almost 6% of the European Regional and Development Fund (ERDF) will contribute to the protection of biodiversity. Germany intends to use over half of its European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) budget to support environmental objectives.

More research and innovation

Germany has planned to dedicate 30% of its investments from the Partnership Agreement to support research and innovation in enterprises, digitalisation, increased competitiveness and smart specialization.

More social cohesion

Germany will strongly promote social cohesion, with more than 30% of overall funds being allocated to this goal. In particular, the ESF+ will support inclusive and high-quality vocational education and training, including apprenticeships, as well as lifelong learning. It will also support the development of socially inclusive services, such as improving the employability of disadvantaged groups and creating assisting services for older people like care and companionship services. Moreover, the funds will help the workforce and businesses in growing more resilient by supporting investments in upskilling and reskilling to create a climate-neutral, more digital and inclusive society. Particular attention will be given to measures in the field of social inclusion, for example combating child poverty and the integration of migrants and refugees, including those fleeing Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Involving local citizens in developing projects on the ground

5% of investments will be dedicated to territorial development instruments, aimed at developing integrated territorial strategies, especially in urban areas. In particular, the Land Saxony-Anhalt is engaging local action groups to design and deliver strategies, decision-making and resource allocation and thereby strengthen deprived rural and urban areas. Ten German Länder will support “Fisheries Local Action Groups' ' within the

EMFAF programme, which will support the resilience and local initiative of coastal and inland communities dependent on fisheries and aquaculture.

Under cohesion policy, and in cooperation with the Commission, each Member State prepares a Partnership Agreement, a strategic document for programming investments from the cohesion policy funds and the EMFAF during the Multiannual Financial Framework. Focussed on EU priorities, it lays down the strategy and investment priorities identified by the Member State and presents a list of national and regional programmes for implementation on the ground, including the indicative annual financial allocation for each programme. The Partnership Agreement with Germany is the second agreement for the new funding period, following the one for Greece.

Source: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_2442