



A EUROPEAN HOME FOR UKRAINE

Perspectives on the EU's Enlargement Challenge
from Berlin, Paris, and Warsaw



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ABOUT CEPA

CEPA's mission is to ensure a strong and enduring transatlantic alliance rooted in democratic values and principles with strategic vision, foresight, and impact. Through cutting-edge research, analysis, and engagement, we provide innovative insight on trends affecting democracy, security, and defense to government officials and agencies; we help transatlantic businesses navigate changing strategic landscapes; and we build networks of future leaders versed in Atlanticism.

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Cover: Ukraine and EU flags. It marks 32 years of independence of Ukraine and embodies the EU's unflinching support to this brave nation. Credit: @EU_Commission via Twitter https://twitter.com/EU_Commission/status/1694624251628638300/photo/2

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Executive Summary

- Ukraine's leadership has proclaimed the country ready for rapid accession to the European Union (EU) after it received candidate status in June 2022. The EU is widely expected to open negotiations with Kyiv in December 2023, but for most EU capitals, Ukraine's accession remains a long-term vision.
- Ukraine will have considerable work to do to meet EU conditionality. These adjustments will in time shape the ultimately political accession process.
- Large member states, including Germany, France, and Poland, will play crucial roles in this process. They can help ensure that Ukraine's European perspective does not bog down in bureaucracy and procrastination.
- In Germany, centrist leaders will need to maintain and expand the consensus in support of Ukrainian accession and overcome fears of the political, economic, and social stress that enlargement will place on the cohesion of the EU.
- In France, it will be crucial to maintain the current momentum toward bolstering the EU as a bulwark against Russian aggression and to emphasize the role that Ukraine can play in strengthening Europe as a political project.
- In Poland, Warsaw's leadership of the transatlantic pro-Ukraine coalition will need to be defended against Eurosceptic forces that threaten to undermine the country's relationship with Germany, France, and the European Commission, as well as corrode European solidarity as a whole.
- Across the three capitals, it will be imperative to tackle key structural challenges head on, including reform of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy and other funding programs, qualified majority voting, and the broader distribution of power. The imperative of solidarity with Ukraine can overcome local political recalcitrance.



Photo: Women hold Ukrainian and Polish flags during a demonstration of solidarity with Ukraine on day 352nd of Russian invasion on Ukraine. Krakow, Poland on January 25, 2023. Credit: Photo by Beata Zawrzel/NurPhoto

Introduction

Ukrainian society is united in its choice to join the European Union. In August of 2023, over 80% of Ukrainians were in favor of membership.¹ Ukrainian leaders have repeatedly expressed the ambition to accede to the EU within two years regardless of whether the country has won the war against Russia. Europe, too, is virtually unanimous in its support for Ukraine's European future. However, all parties must remain wary of underestimating the height of the hurdles they must clear.

In October 2023, the European Commission is expected to produce an assessment of Ukraine's performance on the preconditions for accession, with a decision to be made by December about whether to open negotiations. Most discussions of Ukraine's path to EU accession center on the challenges of reform and diplomacy facing Kyiv. Ukraine must focus on transforming institutions to suit the demands of the common market, adopting or approximating *acquis communautaire*, and opening and closing negotiating chapters, each of which can be blocked by any member state.

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Ukrainian Public Support for EU Accession

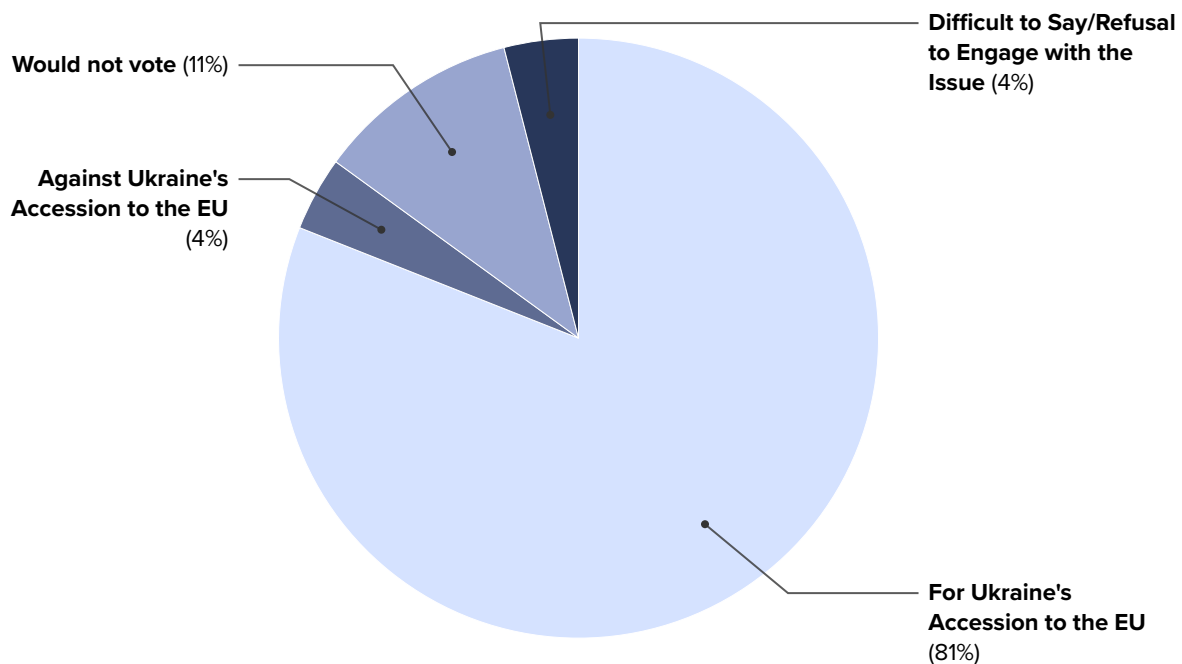


Chart: Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA) • Source: Statista

No less daunting, however, are the challenges the EU faces if it admits Ukraine. Doing so will pose an unprecedented test of Europe's political, social, and economic cohesion. With a population of more than 40 million, Ukraine would become the EU's fifth-largest member state, behind Spain and ahead of Poland. It would also be the EU's poorest member state by far, with pre-war gross domestic product (GDP) per capita of less than half of that of Bulgaria. Without reform, adding Ukraine to the bloc would turn current beneficiaries of EU funding into net contributors.

Accommodating Ukraine will thus require large-scale reforms to the Common Agricultural Policy, distribution of structural and cohesion funds, allocation of seats in the European Parliament, portfolios in the European Commission, qualified majority voting practices, and the current necessity of unanimity on foreign policy. These reforms may be long overdue, but the fact that they remain unresolved only underscores their political, economic, and social complexity.

The legal requirements for EU accession have always depended on adherence to the fundamental political, legal, and market principles of the EU, and rightly so. Achieving compliance with these conditions takes time for a country that has had vastly different legal, political, and economic structures. However, lack of a clear timeline is more likely due to the absence of political consensus on the desirability and feasibility of swift accession for Ukraine among EU member states. Any

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member state can block the opening of accession negotiations or the negotiations themselves if no compromise is reached on the benchmarks embedded in negotiation chapters.² However, the political nature of decision-making on EU enlargement is a double-edged sword. While allowing member states to project their national interests on the accession process, it may also undermine the candidate's trust in the merit-based nature of accession mechanisms. For example, membership negotiations with Turkey have been stalled since 2005. The accompanying decline in trust between Ankara and Brussels exemplifies the dynamic described. Another example is the growing dysfunction in EU relations with candidate countries in the Western Balkans.

Ensuring that the necessity of reform does not become an obstacle to the imperative of membership for Ukraine will require political will on the part of EU members. The positions of large member states such as France, Germany, and Poland will prove crucial both in shepherding Ukraine into the EU, and in shaping the EU that emerges as a result. With that in mind, this paper analyzes the opinions and perspectives in Paris, Berlin, and Warsaw on Ukraine's EU accession, identifying the pivotal points that will need to be addressed by politicians and opinion leaders in the three capitals and across the EU.

Requirements for Ukraine to Join the EU

Political and Economic Criteria	Copenhagen Criteria	Membership Process
<p>Stability of Institutions: The country should have stable democratic institutions, including the rule of law, respect for human rights, and protection of minorities.</p> <p>Functioning Market Economy: The country should have a viable market economy with the ability to cope with competitive pressures and market forces within the EU.</p> <p>Capacity to Adopt EU Laws: The country must have the ability to implement and enforce EU laws and regulations, known as the "acquis communautaire."</p>	<p>Political Criteria: The country should have institutions that guarantee democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and the protection of minorities.</p> <p>Economic Criteria: The country must have a functioning market economy, as well as the capacity to cope with the pressures of EU competition and market forces.</p> <p>Adoption of the Acquis: The country must demonstrate the ability to adopt and implement EU laws and regulations.</p>	<p>Application: The country interested in joining the EU submits an official application to the European Commission.</p> <p>Screening: The European Commission assesses the candidate country's readiness and compatibility with EU standards through a comprehensive screening process.</p> <p>Negotiation and Alignment: If the candidate is deemed eligible, negotiations are conducted to align the country's laws and regulations with the EU acquis. This involves various chapters, such as agriculture, competition, justice, and others.</p> <p>Accession Treaty: Once negotiations are successfully completed, an Accession Treaty is drafted and signed by the candidate country and existing EU member states.</p> <p>Ratification: The Accession Treaty needs to be ratified by the candidate country's parliament and by the national parliaments of the existing EU member states.</p> <p>Joining the EU: Upon ratification by all parties, the candidate country becomes a full member of the European Union.</p>

Germany: Zeitenwende in Slow Motion

Berlin and the War

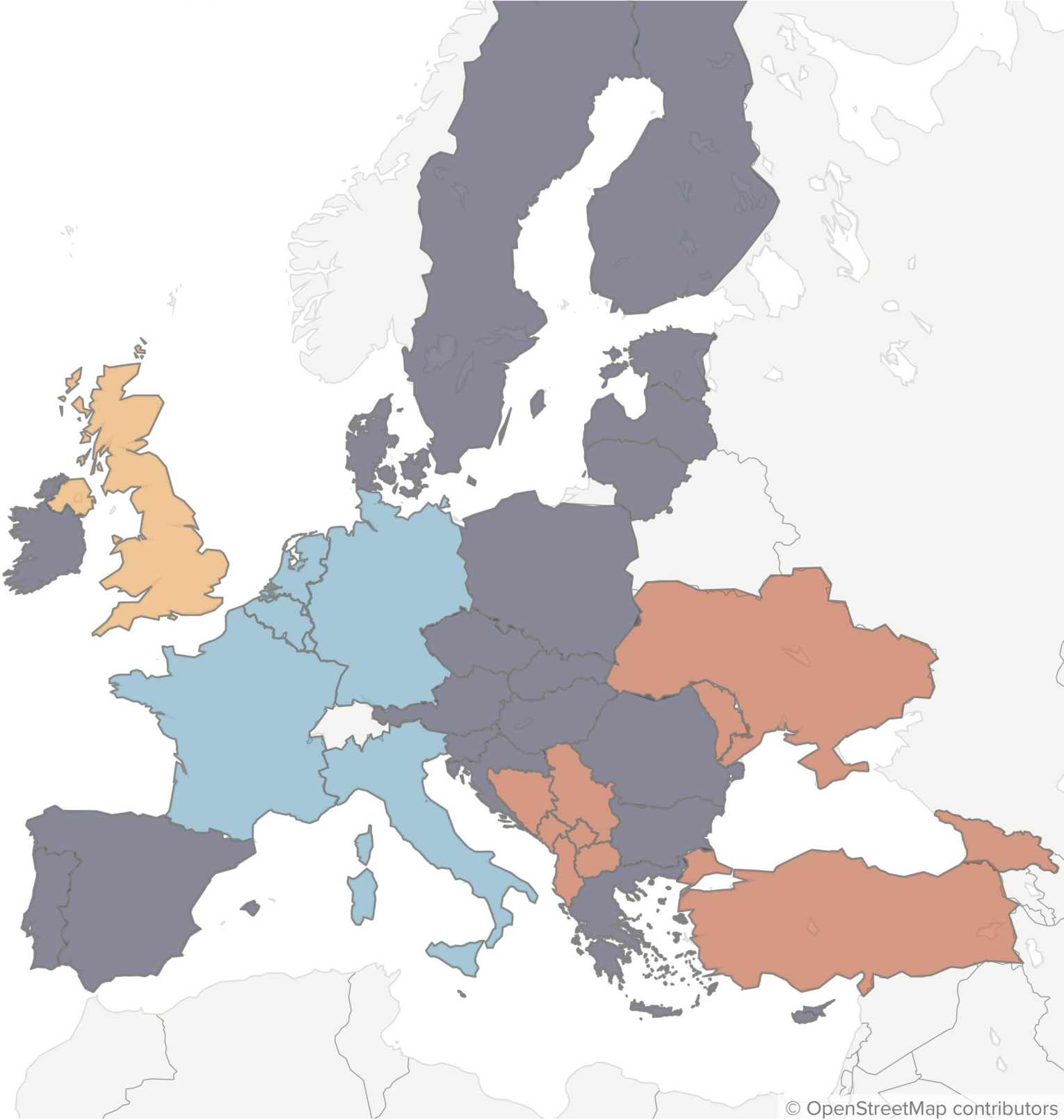
Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, German support for Ukraine's EU candidacy has been steadfast, as has Berlin's recognition that accession is unlikely to occur in the near future. This exemplifies the tension among German leaders between the moral and geopolitical imperative to support Ukraine and concerns about the political, fiscal, and social stresses that enlargement will place on the EU, and on Germany itself.

Thus, while the German foreign policy community accepts the need for a European perspective for Ukraine, it emphasizes that Ukraine must meet the same strict conditionality imposed on every other candidate. However, many in Germany harbor fears of the kind of democratic backsliding witnessed in Hungary and Poland. As a result, Berlin aims to walk a credibility tightrope, understanding that the unsuccessful integration of Ukraine would undermine Europe's integrity from within, while the failure to make good on Europe's promise to Ukraine would undermine Europe's international credibility and resilience in the face of authoritarian threats.

These considerations are compounded by Germany's unique position within the European Union. As bottlenecks and blockages arise in Ukraine's accession marathon, Germany's voice is likely to prove decisive. German leaders are aware of this responsibility, and take it seriously, but this is inevitably balanced against the exigencies of domestic politics.

Ukraine's European perspective has become a core political issue within Germany itself. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz is cautious in his support, while the Greens, led by Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock, advocate for a stronger line. Parties on both the far left and far right, meanwhile, force the centrist coalition to tread a careful path. As the German consensus on Ukrainian accession slowly crystallizes, then, it may need to be Germany's European partners that push the process forward, while Berlin ensures coherence at the rear.

European Union Member States and Candidates



Member State Founding Member Candidate Withdrawn

Map: Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA) • Source: Enlargement of the European Union

Berlin and Ukraine's EU Candidacy

In German discussions about Ukraine's prospects of EU membership, there is a lingering perception that Ukraine cannot credibly satisfy the conditions for accession in less than 10 years. Skeptical voices within the foreign policy community emphasize Ukraine's spotty record on reforms and concerns about the government's capacity to implement them during the war.³ Another widespread argument is that before the war, Ukraine did not have a good reputation with investors due to acutely perceived corruption risks.⁴

The European Commission has listed steps that Ukraine needs to take to open accession negotiations. They include the following:

1. Reforming the Constitutional Court
2. Vetting the integrity of the candidates for the High Council of Justice and the selection of candidates to establish the High Qualification Commission of Judges of Ukraine
3. Strengthening the fight against corruption, in particular at the highest levels, as demonstrated by a credible track record of prosecutions and convictions and completing the appointment of a new head of the Specialized Anti-corruption Prosecutor's Office
4. Undergoing anti-money laundering and law enforcement sector reforms
5. Limiting the excessive influence of oligarchs in economic, political, and public life
6. Aligning Ukraine's legislation with the EU Audiovisual Media Services directive
7. Finalizing the reform of the legal framework for national minorities and adopting implementation mechanisms⁵

In terms of a criterion-based approach for candidate countries, satisfactory performance on these seven steps should be sufficient to open accession negotiations. However, German policymakers are likely to voice additional criteria when evaluating Ukraine's performance on initial conditions. These may include the need for assurance that many vacant judicial appointments in Ukraine will be filled with adequate candidates and that Ukraine will continue its decentralization reform process.

While the reform of the Constitutional Court and the appointment of an anti-corruption prosecutor are viewed as important, the German diplomats we interviewed in spring 2023 for this paper expressed concerns about other aspects of the integrity and independence of the judiciary — including the many vacancies. The lack of



Photo: The EU Commission and Germany as G7 Presidency invite you to an expert conference on the reconstruction of Ukraine in Berlin. Credit: Federal Government/Hartmann

appropriate candidates to fill those positions is seen as a sign of weakness of the rule of law.⁶

The legal framework for the protection of national minorities in Ukraine is another aspect of reforms viewed with some doubt. As of May 2023, Ukrainian civil society had evaluated the legal framework as nearly ready and overall aligned with the standards of the Council of Europe.⁷ However, the German opinion of the law, passed in December 2022, is that it does not provide sufficiently comprehensive protection of national minorities, which may be cause for Hungary and potentially also Romania to express concerns prior to deciding whether to open accession talks.⁸ As can be seen from the independent opinion published by the Venice Commission,⁹ the law does have a number of significant shortcomings, and Hungarian state media have already labelled it as inadequate.¹⁰

Similarly, German Federal Foreign Office officials have determined that decentralization reform remains incomplete. Further, the current legal status of Ukrainian municipalities has serious flaws — for example, municipalities have no

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legal personality that would allow them to sue the central government in a court of law.¹¹

Though the Greens are the most pro-Ukraine group in the Bundestag, there remain concerns within the party about the ways in which decentralization reforms have become partially endangered by wartime centralization.¹² In particular, there is concern about the high-handed way Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's administration fires and appoints mayors and transfers control from civil to military governors in regions far from the current front line.

Another significant argument frequently brought up by members of the German foreign policy community is the lack of guarantees that Ukraine, if admitted, will adhere to all democratic principles, and will not backslide. The examples of Hungary or Poland are referenced regularly,¹³ even though both countries' regressing on the rule of law began long after EU accession due to social and political processes specific to those countries.

Skepticism about Ukraine's chances of preserving democratic principles after the war is expressed as either concern about growth of nationalism due to the war, or through references to corruption as a pervasive state of Ukrainian society. Media articles seemingly focused on current anti-corruption efforts often include references to "centuries-old" traditions of corruption and include sensational headlines presenting Ukraine as deeply corrupt.¹⁴ The link between the development of strong public institutions and economic recovery on the one hand and democratic resilience on the other is a dynamic reminiscent of Germany's experience after the Second World War, but is seldom brought up in discussions of Ukraine's European future. This leaves the field open to speculations about culture, though vaguely defined, as the cause of potential democratic backsliding. At the same time, the foreign policy community distances itself from such arguments, noting that it is the German media and public that persist in perceiving Ukraine as culturally less predisposed toward democracy and rule of law.¹⁵

The actual cost of supporting Ukraine through EU cohesion policies may also impact the German position. Germany is a major net contributor to the EU; however, its domestic concern about regional inequalities is growing. In recent years, the government adopted a policy directed at raising the socioeconomic level of less developed German regions.¹⁶ Policymakers view such inequalities as significant risks to long-term political stability in the country.

Based on these factors, it is not surprising that the cost of enlarging Europe is a concern. Certain German think tanks and the federal Chancellery are mindful of the fact that Ukraine, apart from the cost of its recovery, will be also the most expensive

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item on the enlargement agenda.¹⁷ An academic article title captures this mood: “The EU’s Next Eastward Enlargement Will Be Complicated and Expensive.”¹⁸

A topic much less discussed in the German expert community is the price of not having Ukraine in the EU. Without the incentive or legal underpinning provided by accession criteria, the cost of a Ukraine in limbo between Europe and Russia could arguably be higher, considering the corruption risks and their potential cost in the context of Ukraine’s recovery, or the cost of political instability, which might lead to multiple security risks (e.g., flow of light weapons to criminal structures in Europe).

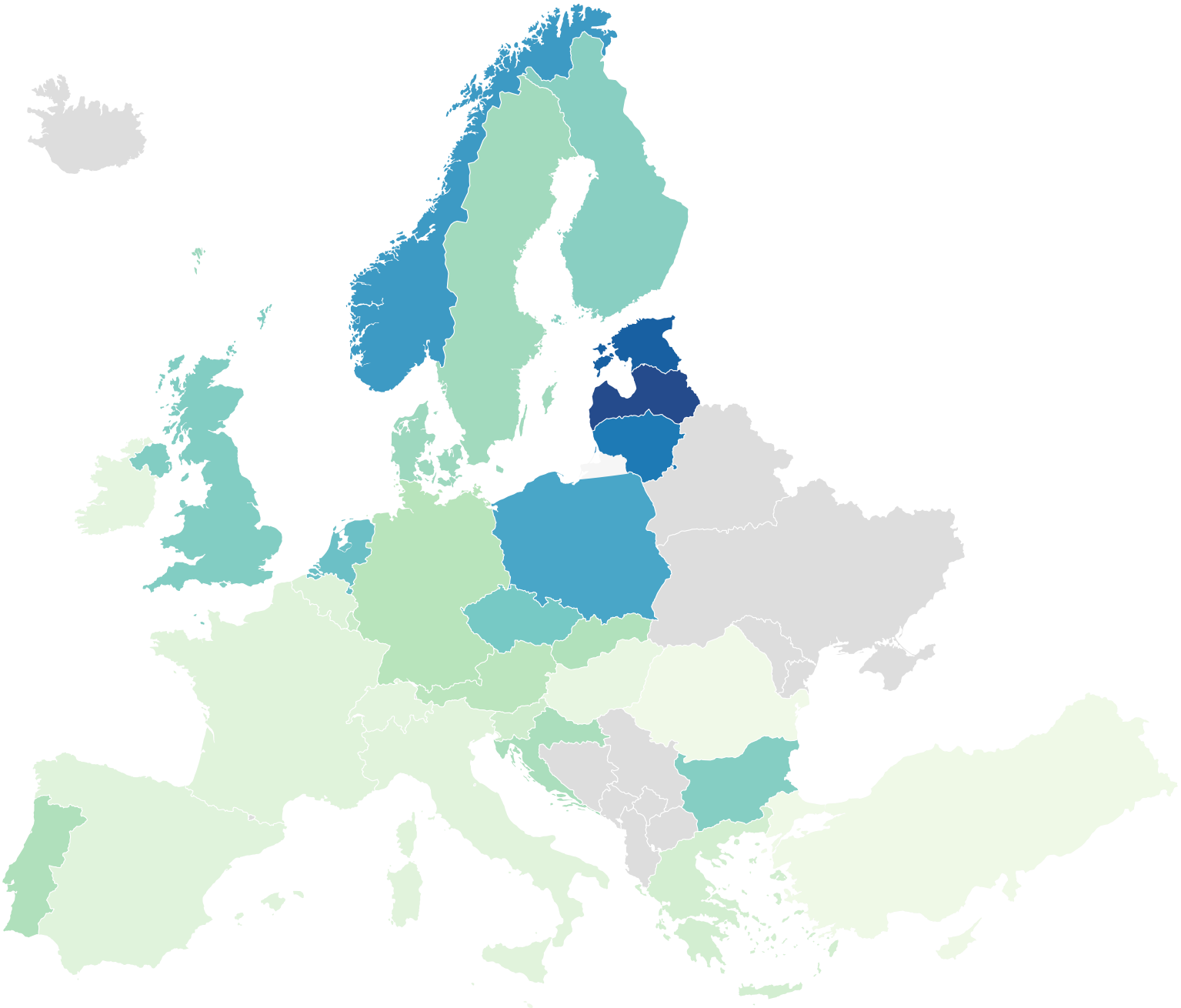
Berlin and the Politics of Accession

Germany has been the “engine” of EU enlargement since 2004, while France has dragged its feet and many smaller member states have been skeptical at times. However, German enthusiasm for enlargement comes with proposals of strengthening the EU’s institutions. When considering Ukraine’s membership, there has been less initial enthusiasm, and more insistence on EU reform.

The issue of Ukraine’s potential EU accession is significant for Europe’s geopolitical unity, but the country’s sheer size poses challenges for the EU’s political governance. Ukraine, with a population of more than 43 million, is considerably larger than Poland at over 37 million. Its GDP per capita before the war was less than US \$5,000 compared with an average of \$33,000 in the EU and \$12,000 in the EU’s poorest member state, Bulgaria. This would mean that with Ukraine joining, many countries now benefitting from EU funds would become net contributors. It is a widely held conviction in Brussels, Berlin, and Paris that a new round of enlargement is not possible without an institutional reform of the EU that would safeguard the EU’s political coherence.¹⁹ Scholz is one of the key proponents of linking reform to enlargement. In his programmatic speech at Charles University in Prague in August 2022, he stated that the EU should be ready to accept new members on its eastern flank, including Ukraine. He also signaled that for the enlargement to happen, the question of EU reform could not be ignored.²⁰ This would include a change from the principle of unanimity among member states to the principle of qualified majority voting, at least in decisions on foreign policy and taxes. In May 2023, Scholz repeated the same point in his address to the European Parliament.²¹

However, with Northern and Eastern European member states strongly opposing a reform of the EU’s founding treaty,²² it is unlikely that a reform of voting in European institutions will succeed anytime soon. For the time being, saying that EU enlargement may happen only after EU reform is tantamount to saying there will be no new members in the foreseeable future.

Total Bilateral Commitments as a Percentage of GDP



Map: Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA) • Source: Kiel Institute for the World Economy

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The EU reform argument aside, Germany's position on Ukraine's EU membership is reserved, pledging support but withholding commitment to a clear timeline.

Mirroring delays on the delivery of heavy weapons to Ukraine, Berlin has been slow to commit to Ukraine's candidate status. Partners within the German governing coalition differ in their outlook.

Two of the three governing coalition parties, the Social Democrats and the Greens, have direct responsibility for foreign policy in the Chancellery and in the Federal Foreign Office, respectively. Ukraine happens to be the issue on which the two do not always see eye to eye.

- Scholz of the Social Democrats is, according to many German experts, firmly grounded in *realpolitik* and moves slowly and reluctantly where he sees risk (this has been the case with his assent to Ukraine's and Moldova's candidate status, but also with weapons shipments). Apparently, on the eve of his first visit to Kyiv during the war, Scholz remained opposed to promising support for Ukraine's candidacy, and only changed his position during the trip.²³
- Baerbock of the Greens is an active proponent of values-based foreign policy and has pushed for more support to Ukraine. Her Greens colleagues in the Bundestag, Anton Hofreiter, head of the Committee on European Union Affairs, and Robin Wagener, head of the German delegation to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly, have both been outspoken in their support of Ukraine. The Greens have at times expressed frustration with the slow pace of the chancellor's decision-making on Ukraine. Their voter base is younger, more socially liberal, and predominantly lives in the industrialized cities of the west, where value politics is in demand.²⁴ Nevertheless, they also do not see Ukraine fast-tracking to EU membership — not so much due to the requirements of EU reform, but mainly due to the principles of merit-based conditionality.²⁵
- The third coalition partner, Free Democrats (FDP), historically advocated for economic ties with Russia (in 2017 FDP Chief Christian Lindner underscored the importance of Germany and the European Union maintaining good ties with Moscow). However, things changed with the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. FDP supported a “European perspective” for Ukraine as early as spring 2022.²⁶ The same declaration made clear the link between Ukraine's future chance to join the EU and the reform of European institutions. The FDP is the party known most (on a par with the Christian Democrats) for its pro-industry lobbying; its voters are primarily self-employed independent professionals, senior managers, and civil servants.²⁷ FDP foreign policy figures are cautious regarding the timeline for Ukraine's accession.

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- The most established opposition party, the Christian Democrats, is more outspoken regarding its skeptical outlook on faster accession plans for Ukraine. Its constituency is older and more conservative,²⁸ and its leading figures in national politics stand no comparison with former German Chancellor Angela Merkel and EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in terms of European leadership. Having given their best to European politics, the party's leadership is careful to maintain a cautious and moderate stance on most EU issues. Its most notable politician, European Parliament Foreign Affairs Committee Chairperson David McAllister, has made it clear that the accession process should go through all the ordinary steps and not have a fast track.²⁹ Daniel Caspary, a colleague in the European Parliament, reiterated this point in June 2023.³⁰
- The greatest challenge to pro-Europe and pro-Ukraine politics is presented by the far-right Alternative for Germany (AFD) and the extreme-left Die Linke (The Left). Both parties capture the voters most dissatisfied with the economic, social, or cultural developments of contemporary society, those who see themselves on the losing side in the globalized world. This profile coincides largely with the audience targeted by the Russian anti-Western narratives. AFD's visible figures

German Public Response to the Statement "Ukraine Should Join the EU When it is Ready"

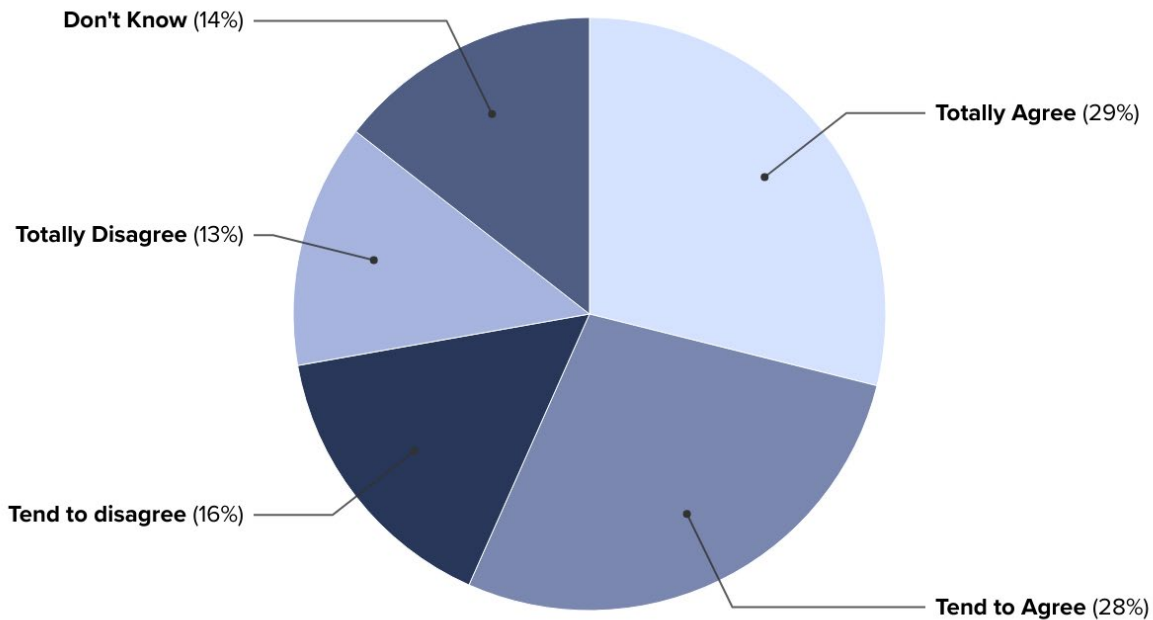


Chart: Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA) • Source: Eurobarometer

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maintained close ties with Russia before the war, similar to other European far-right parties,³¹ and some of them continued to cooperate with Russia during the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, including trips to occupied areas.³² Die Linke also number some pro-Russian politicians among its leadership, notably Sahra Wagenknecht, who organized “peace rallies” protesting the delivery of arms to Ukraine.

The last two parties hold fast to what used to be the mainstream of German foreign policy, a firm belief that peace and trade with Russia are essential to the German national interest. The formula *wandel durch handel* (“change through trade”), which mainstream politicians used to share, reflected the dominant belief that economic exchange between Russia and the West was beneficial. In practical terms, this translated not only into major projects increasing Russian economic and political influence in Europe, such as the Nord Stream pipeline, but also into positions for retired German politicians on the boards of Russian state companies. War in Ukraine changed this pattern, dislodging Russian sympathies from the mainstream. Recent surveys indicate that the era of trust in cooperation with Russia among the German public is by and large gone,³³ but not among the AFD and Linke.

Berlin and the Road Ahead

Despite the arguments against fast-track accession for Ukraine, parts of the German foreign policy community see the necessity of offering Ukraine realistic goals for European integration while the political consensus about the timeline for its full accession remains unclear.

Two proposals for such intermediate goals have been put forth in Germany: one to create a partnership for enlargement and the other to give Ukraine access to the four freedoms enjoyed by EU members — the free movement of persons, services, goods, and capital.

Kai-Olaf Lang of the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik and Piotr Buras of the European Council on Foreign Relations put forth the proposal to develop a partnership for enlargement. It would offer a closer partnership based on three pillars: single market integration and the reconstruction of Ukraine, a reinforced commitment to energy security and a climate transition, and stronger political cooperation on security matters.³⁴

Gerald Knaus, the founder of the European Stability Initiative, issued the second proposal. It would make Ukraine’s access to the four freedoms conditional on the country’s performance against fundamental criteria within a clear timeframe, and not on closing every negotiation chapter, which would require the political will of every member state.³⁵



Photo: "Pulse of Europe Cologne at Sunday, March 26th 2017," © Superbass / CC-BY-SA-4.0 (via Wikimedia Commons)

Given its more far-reaching nature, the "four freedoms" proposal would be potentially attractive for Ukraine.³⁶ However, the German Federal Foreign Office apparently does not yet believe that Ukraine's full participation in the single market could be made possible before all negotiation chapters have been closed,³⁷ and doing so would certainly take longer than a couple years.

The consensus on the perspective of EU membership for Ukraine has been building slowly in the German foreign policy community, and there is still no clear vision of a timeline for Ukraine's accession. Cautionary voices in the federal Chancellery and at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, in particular, tend to focus on the risks of a faster accession process, citing both concerns for Ukraine's progress on the rule of law and the cost of its recovery and potential claim on EU cohesion funds.

German policymakers view internal socioeconomic challenges in German regions as risks to long-term political stability. Geopolitical needs such as the reconstruction of Ukraine and its future share of EU cohesion funds present competing pressures on resources.

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At the same time, there is an increasing realization that both Ukraine's and Europe's geopolitical needs call for Ukraine's closer integration into EU structures sooner rather than later. There is also a widespread understanding that the EU accession provides a legal framework for more transparent investment in Ukraine's recovery.

Given that the European Commission is due to make its assessment of Ukraine's readiness to begin accession talks before December 2023, cautionary arguments voiced by the German foreign policy community may have a bearing on the political decisions following this assessment. The areas likely to provoke most scrutiny are reform of the judiciary, legislation on national minorities, and the fate of decentralization in Ukraine.

Maintaining robust support for Ukraine's reforms and EU accession perspective is crucial for the EU's credibility and future resilience in the face of authoritarian threats. A prolonged and uncertain accession process for Ukraine may pose additional risks to European unity, as member states on the EU's eastern flank are in favor of a relatively fast accession for Ukraine. To avoid the risks to Europe's unity and Ukraine's European aspirations, EU member states must agree on concrete proposals regarding intermediate goals for Ukraine's European integration, and politicization of the accession process should be avoided. Germany can play a central role in ensuring consensus on these points but is not likely to initiate the proposals. It is up to other member states, more enthusiastic about Ukraine's accession, to spearhead this process.

France: From a Pas de Deux with Moscow to a Tango with Kyiv

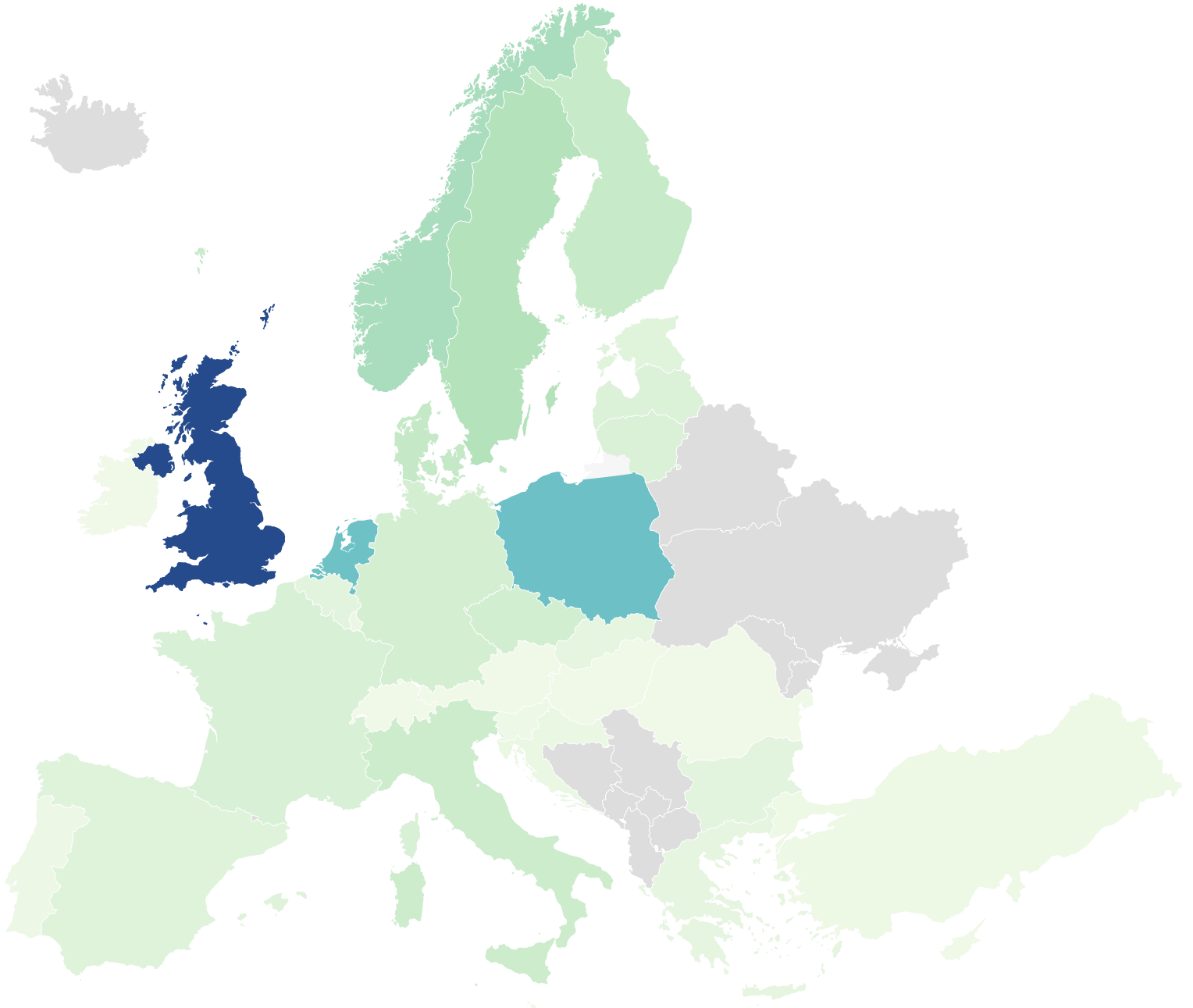
Paris and the War

Russia's all-out war against Ukraine has instigated a fairly radical revision of France's fundamental foreign policy orientation. Today, Paris has become one of Kyiv's most determined supporters, both in terms of military and financial assistance. France also supports, in principle, Ukraine's European Union and NATO membership. France, no more than the US or Germany, does not seem to have the total defeat of Moscow as a clear war goal. Instead, it believes that some form of arrangement with Russia will have to be found one day. This remains a future prospect because no Western power has a long-term vision of Russia. However, it is becoming less and less likely that such a prospect will emerge as long as Russian President Vladimir Putin remains in power.

In some respects, French foreign policy remains inspired by three fundamental considerations.

- The first is the preeminence given to Europe. This was the major theme of French President Emmanuel Macron's 2017 campaign and his major point of differentiation from his competitor, far-right leader Marine Le Pen. It should also be noted that Macron is the French head of state, perhaps even the European leader, who has devoted the most speeches to Europe.
- Macron's second preoccupation is to assert the least possible dependence on the United States, while reaffirming the virtues of the NATO alliance, which may have led him to make some misleading remarks on his return from his trip to China, even if they were corrected.³⁸
- Last but not least, Macron is more focused on taking into account the concerns of countries in the Global South than other European powers. This is another reason why he stands out from Washington. Macron is increasingly acting as a kind of spokesman for these countries and the issues they face, as seen in June 2023 with the conference on financing for development (Summit for a New Global Financial Pact). Further, he has a personal preoccupation with dividing the world on strategic issues.³⁹

Military Aid to Ukraine (Billion USD)



Map: Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA) • Source: Kiel Institute for the World Economy

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New foreign policy orientations avert the risk that Russian revisionist power will exploit these traditional features. Macron once promoted a strategic vision of Europe involving a “grand design” that would have involved integrating Russia into a European security architecture. However, the French leader’s new realism about the reality of the Russian regime avoids this trap. Kyiv replaces Moscow, so to speak, as the key partner in a new architecture of this kind. Macron’s erstwhile reluctance to risk alienating the Global South by targeting Moscow too much in his criticism has given way to a concern with Russian efforts to destabilize swaths of Africa.⁴⁰

Finally, Macron now believes that disagreements with the White House must not risk undermining the West’s consolidated position toward Russia in its war of extermination against Ukraine. Notably, in his speech in Bratislava at the GLOBSEC security conference on May 31, 2023, and in his actions over the month that followed, he distanced himself from Washington. This was not because the US is defined by “neo-con warmongers,” but because Washington was too reluctant in its support for Ukraine’s integration into NATO.⁴¹

Paris on Ukraine’s EU Candidacy

Two presuppositions characterized Paris’s traditional position on the construction of the European Union, even among its most fervent supporters.

The first, more implicit than clearly expressed, was that there was a kind of tacit hierarchy among European countries. On the one hand, the founders of institutional Europe, at that time the European Economic Community, considered themselves as the guarantors of a correct reading of Europe, initially perceived as essentially Western. On the other hand, newly formed countries, particularly those from Central and Eastern Europe, were expected to join the club with equal rights, but with a lesser degree of legitimacy. The “real Europe” was supposed to be led by the Franco-German couple, supported by the rest of the founding countries, while the “other Europe” had to conform to principles defined by the others.

The second assumption was based on a mistrust of enlargement. Europe’s main objective was to continue “deepening,” which meant achieving ever-greater policy integration. However, the more that enlargement progressed, the more difficult it became to avoid reinforcing divergences and conflicts, and the more complicated the governance of the EU became. The proponents of this line, largely inspired by figures such as former European Commission President Jacques Delors and former Commissioner Pascal Lamy, focused on economic and institutional considerations, and much less on a geopolitical vision of European realities. Many, including Macron, considered that accelerated enlargement risked killing off common European policies, and the EU’s institutions should therefore be revised before going any further. Certain recently acceded countries, notably Hungary, Poland, Cyprus, Malta,

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and Bulgaria, struggled to comply with common rules. This raised concerns about the consequences of the arrival of states still far from having adopted the rules of the *acquis* in terms of justice and the rule of law, in particular the fight against corruption.

Macron had hitherto taken this cautious line and expressed a degree of skepticism toward further enlargements to such an extent that he was wrongly accused of making the European Political Community a substitute for further enlargements. He also espoused geostrategic concerns, and ultimately had to abandon France's traditional position on the two dimensions discussed above.⁴² The conservative vision of a small, Western-centric Europe was over.

Here too, the Bratislava speech marked a turning point that many had long been waiting for.

Referring to the accessions already obtained and those to come, Macron now refuses to speak of enlargement, preferring instead the term "reunification" of the European continent, once divided by the fall of the Iron Curtain. Explicitly criticizing his predecessor Jacques Chirac, who asked the new countries to "shut up," thereby revealing a vision of these countries as "less European" or less legitimate than the founding countries, Macron now considers that the countries of Western Europe should have listened to them instead.⁴³ Yet, on September 1, 2022, he himself was still talking about "warmongering" countries, in a rather transparent allusion to some of these states. In the wake of the 2008 NATO Bucharest Summit decision to refuse to grant a Membership Action Plan, he also criticizes the lack of effective security guarantees for the countries left by the wayside, namely Georgia and Ukraine.

Second, and most importantly, Macron believes that the accession processes for Ukraine, Moldova, and the Western Balkans should go ahead without waiting for institutional reform, even though he clearly states that this will soon become essential. In several of his previous speeches, he spoke of geopolitical Europe only in the abstract, but he now seems to be making it the core of his discourse.

Admittedly, under its presidency of the Council of the European Union (January 1-June 30, 2022), France obtained candidate status for Ukraine and Moldova, after having initially been reluctant, if not outright opposed to it. However, France also appears to be one of the most fervent supporters of establishing EU membership for these countries as soon as possible, but without any fast-tracking or exceptions made to the *acquis* requirements.

It is in this new context that Emmanuel Macron should push forward with his ambition to reform the European Union. This goal will probably not require a revision of the treaties, which is always a perilous exercise with uncertain results. This is the case



Photo: French President Emmanuel Macron and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.
Credit: © Soazig de la Moissonniere / Presidency of the Republic via Flickr.

for everything that corresponds, de jure or de facto, to what is known as enhanced cooperation, particularly defense, new technologies, and infrastructure. Without calling into question areas in which the EU can still go further, such as social standards and the environment, Macron has always shown his desire to strengthen partnerships with one and, if possible, several European states at every opportunity. This has been the case, for example, with the European Intervention Initiative.⁴⁴

For a long time, France has been aware of the need to change the voting arrangements in certain areas of foreign policy, moving from unanimity across 27 EU member states to qualified majority voting. Nine out of the 27 countries, including the founding members, have already declared themselves in favor of this move, but most of the smaller states, notably those of Central and Eastern Europe, oppose the plan, fearing that they would be marginalized in important votes.⁴⁵

This proposal resurfaced divisions within the EU and revived the specter of a “Franco-German condominium.” It was also hampered by memories of perceived complacency in these countries prior to Russia’s all-out war against Ukraine.

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However, the change in tone on this issue, particularly in France; Hungary's blocking of certain decisions on sanctions; and the fear that, after certain elections, other countries might join the *Putinverstehers* camp, could lead critics of the proposal to soften their positions.⁴⁶

Already, during the Czech presidency of the EU, positions have shifted, notably on sanctions and human rights issues. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy Josep Borrell have also made statements to this effect, echoing the belief that the EU's credibility depends on foreign policy decisions being taken quickly and without obstruction. Although this issue will not be settled immediately, further enlargement, which is also desired by the countries most opposed to changing the rules, is now uncertain. Many points of negotiation on the modalities now appear to be open: the possibility of a veto by a limited number of countries; a vote of constructive no confidence; an opt-out clause; already applied in several areas; and so on.⁴⁷

It could also be argued that one of Macron's major preoccupations, namely the weakness of certain countries' commitments to the rule of law and fundamental rights, will also find a new topicality with the prospect of Ukraine's accession. Kyiv's accelerated compliance with such indispensable fundamentals as judicial independence, media freedom, and the fight against corruption should give Macron and the commission strong arguments for greater intransigence toward EU countries that are taking liberties with these principles (notably Hungary, Bulgaria, Malta, Cyprus, and Poland, and, to a certain extent, Greece and Italy). Perhaps Macron privately thinks that Ukraine's membership will have favorable effects on the vision of Europe that he defends.

Paris and the Politics of Accession

Moscow's large-scale attack on Kyiv led Paris to revise its policy toward Russia even more thoroughly. Despite popular misconceptions about long-standing French friendliness toward Moscow, the reality is that relations did not begin to develop in earnest until the presidencies of Jacques Chirac and Nicolas Sarkozy, both of whom developed fairly good relations with Putin. Sarkozy was the president who was ultimately the most pro-Russian — after his presidency, Sarkozy also had contracts with a Russian company, was well paid for a speech to the Russian sovereign wealth fund in 2018, and is constantly full of praise for strongmen, notably Putin — but he paradoxically was also the one who reintroduced France into NATO's integrated command.⁴⁸ By contrast, relations were rather cold under François Hollande, who had to cancel the contract to supply Mistral warships to Russia and who was prepared to strike Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's forces in Syria in 2013 after the chemical attacks on Ghouta.

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The sort of reset Emmanuel Macron led from 2017 to 2022 was marked by a strong silence in the face of the massive crimes committed by Putin’s Russia, but without many concrete consequences in terms of cooperation. His joint proposal with then German Chancellor Angela Merkel and then Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz for an EU-Russia summit, presented to the June 2021 European Council, was ill-advised and therefore rejected, but that is no longer the case today. Macron’s attempts to encourage dialogue with Moscow divided the Europe he had set out to unify — and failed to produce any tangible results.

Macron’s speech at GLOBSEC on May 31, 2023, however, underscored a dramatic shift in the French position. Deliveries of heavy weapons to Ukraine intensified, with production increasing considerably and Macron determined to continue in this direction. Whereas in the months following February 2022, he had declared that there could only be peace talks when Ukraine so wished, he now asserted that the conditions set out in the 10-point peace plan presented by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy had to be met, including the complete liberation of the occupied territories, punishment for the crimes committed, and payment of war reparations.

French Public Response to the Statement “Ukraine Should Join the EU When it is Ready”

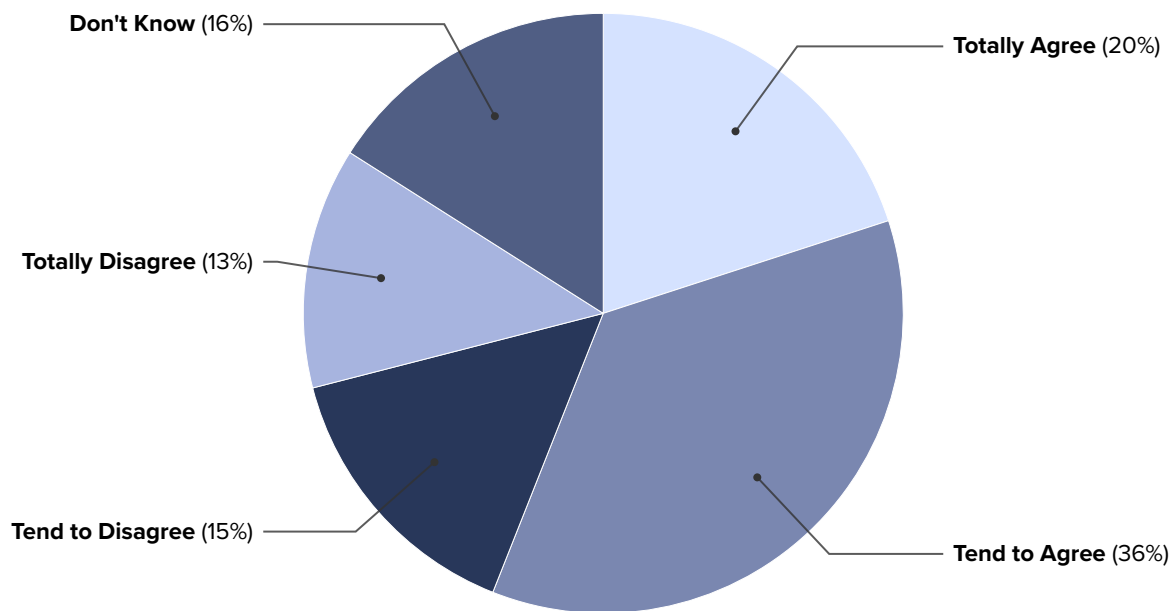


Chart: Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA) • Source: Eurobarometer

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Macron also insisted on the impermissibility of a frozen conflict and the preservation of Russian-occupied zones and reaffirmed the need for bilateral and/or multilateral security guarantees for Ukraine. While he continues to believe that Europe must continue to deal with Russia for reasons of geography, he is perfectly clear on the unacceptable nature of a regime that continues to threaten its neighbors and prevent them from choosing their alliances. Lastly, following his subtle messaging in Bratislava, Macron made official his support for NATO membership of Ukraine in June 2023. This marked a reversal of France's position expressed at the 2008 Bucharest Summit, which, together with Berlin, had blocked the allocation of a Membership Action Plan to Ukraine.⁴⁹

Although Macron said little about the NATO summit in Vilnius on July 11 and 12, 2023, the outcome of which was certainly not what he had expected, the announcement just before the summit of the delivery of SCALP long-range missiles was seen as a concrete symbol of this change.⁵⁰ These orientations, as recently clarified, also imply a revision of the French conception of the future of European construction.

This risk must be seriously considered. It is well known that both the extreme right, comprised of figures such as Marine Le Pen, Eric Zemmour, and Nicolas Dupont-Aignan, and the radical left, including Jean-Luc Mélenchon, have a long-standing complacency toward Russia. For different reasons, these two extreme wings of the French political spectrum are also very hostile to European integration and NATO. However, this is also the case for conservatives (les Républicains) who, along with the extremes, condemned the delivery of SCALP missiles to Ukraine. The same is true of the Communist Party, which, although less virulent in its stance, continues to call for negotiations with Moscow.

However, it is interesting to note that, as a recent opinion survey shows, supporters of all political camps, including extreme ones, declare that they “do not like Russia” by a large majority, with the average standing at 85% of French people.⁵¹ This poll, which reveals a strong distance between the voters of extreme parties and their leaders, could in some ways be reassuring. Nonetheless, as with any poll, it should be borne in mind that not all the questions asked are of equal importance to voters, and this may not be the decisive factor in their votes compared with domestic political issues, which are expected to be more important to them.

Given the uncertainties of France's 2027 presidential and parliamentary elections, it is not out of the question for the far right to come to power either in the presidential election, or in the parliamentary elections, where it could become an auxiliary force in building a government.

Finally, there is another risk to be reckoned with: the one made possible by Article 88-5 of the European Constitution, which stipulates that the accession of new

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members to the European Union that become candidates after July 1, 2004, must be the subject of either a referendum or a motion adopted in the same terms by the National Assembly and the Senate by a three-fifths majority. Such a majority cannot be relied on with any certainty on the day when the European Council approves accession of countries such as Ukraine, Moldavia, and certain Balkan states. Nor can anyone prejudge the outcome of any future referendum, especially as turnout is traditionally low and voters are sometimes more inclined to vote for or against the government than to answer the precise question posed.

Paris and the Road Ahead

Macron's change of direction cannot mean that it is destined to last for the next 10 years, when crucial decisions will have to be made — despite the massive support for Ukraine both in public opinion and in the current French parliament (e.g., recognition of the Holodomor as genocide, designation of the Wagner Group as a terrorist entity).

France, Germany, Austria, and Hungary have been perceived as weak links in Europe's opposition to Russia's criminal dictatorship. France now appears to be one of the strongest European countries in terms of support for Ukraine. After having nurtured unreasonable hopes as to the possible evolution of Russia, Macron seems to have understood that the language of total firmness was the only coherent and acceptable one. If in 2027 the far right or conservative right comes to power, certain political, economic, and intellectual elites sensitive to Moscow's arguments could once again be in a position to set the pace.

France, however, is not totally unique within alliance, as such a risk exists in other countries, including the most powerful among them—the United States.

Now that Emmanuel Macron has significantly raised awareness of the Russian threat, he must realize that it is currently a unique moment to ensure that this effort is not swept away at the end of his mandate. Perhaps this moment also exists on the other side of the Atlantic. For the French leader, this does not mean abandoning France's traditional ambitions in terms of European leadership, let alone universalism — quite the contrary. To realize such ambitions and attempt to create a point of no return, Macron could commit to the following seven actions:

1. After the failure of the NATO summit in Vilnius, lead the initiative to give immediate security guarantees to Ukraine, notably by deploying troops under the European banner if this seemed impossible within the NATO framework
2. Give stronger support to all initiatives launched in favor of recognizing Russia's crime of aggression against Ukraine, and advocate more openly for indicting all Russian leaders on this charge

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3. Take the lead in establishing a long-term strategy toward Russia, including long-term transformation of the regime
4. Emerge as the leading country in the fight against corruption linked to foreign influence, the misuse of business secrecy, and the protection of whistleblowers
5. Regain the political initiative in the fight against political interference and Russian influence outside Ukraine (France has long been an all-too-resigned witness to this in several African countries; this presupposes, however, that it is willing to talk more openly about the need to defeat Russia not only in Ukraine, but also in the other European countries concerned, as well as in Syria and Africa)
6. Strengthen its positions, still somewhat timid today, on seizing the assets of the Russian central bank and Russia's oligarchs, and show more precise ambitions in the medium term on Russia paying war damages
7. Take the initiative, in terms of foreign policy, with retaliatory measures against certain countries, supposedly allies, active in circumventing sanctions against Russia

For France, acquiring the means to defeat Russia more quickly and decisively is essential in terms of both its international and domestic policy ambitions. Internationally, Paris has not yet sufficiently emphasized the human rights dimension, even though it is vital in terms of achieving justice and its foreign policy objectives. If Russia is not defeated, France's far right may seize the opportunity offered by the 2027 elections to advance its pawns. The French political landscape today is such that it could succeed.

Poland: Healing Open Wounds

Warsaw and the War

Since the onset of the Russian invasion in February 2022, Poland has emerged as one of the staunchest European supporters of Ukraine. While Ukrainian-Polish ties are at an all-time high, the two countries' history is riddled with violence. Their blood-soaked past has been addressed publicly, most recently through the 18th anniversary of the Volyn massacres,⁵² when Zelenskyy and Polish President Andrzej Duda participated in an ecumenical service in Lutsk.⁵³

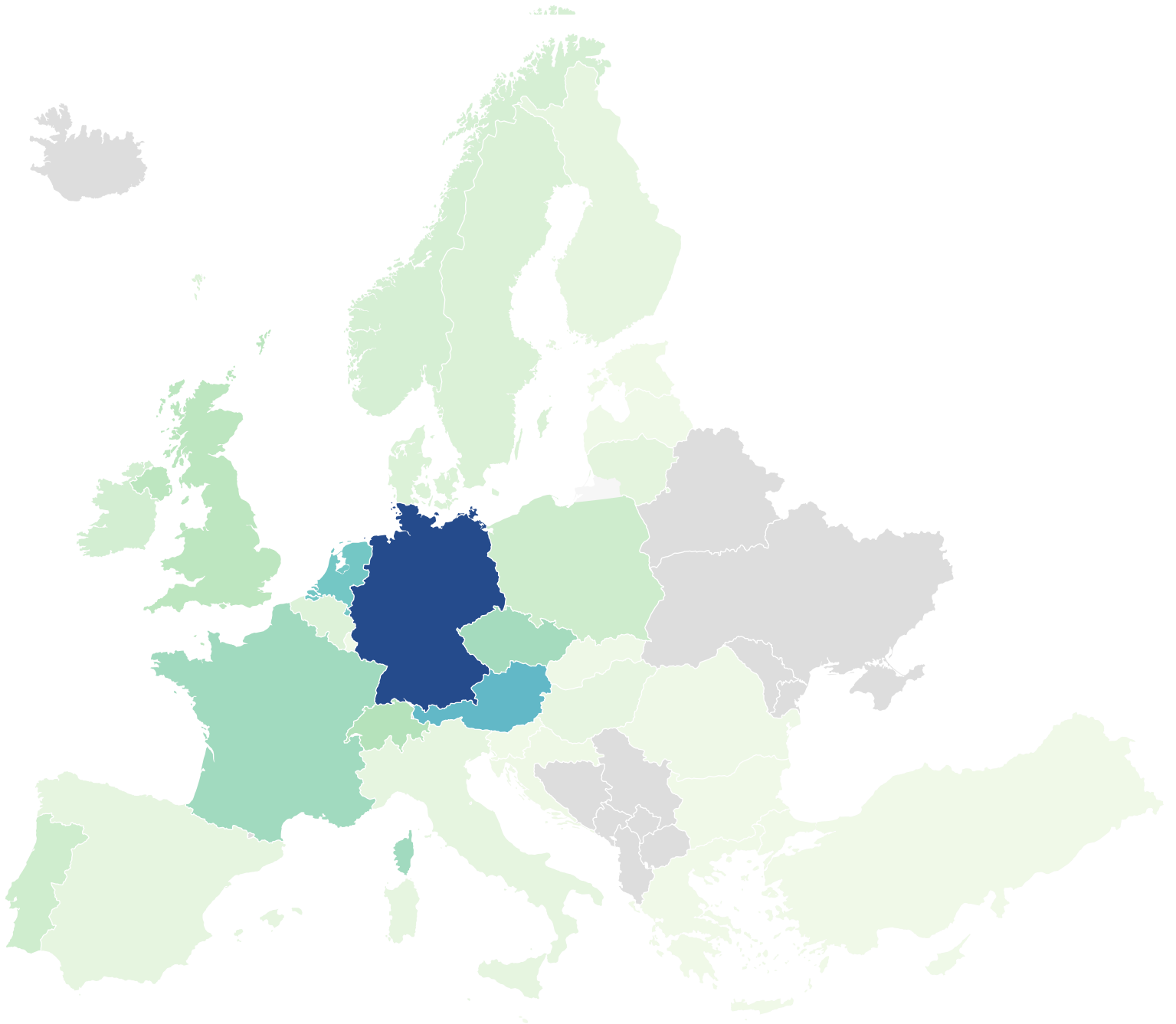
President Duda has acknowledged that there “are still open wounds,” but notes that standing united with Ukraine is the only way to send a message to the Kremlin that Ukraine and Poland will never be divided again.⁵⁴ Now, Duda's government is setting the bar for Ukrainian support. The wide-ranging assistance provided in the first 16 months of the war was particularly tangible in three areas: humanitarian, military, and international advocacy.

From day one of the war, Poland has been the main hub for humanitarian assistance to Ukraine. Within hours after the fighting began, in an unprecedented move, the Polish government opened its borders to all refugees wanting to leave Ukraine, regardless of nationality or legal status. As noted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, between February 2022 and May 2023, almost 9 million Ukrainian refugees crossed the Polish-Ukrainian border. Of these, around 1.6 million found permanent refuge in Poland, which in absolute numbers made the country the largest European reception center.⁵⁵

Polish citizens orchestrated as many or more of the refugee reception activities as the authorities did. They have showcased unprecedented solidarity and compassion by taking most of these refugees into private homes. The Polish government also enacted several initiatives that have helped 1.5 million Ukrainians receive social security and health insurance and allowed over 200,000 children to enter the Polish education system.⁵⁶ By the end of 2022, the Polish government estimated that the total humanitarian aid for Ukraine, including food and medicine sent as well as costs related to hosting refugees from Ukraine, exceeded 1.5% of Poland's GDP.⁵⁷

Second, Poland has been one of the most forward-leaning military assistance providers to Ukraine. Within the first 12 months of the war, the country donated over 250 Soviet-made T-72 battle tanks, becoming the first Western state to supply Ukraine with armored fighting vehicles.⁵⁸ Further, Poland was the driving agent behind the initiative to donate Western-made main battle tanks. After the success of

Humanitarian Aid to Ukraine (Million USD)



Map: Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA) • Source: Kiel Institute for the World Economy

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the initiative in February 2023, Poland was the first country to deliver a full company of German Leopard 2A4s. Additionally, Poland has supplied Ukraine with artillery and rocket systems, including 18 Krab self-propelled howitzers and over 20 Grad multiple rocket launchers.

Most importantly, Poland was the first state to provide Ukraine with fighter aircraft, pledging as many as 14 MiG-29 jets with four already delivered. Consequently, the Polish government has been campaigning to supply Ukraine with Western-made fighter jets (F-16s) since early spring 2022, hoping to organize a wider Western coalition that could provide Ukraine with an air force capable of matching and defeating its Russian counterpart. Poland continues to be a military hub for Ukraine not only by helping to deliver weapons but also by providing medical assistance to wounded Ukrainian soldiers, maintaining and repairing damaged Ukrainian equipment, and gearing up its own war production to meet Ukrainian needs. As of January 2023, the German Kiel Institute estimated Poland's military commitments to Ukraine at \$2.622 billion, or 0.44% of its GDP, which meant the country ranked third in the world in terms of military assistance, just after the United States and United Kingdom.⁵⁹

Polish Public Response to the Statement “Ukraine Should Join the EU When it is Ready”

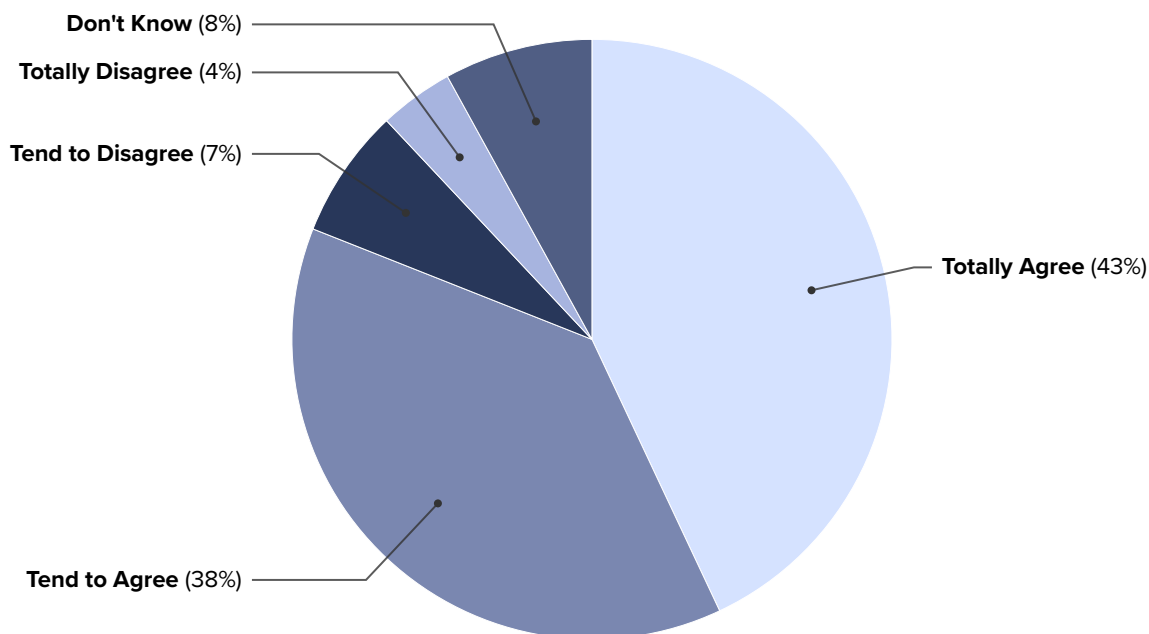


Chart: Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA) • Source: Eurobarometer

Warsaw and Ukraine's EU Candidacy

Poland has arguably been Ukraine's most vocal advocate in Europe, condemning Russia's aggression and calling for strong international action to support the state's sovereignty and territorial integrity. This includes driving the support for 11 packages of EU sanctions against Russia, organizing donor conferences, and calling for the creation of a war tribunal to prosecute the numerous war crimes committed by the Russian state and its army. There have also been many important symbolic gestures in support of Ukraine, setting an example for leaders in the West. Most prominently, as the invasion began, Poland's ambassador to Ukraine, Bartosz Cichocki, was the only high-ranking foreign diplomat who remained in Kyiv despite Russia's direct assault on the city. Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki also led the first delegation into Kyiv, only three weeks after the fighting began, taking with him Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala and Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Janša to show European solidarity with Ukraine and present aid packages and initiatives to help the country.

Overall, Poland's support for Ukraine since February 2022 has been unwavering and multifaceted, reflecting the country's strong commitment to Ukraine's security and well-being in the face of Russian aggression. The Polish government's support extends beyond its own leaders, with approximately 80% of the public approving of the Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość; PiS) party's policies toward Ukraine.⁶⁰ The total bilateral commitments including refugee costs, military assistance, and direct financial aid have in the first year of the war placed Poland at the top of the list of donors to Ukraine, with total support corresponding to 2.1% of its GDP. However, Poland's support for Ukraine has not gone unnoticed by Russia. Warsaw is a key target for Russian espionage. Polish authorities have identified and arrested 15 individuals involved in a Russian spy network within Poland.⁶¹ Poland has also experienced two missile attacks on its own soil, both from Ukrainian and Russian missiles.⁶² While both were considered accidents, they reflect the reality of war.

Since its accession to the European Union in 2004, Poland has been a staunch supporter of the organization's open-door policy, especially toward the East. As the largest of the "new" (post-1991) member states, Poland and its consecutive governments have shown aspirations to shape a comprehensive EU eastern policy. The aim of such a policy is first and foremost to strengthen relations with neighboring countries remaining outside of the EU, and under the potential heavy influence of Russia.

Poland wants to offer countries such as Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova a perspective of an ever-closer partnership with the European Union through various initiatives and cooperation frameworks, which would promote democratic reforms in the region. As a consequence of Poland's advocacy efforts, in 2004 the European

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Commission proposed creating a larger European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). The ENP was seen as a key instrument for implementing the EU's "eastern dimension," but also provided a framework for cooperation and dialogue with all EU neighbors, including those in the south.

From the onset, however, the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs criticized the ENP for not providing the EU neighbors with sufficient incentives, such as an accession perspective, to encourage domestic reforms. In addition, as argued by Warsaw, the ENP did not differentiate its approach toward the EU's eastern neighbors (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine) and its southern neighbors (North Africa and Middle East). This played to the disadvantage of the former, which had much larger ambitions regarding integrating with the European Union. As a result, in 2007 Poland and Sweden proposed strengthening the ENP's eastern dimension by introducing the Eastern Partnership initiative.

The Eastern Partnership aims to deepen the EU's engagement with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, offering these six countries a platform for political dialogue, sectoral cooperation, and people-to-people contacts. While the Eastern Partnership does not provide a direct path to EU membership, it aims to bring partner countries closer to the EU by offering opportunities for political association and economic integration, including a promise of joining the EU's internal market ("Norwegian model"). The Eastern Partnership framework has indeed led to progress toward a deeper economic integration of the EU with the region. This includes first and foremost a successful signing by the European Union in 2014 of Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) and association agreements with Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. In the case of Ukraine, the signing was preceded by the Euromaidan revolution, Russia's invasion into Donbas, and the annexation of Crimea. All these events were consequences of Ukraine's determination to integrate with the EU and break away from Russia's sphere of influence.

The question of EU enlargement to the east has reemerged with Russia's invasion of Ukraine. As a response to Russia's aggression, Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia applied for EU membership and two of them — Ukraine and Moldova — were granted such a status on June 23, 2022. With this, Poland reached an important milestone of its eastern policy.

Warsaw and the Politics of Accession

All in all, Poland's firm stance on the need to provide an accession perspective to its eastern neighbors, including Ukraine, derives from both its historical experience and foreign policy doctrine. First, there is a widespread belief among Polish elites that, as proven in the case of the 2004 enlargement, only the promise of EU accession

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can mobilize a candidate state to undertake deep and comprehensive reforms that allow for a full transition from post-communist authoritarianism to democracy. Second, as the argument goes, only EU (and NATO) membership can ensure long-term security, embedding a country into the wider transatlantic security architecture.

The support for an EU open door policy is consistent with the fundamental doctrine of Poland's eastern policy, namely the Giedroyc doctrine. Formed in the 1980s by Polish émigré publicist Jerzy Giedroyc, the doctrine sees the preservation of independence by countries that lie between Poland and the Russian Federation (particularly Ukraine, Belarus, and Lithuania) as fundamental to long-term Polish interests. It thus advocates treating all eastern European countries as equal in importance to Russia and refuses special treatment for Moscow. Finally, Poland's active involvement in shaping its relationship with its eastern neighbors stems from strong historical and social ties with its direct neighbors as well as the fact that there are a significant number of Polish minorities in Belarus and Ukraine and a growing number of Belarusian and Ukrainian citizens in Poland. The support for EU's eastern enlargement is high not only among Poland's political elites, but also among the majority of Polish citizens. A January 2023 Ipsos poll showed that 73% of Poles support Ukraine's membership in the EU, while only 36% of Germans do.⁶³

Consistent with the main direction of Poland's eastern policy, the opening of EU accession negotiations with Ukraine will be a welcome development. The sense in Warsaw is that although enlargement to Ukraine will most likely take place after the war ends, preparations must begin as soon as possible.

Two arguments support this stance. First, the Polish EU accession experience (1994-2004) showed that the enlargement process not only requires a long-term commitment of the candidate country to reform but is a complex and highly technical endeavor of adjusting national law to the *acquis communautaire*. This necessitates both time and a highly competent body of technocrats whose training must begin today. Second, any delays in starting accession negotiations might have a highly unfavorable effect on Ukrainian society, which is engaged in an existential conflict with Russia. The Ukrainians need a positive signal that the EU is serious about the enlargement perspective and that Ukraine is on track to obtaining one.

At the same time, Poland will not challenge the general EU approach that Ukraine must do its homework to join the European Union. Warsaw's living memory of the enlargement process is that it has to be merit-based to make the necessary changes to bid farewell to post-Soviet structures and mindsets. Ukraine must undergo judicial reform, strengthen the rights of minorities, and address the key issues at stake — namely corruption. It also needs to demonstrate determination and openness to reforms. With enough support from key stakeholders, an initiative



Photo: Euromaidan pro-EU rally in Kyiv. Credit: Ivan Bandura, November 26, 2013.

can be established to assist Ukraine in understanding and implementing necessary reforms. Poland can contribute its expertise and support in this process.

There are many challenges, however, which can weaken Poland's role as an effective advocate of Ukraine's membership. First, Poland's right-wing Law and Justice government is itself at odds with Brussels on issues including the rule of law and judicial independence. Since October 2021, the European Commission's infringement process against Poland's judicial reform has cost the country a stunning 1 million euros per day,⁶⁴ yet a resolution of the conflict is nowhere in sight.

The situation will be only worsened by the most recent law (Lex Tusk), which established a special committee to investigate cases of so-called Russian influence inside the country. In early June 2023, the European Commission yet again launched legal action against Poland over the law, arguing that the special committee could be used to target politicians in the run-up to the country's general election, expected to be held this autumn.⁶⁵ The infringement processes naturally undermine Poland's position within the European Union as a reliable member state and its ability to forge strong coalitions on behalf of Ukraine's membership, among other issues.

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In addition, the enlargement of the EU to include Ukraine will most likely necessitate internal changes, which will not always be in line with Warsaw's interest. For example, as Ukraine's sheer size poses challenges for the EU's political governance, Brussels, Berlin, and Paris strongly believe that a new round of enlargement is not possible without an institutional reform of the European Union that would safeguard the EU's political coherence. As for now, however, the general sense in Warsaw is that the current decision-making system functions effectively and should not change. Poland's government particularly opposes introducing qualified majority voting (in place of unanimity) in the area of EU foreign and security policy.

The PiS government also opposes any steps that would indicate a federalization of the European Union, insisting on its vision of a "Europe of nations." In a recent speech in Heidelberg, Morawiecki warned against a "super-state government" that ignores national differences.⁶⁶ The fear in Warsaw is that Germany and France may introduce measures that could put Poland in a difficult position by conditioning their acceptance of Ukraine's EU membership on Poland's agreement to certain terms. At the same time, the country's general election in October 2023 could change the political landscape and bring to power parties with a strong pro-European stance. These parties would be more likely to argue that the current procedure of EU decision-making cannot exist only for Poland and that a qualified majority voting in foreign policy might better serve Poland's interests.

Another sticking point will be the necessary reforms of some EU policies of importance to Poland. The most consequential of these will be the Common Agricultural Policy of which Poland — along with France — is one of the largest beneficiaries. Ukraine's accession to the EU will mean welcoming thousands of farms and farmers who will be subject to the system of EU subsidies, requiring a reform of the entire policy. Ukraine's membership would also most likely mean much less money for Poland from the EU's regional and cohesion policies, money that would be flowing instead to "the new east" of the EU. Finally, Ukrainian and Polish companies will be natural competitors in not only agriculture but also cargo transport markets. The recent grain crisis, with cheap Ukrainian grain flooding the Polish, Romanian, and Slovakian markets, well illustrates the challenge.⁶⁷

To try to alleviate this issue, the EU agreed to allow only Ukrainian grain transit shipments through Poland, restricting land imports. With the suspension of the Black Sea grain deal, Poland is again calling upon the EU for assistance to bolster infrastructure as shipments through Poland and other countries would drastically increase.⁶⁸ Polish society needs to better understand the consequences of EU enlargement to Ukraine, and the government will have to provide leadership. Worth remembering, however, is that similar issues arose around the 2004 "big bang" enlargement (including German and French fears that a cheap Polish workforce



Photo: A woman seen shouting slogans during the demonstration. Ukrainians gathered to protest against Russia's invasion of Ukraine in Istanbul, Turkey. Explosions and gunfire were reported around Kyiv on the second night of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which has killed scores and prompted widespread condemnation from US and European leaders. Credit: Photo by Ibrahim Oner / SOPA Images/Sipa USA

would flood the EU markets) and were remedied by the use of different transition periods and adaptation instruments.

Warsaw and the Road Ahead

Without a doubt, Poland's stance on EU enlargement to Ukraine will be influenced by the upcoming parliamentary elections in October 2023. If PiS retains a majority, one can expect a continuation of the current policy. The general national consensus indicates that Poland will remain an outspoken advocate of enlargement while simultaneously having limited power to influence policy in Brussels. PiS will also be ready to take a confrontational stance during eventual negotiations if and when the interests of any of its largest constituencies, such as farmers, might be in jeopardy.

If the pro-European opposition wins the election, Poland would be more likely to compromise on certain issues, especially related to EU reforms and quality majority voting in foreign policy. With the rule of law spat resolved, a new government would

A European Home for Ukraine

also have more coalition-building power within the EU, which would be good news for Ukraine. The worst-case scenario for Ukrainian accession would be a coalition government between PiS and the far-right, anti-EU Confederation party. The latter openly speaks about a Polesxit and has expressed strong anti-Ukrainian sentiments. Such an election outcome would largely block PiS's ability to remain a staunch EU enlargement advocate.

As of today, however, there is a widespread understanding in Poland that EU enlargement to Ukraine is a historical opportunity to fill the security vacuum in Central and Eastern Europe. Poland will surely have ambitions to play a larger role in pushing for Ukraine's expedited accession to the EU. Warsaw will also continue to argue that maintaining robust support for Ukraine's reforms (including tackling corruption) and EU accession is crucial for the EU's credibility and future resilience in the face of authoritarian threats. A prolonged and uncertain accession process for Ukraine risks fracturing European unity, but most importantly undermines the incredible struggle of Ukrainian people for a Europe whole and free.

Conclusions

“Our future is together.”

That commitment, made by European Council President Charles Michel, marked the extraordinary moment in June 2022 when the EU granted Ukraine candidate status. A year and a half later, the EU is expected to take the next step, opening what will be a long and fraught process of negotiations. As the experience of Turkey and the Western Balkans illustrates only too clearly, there is no guarantee that, once begun, accession talks will lead to a happy conclusion.

To be sure, much of the work that will make European accession a reality will need to be done in Ukraine. Just as much, if not more, will need to be done in Europe itself, however. For all its technocratic content, accession is at its heart a long series of political decisions. Reaching the end of the process requires a persistent vision and the consistent application of political will. With that in mind, this paper has

EU Public Response to the Statement “Ukraine Should Join the EU When it is Ready”

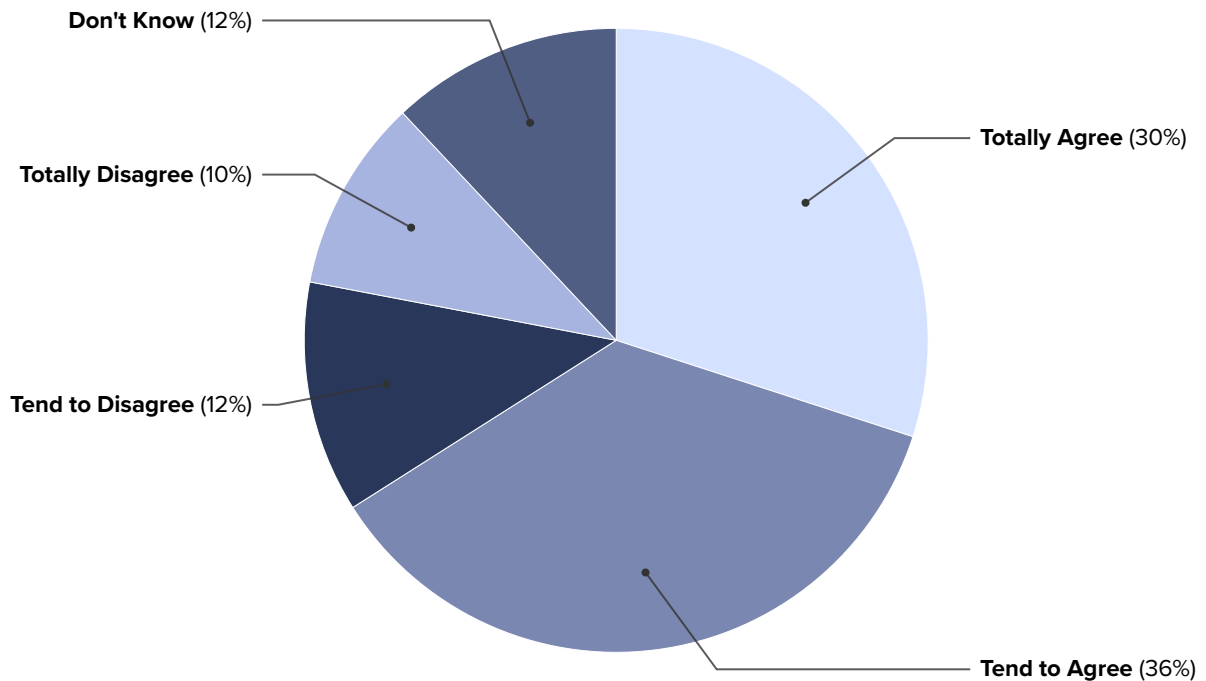


Chart: Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA) • Source: Eurobarometer

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presented the views from Berlin, Paris, and Warsaw, the three capitals most likely to be decisive in the success or failure of Ukraine's EU candidacy.

Germany, France, and Poland share a commitment to Ukraine's European future. Leaders in all three countries acknowledge the importance of a robust and realistic membership perspective for Kyiv both for Ukraine's own future, and for the future of democracy, peace, stability, and prosperity in the broader region.

Further, the German, French, and Polish leaders and foreign policy establishments all recognize the centrality of Ukraine to European security and to neutralizing the threat posed by Russia. While visions of how best to support Ukraine may differ, all three capitals are strategically committed to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, not least as a means of deterring further Russian aggression. Further, all three capitals see European integration as an important pillar of that deterrence. There should be no doubt about the breadth of the consensus in favor of a membership perspective for Ukraine.

That said, all three core EU member states have a sober understanding of the reform tasks facing both Ukraine and the EU itself, if accession is to be a success. Even Ukraine's strongest advocates are not lobbying for fast tracks that would allow Ukraine to circumvent badly needed reforms, including pertaining to upholding the rule of law, protecting human rights, and suppressing corruption.

Those similarities in opinion and outlook, though, coexist with important differences. These include the following:

The question of speed: While Berlin would prefer to see accession take place after a permanent resolution to the war, Paris and Warsaw are more flexible. Neither Paris nor Berlin, however, has the appetite for a rapid accession process, and both are resistant to the sense of urgency expressed by Warsaw.

The question of impact: Germany is worried about the economic, social, and ultimately political impact of a potential influx of Ukrainian workers into the country's industrial and retail sectors, as well as the monetary and fiscal burden of integrating Ukraine under current models of solidarity and mobility. France is more concerned about the impact that integration will have on its agricultural sectors. While Poland shares these concerns, policymakers in Warsaw are more likely to see them as outweighed by the benefits of having a stable neighbor on its southeastern border.

The question of institutions: Paris and Berlin are both eager to push reforms through to the EU's decision-making structures prior to admitting Ukraine to the bloc. They differ over emphasis, however, with Paris privileging maintaining current structures of solidarity, and Berlin more open to reform for the sake of institutional efficiency. Warsaw, meanwhile, is willing to begin integrating Ukraine even as Berlin and Paris



Photo: European Parliament buildings in Brussels lit in the colors of the Ukrainian flag to mark Ukraine Independence Day. Credit: European Parliament

spar over the shape and scope of reforms (and Poland is in any case embroiled in its own struggles over the competencies of the European Commission).

These questions are further complicated by the fact that the pro-Ukraine consensus in France, Germany, and Poland is, while broad, not particularly deep. In both Germany and France, forces on the far right and the far left have consistently opposed the stances that mainstream parties have taken in support of Ukraine and resistance to Russia. Populist and Eurosceptic parties are a threat in all three countries. While the political center has thus far held strong, growing dissatisfaction over rising costs of living and fraying social safety nets threaten to shift politics across Europe toward nationalism and isolationism.

Done right, however, Ukraine's European perspective and Europe's Ukraine perspective have the potential to shift these dynamics. With careful reform and proactive leadership, the integration of Ukraine into Europe can help reestablish both socioeconomic cohesion and the credibility of European institutions.

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