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## **Kyiv pressures EU to open accession talks at Brussels summit**

### ***Київ вимагає від ЄС розпочати переговори щодо вступу на саміті у Брюсселі***

*Дипломатичний редактор «The Guardian» Патрік Вінтур пише, що після рекомендації Європейської комісії про початок офіційних переговорів про членство України, 27 глав урядів ЄС мають обговорити цю пропозицію на зустрічі у Брюсселі. Лідери країн-членів Євросоюзу повинні схвалити фінансову й військову підтримку України та дозволити початок переговорів з Україною про її вступ в блок. П. Вінтур зауважує, що у Києві зростає стурбованість тим, що неодноразові погрози прем'єр-міністра Угорщини Віктора Орбана накласти вето на членство України можуть призвести до відстрочення ухвалення рішення. У телефонній розмові, перебуваючи в Аргентині на інавгурації нового президента Хав'єра Мілея, Володимир Зеленський порушив це питання перед президентом Франції Еммануелем Макроном, попередивши його про вплив такої відмови на моральний дух українців. У зверненні до лідерів держав-членів, Голова Офісу президента України Андрій Єрмак, закликав країни ЄС визнати, що Україна може багато запропонувати блоку, що вступ України до ЄС зміцнить, а не підірве безпеку Європи.*

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/dec/13/kyiv-pressures-eu-to-open-accession-talks-at-brussels-summit>

Kyiv has increased pressure on the EU to open accession talks at a crucial summit this week, with Volodymyr Zelenskiy's most senior adviser warning that without his country "the 'Europe puzzle' cannot come together".

After the European Commission's recommendation last month that formal membership talks begin, the EU's 27 heads of government are due to discuss the proposal at a meeting in Brussels on Thursday and Friday.

But there is increasing concern in Kyiv that repeated threats by Viktor Orbán, the Hungarian prime minister, to veto Ukraine's membership could lead to the decision being deferred.

Now, in a fresh appeal to member state leaders, Zelenskiy's chief of staff, Andriy Yermak, has urged EU countries to recognise that Ukraine has "much to offer" the bloc.

Letting Ukraine into the EU will reinforce, not undermine, Europe's security

Piotr Buras

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Yermak said: "Values-wise and ideologically, Ukraine is an indisputable part of Europe – which is precisely why Russia attacked us. We want to be part of the EU, and membership is one of the key priorities of our state policy. However, we are aware that willingness alone is not enough.

"Ukraine has demonstrated the ability to undergo rapid transformation ... We are geared towards a highly constructive dialogue regarding accession and count on a similar approach from our partner countries. Without Ukraine, the 'Europe' puzzle cannot come together."

After being criticised for being overbearing in its demands to join Nato at the alliance's summit this summer in Vilnius, Ukraine is trying to pitch its demand to join the EU respectfully but with a sense of urgency.

In private some Ukrainian officials are becoming more desperate, fearing rejection or deferment would be a severe blow to morale that would be felt across Ukraine as it struggles to fend off a growing Russian offensive.

One official said: “The case of Ukraine stands out: it is about the security and stability of the entire Europe. No bilateral issues can be compared to the perspective of a community of democracies watching a sovereign independent state vanish in the 21st century”.

They added: “Rejecting Ukraine would be as cynical as the 1938 Munich agreement. Keeping Ukraine out of the EU would mean feeding it up to Russia the same way Czechoslovakia was dismembered and given up to the Nazis. And it would not stop the crisis. Historically, any attempts to keep Europe divided resulted in crises and wars.”

Yermak, however, is keen to strike a more measured and pragmatic note.

“Ukraine’s accession to the EU will strengthen its security, defense capabilities, and economic resilience,” he said.

Viktor Orbán walks in front of EU flags at a summit in 2022

European leaders try to stop Orbán derailing Ukraine’s EU accession bid

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“Having fulfilled all the requirements necessary to initiate accession negotiations with the European Union, Ukraine has showcased its dedication to reforms and the European path of development. Joining the EU will enable us to progress more rapidly along this path.

“Yet, Ukraine also has much to offer to Europe. We are building a modern defence industry, have established a powerful IT sector, and our solutions in government digitisation and administration can benefit EU member states and the private sector.”

In a phone conversation while in Argentina for the inauguration on Sunday of the new president, Javier Milei, Zelenskiy raised the issue with the French president, Emmanuel Macron, warning him about the impact on Ukrainian morale of a rebuff.

At the Milei inauguration, Zelenskiy confronted Orbán directly in a brief but apparently intense exchange.

Macron earlier this year became a surprise champion of EU enlargement, but Ukraine fears Macron senses Orbán is unshakeable. Macron met Orbán in Paris last week to gauge Hungary’s demands and is seen as critical to trying to persuade Budapest to show flexibility.

But Macron’s diplomatic efforts appeared to have been rebuffed when Orbán the following day called Ukraine “a joke” and “one of the most corrupt countries in the world” in an interview.

In the coming hours or days, the European Commission is expected to announce it will release €10bn of withheld Hungarian funds, arguing that Budapest has met Brussels’s demands to adhere to the rule of law in relation to the independence of its judiciary. But few expect that to be enough to dissuade Orbán.

On Tuesday Balázs Orbán, the Hungarian prime minister’s political director, hinted that Budapest would be prepared to lift its opposition to another proposal due to be discussed at the

summit, a €50 billion support package for Kyiv, if Brussels were to release €30bn in frozen funds.

But Ukraine accession remained a “red line” for Hungary, he said in an interview with Bloomberg, while insisting that “sending a negative signal” to Kyiv was “the opposite” of what Hungary wanted.

Additional reporting by Lisa O’Carroll in Brussels