

PERSPECTIVES OF UKRAINE-EU COOPERATION WITHIN THE ENLARGEMENT POLICY

The aim of this study was to analyze the potential benefits and challenges of Ukraine's integration with the European Union and define prospects and challenges of the process. This article analyzes the prospects for cooperation within the framework of the enlargement policy, considering both potential benefits and the significant challenges that lie ahead. On the basis of this research we can outline valuable insights into the future of Ukraine-EU relations.

The European Union's (EU) decision to grant Ukraine candidate status in June 2022 marked a pivotal moment in their relationship.

With the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine's territory we can witness an increase in the pace of our country's integration into the European community. The first thing that is needed to be done is defining the notion of integration. According to the Cambridge dictionary of English language integration is the action or process of successfully joining or mixing with a different group of people or the action or process of combining two or more things in an effective way [1]. Hence we can conclude that European integration is the unification of different countries into a single European community. In order to make this process efficient and effective, the EU pursues an enlargement policy.

The enlargement policy encourages states that want to become EU members to undergo democratic, economic and political transformations. According to Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union, any European state that respects the values set out in Article 2 (respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of people belonging to minorities) and undertakes to uphold them may apply for membership in the Union. However, to join the association each country must meet certain requirements namely the Copenhagen criteria. According to the accession criteria, a state must have:

- Stable institutions that guarantee democracy, respect for human rights, the rule of law and the protection of minorities;
- A functioning market economy and the ability to cope with competitive pressures and market forces within the EU
- Able to assume the obligations associated with membership, including the ability to effectively implement the rules, standards and policies that are part of EU law, and to comply with the objectives of economic, monetary and political union.

Only after fulfilling these conditions and meeting the requirements of both parties a country can become part of the European Union. To facilitate the reforms and preparation for integration, the state can enlist the support of the association [5; 4; 3].

Ukraine is currently a candidate country for EU membership. In view of the above information, our country is not yet ready to become a full member of this association. Currently, we have stable institutions in the territory controlled by Ukraine that can ensure respect for human rights and the rule of law. We are fully prepared to assume all the

obligations of a member state of the European community. We are committed to close cooperation and implementation of all EU standards and requirements. However, we are currently unable to ensure the high competitiveness of our products and services in European markets.

Due to the hostilities about 20% of the territory of our country was lost, which reduced our resource base and most of the enterprises located in these areas do not fall under the jurisdiction of Ukraine. Moreover, logistics routes were significantly affected. Ukraine has lost control over most of its ports and had to close its airspace, so we currently have only land and rail transportation available which is not enough to meet our export needs.

As a consequence of the constant missile attacks and the unstable situation in the power grid, we cannot ensure uninterrupted production of the pre-war volume of products. In addition, due to air attacks there are high risks of product damage during transportation. So, in our opinion, our top priority is to restore the territorial integrity and rebuild our country as soon as possible.

Challenges to Consider:

Ukraine's Readiness for Accession: Meeting the EU's stringent membership criteria, known as the *acquis communautaire*, presents a significant challenge for Ukraine. The country requires substantial reforms in its judiciary, anti-corruption measures, and human rights framework [2]. The ongoing war further complicates these efforts.

EU's Internal Capacity: The EU itself is navigating internal reforms and faces issues like Euroscepticism. Integrating a large country like Ukraine, with its substantial post-war reconstruction needs would require significant financial and administrative resources from the EU [6].

The historical precedent suggests a slow and complex path for EU enlargement. While Ukraine desires swift accession, the actual timeline hinges on its reform progress and the EU's internal capacity. Discussions surrounding alternative models of cooperation, such as the European Political Community or the Continental Partnership, are ongoing and could serve as stepping stones towards full membership.

Overall, EU-Ukraine cooperation within the enlargement policy presents both opportunities and challenges. The war and internal EU discussions add complexity. While full membership might take time, deeper cooperation is likely in the coming years. EU-Ukraine cooperation within the enlargement policy offers a path towards a mutually beneficial future that requires continued commitment to reform from Ukraine and an internal EU support.

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