



In the past year, Europe has witnessed a renewed push for EU enlargement, driven by factors like geopolitical significance and the pursuit of peace and stability. The EU recognizes the importance of readiness before welcoming new member states. This impetus for reform comes from collaborative efforts by France and Germany, as outlined in their expert group's report. The infographic highlights key stakeholders' positions shaping the EU's path forward.

Key positions on EU enlargement and reform (September – October 2023):



“For geopolitical reasons, EU enlargement is high on the political agenda, but the EU is not ready yet to welcome new members, neither institutionally nor policy-wise. /.../ To regain credibility, the EU should set the goal to be ready for enlargement by 2030 and accession candidates should work to fulfil the criteria to accede to the EU on this earliest entry date. /.../ It makes clear that there is no free entry into the EU and that the timeframe is an objective rather than a set date. The new political leadership after the European elections in 2024 should fully commit to this goal and the reform process required to reach it.”

Franco-German expert group, 18 September 2023, quote taken from the report on the EU institutional reform



“It is not wise to set fixed or very determined timetables. The enlargement process is based on the candidates’ own merit and on an assessment of their capacity and fulfilment of the Copenhagen criteria. /.../ We need to speed up the work that will make this enlargement possible, both for the candidate countries and for the European Union itself, so that both sides are prepared for when that moment arrives. /.../ The candidate countries must speed up their reform process, particularly about the rule of law, which is an essential and basic aspect. It is also our obligation to provide technical assistance and help the candidate countries in this extremely demanding process of preparing for and integrating into the community acquis.”

Portuguese Secretary of State for European Affairs Tiago Antunes, 5 October 2023, addressing a EU affairs committee before the informal Granada Council meeting



“I very much disagree with that date. It is not a question of when countries will be ready. It is a question of if countries will be ready. /.../ The EU already has 27 member states, and if more countries are added, then decision-making and all sorts of other things will become even more complicated.”

Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte, 6 October 2023, reaction to Charles Michel's call for EU enlargement by 2030



“Politically if a country looks to Europe, then Europe should fling its doors wide open. A host of advantages could be offered to countries on the cusp of joining, ranging from single market perks to involvement in the Erasmus youth program. We can even go further, having observer members in this Parliament — these are things that matter to a population.”

European Parliament President Roberta Metsola, 25 October 2023, in an interview for Politico



“What we see now is a true momentum in the process for enlargement. We want the Western Balkans to join the EU, and for that, you need to get ready, and we need to get ready. It is very good that now concrete discussions have started in the EU: what do we have to do to get ready, what are the questions that are open, and what are the answers that we have to give? This was not the case in the last mandate of the European Commission, so something substantial changed in this mandate, it is now concrete.”

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, 30 October 2023, at the press conference with Macedonian Prime Minister Dimitar Kovačevski in Skopje