
European Commission: EU opens its doors to Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. Von der Leyen “historic day”

The European Commission has today adopted its Opinions on Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia’s perspective to become members of the EU, giving the go-ahead to the three countries to join the club, although at different paces. Having assessed the merits of each country on the basis of the Copenhagen and Madrid criteria, the Commission now calls on the Council to open the EU’s doors to these three countries. While the Commission recommends that Ukraine and Moldova be granted candidate status, in the case of Georgia, that status should be granted “once a number of priorities have been addressed”. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, who spoke in a yellow jacket and blue blouse at a press conference after the meeting of the College of Commissioners, paused to describe the situation in Ukraine, saying: “a number of further, important reforms” are needed, but the country “has clearly demonstrated the aspiration and determination to live up to European values”. She highlighted progress in a number of areas, including: 70% of the EU acquis implemented; a robust parliamentary democracy and well-functioning public administration; a successful decentralisation reform; a vibrant civil society; a free electoral system; and a well-developed education system. However, further work needs to be done in other areas, for example, to speed up the selection of judges and members of the High Council of Justice; as regards the fight against corruption, dedicated bodies are in place, but they now need to become fully operational. Also, a deoligarchisation law has been adopted but still needs to be implemented, and the country still lacks a law to protect minorities. All things considered, “Ukraine deserves a European perspective” and “should be welcomed as a candidate country”, Von der Leyen concluded, “progress depends entirely on Ukraine. It is Ukraine that has it in their hands”. As for Moldova, “key economic reforms remain to be undertaken”, but the country has established “a solid basis to further alignment with the EU acquis”. This is why “it should be granted candidate status on the understanding that steps are taken in a number of areas”. As for Georgia, the country still needs time to pass the reforms required for it to be granted candidate status. In any case, according to Von der Leyen, “these three Opinions are a solid basis” to “move forward”, and mark “a historic day”.

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