

EN
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Answer given by Ms Kos
on behalf of the European Commission
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The enlargement process is merit-based and depends on the objective progress made by each of the partners. The speed of the accession process depends on the speed and implementation of reforms.

Credible reforms and irreversible progress especially on the fundamentals of enlargement are essential. This is at the core of the revised Enlargement Methodology¹ adopted in 2020 and continues to guide the process. The inclusion of some enlargement countries in the Rule of Law Report as of 2024² (Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia) supports the implementation of the related recommendations under the enlargement package³. Other accession countries will be included in the Rule of Law Report as and when they are ready.

Reaping the benefits of EU membership requires thorough preparation and the putting in place of appropriate safeguards against backsliding on reforms. The experience of the 2004 EU enlargement demonstrates the positive impact that membership of the EU single market and structural funds has on economic convergence. Accelerating socio-economic convergence already prior to accession is being pursued through dedicated instruments such as the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans⁴, as well as the association agreements, including the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTAs) with Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia.

¹ COM(2020) 57 final.

² https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/upholding-rule-law/rule-law/annual-rule-law-cycle/2024-rule-law-report_en

³ COM (2024) 690 final.

⁴ COM(2023) 691 final.