

The road to the EU

Rule of law reforms in Ukraine are an important step towards EU membership



The challenge: far-reaching rule of law reform necessary

Since the 1990s, Ukraine has increasingly made moves to align itself with the European Union. In 1994, the country signed a partnership and cooperation agreement with the EU, which came into force in 1998. In 2013, the then president's refusal to sign an Association Agreement with the EU led to the Maidan Revolution. The population at the time demonstrated a clear desire to become part of the EU.

In 2019, the Ukrainian parliament took the decision to integrate the objective of full EU membership into the constitution. In February 2022, just after the start of Russia's war of aggression, Ukraine submitted its application for EU membership.

Project title:	Strengthening the Ukrainian EU adjustment process in the area of the rule of law (3*E4U)
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Many Ukrainians want their country to become part of the EU.

The European Commission recommended that the European Council grant Ukraine a prospect of membership and candidate status – on condition that the country would implement seven reform steps. The European Council agreed and granted Ukraine the status of candidate country.

Since then, the Ukrainian Government has initiated comprehensive reforms in order to satisfy the European Commission's requirements. Its efforts are now bearing fruit: accession negotiations were officially opened in June 2024.

However, much remains to be done. Harmonisation of Ukrainian legislation with EU law calls for far-reaching reforms. The judiciary in particular faces major challenges. It currently lacks adequate resources, modern processes that meet EU standards and a legal framework that takes into account all EU values and requirements. Furthermore, the Ukrainian Government needs to be advised on the organisation and implementation of accession negotiations with the EU.

Our approach: expertise, experience, exchange

The project ‘Strengthening the Ukrainian EU Adjustment Process in the Area of the Rule of Law’ (3*E4U), implemented by GIZ on behalf of the German Federal Foreign Office, provides support to Ukraine in aligning itself more closely with the EU legal framework and shaping the EU accession process in a cooperative and participatory manner.

Our cooperation rests on three pillars – *expertise, experience and exchange*.

In the area of **expertise**, we provide Ukrainian actors with a platform of experts made up of academics, administrative representatives and other experts in the fields of rule of law, fundamental rights, justice and anti-corruption. The experts support the Ukrainian Government in shaping and implementing the reforms required for EU accession. Their work is complemented by a gender desk, which ensures that gender equality issues are taken into account. Our team manages the platform and advises on political and legal issues.

In terms of **experience**, the focus is on the dialogue between Ukraine and other countries that have recently joined the EU or are currently in the accession process. Lectures, training events, policy papers and studies provide the Ukrainian government with comprehensive insights into the process of accession negotiations – as well as the opportunity to benefit from the experience of other countries.

And **exchange** is about creating networks between the various actors from Ukraine, Germany and the EU that are able to support Ukraine’s accession. These include government institutions, parliamentarians and civil society organisations. Through close dialogue, we ensure that Ukrainian reforms are shaped in a participatory manner and on a broad social basis. In collaboration with a German think tank, we organise events in Kyiv, Berlin and Brussels, where government representatives and parliamentarians can exchange views in strict confidence. Other events offer forums on specific topics relating to EU accession. The field of action is rounded off by a major conference that will present to the wider public the status of the EU rapprochement process.



The Ukrainian Government has initiated comprehensive reforms in order to satisfy the requirements of the European Union.

Our results: Ukraine’s rule of law system is fit for the EU

- Since the launch of the project in spring 2024, we have developed several proposals to establish the necessary structures and processes for the accession negotiations – including a process proposal for the creation of the Rule of Law (RoL) Roadmap, which is a prerequisite for the opening of negotiations.
- The working group charged with developing this RoL Roadmap has now started its work. We provide them with support through our experts, who make recommendations for policy initiatives and also advise the working group.
- We have developed ideas to make the negotiation architecture more effective and to strengthen the role of the chief negotiator. We have also drawn up guidelines for the negotiating delegation during the bilateral screenings, the pre-defined, formal dialogue between Ukraine and the EU Commission on adjustment to EU law. Many of our recommendations have already been implemented by the Ukrainian Government.
- In the run-up to the bilateral screenings, we organise training sessions in which the Ukrainian delegation rehearses its presentations and receives feedback and recommendations from experts.



‘Tremendous opportunities for our country’

Olha Stefanishyna, Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration of Ukraine – Minister of Justice of Ukraine

“The accession to the EU bears enormous opportunities for Ukraine and Europe. Rule of Law is a central pillar of our European identity. We are grateful for the partnership with Germany on this journey.”

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