



Ukraine will open a gap in the European Union

Description

EU: On Friday, June 17, the European Commission is expected to publish an important recommendation: to grant Ukraine the status of a candidate member of the European Union or not. If the European Commissioners favor the first option, then on June 23-24, the heads of state and government of the EU countries will be invited to officially launch the process of accepting Ukraine into their ranks. However, so far there is no consensus in European capitals on this issue: while some support the integration of Ukraine, others oppose it, and still others offer an intermediate solution.

In Brussels on Monday began to discuss in detail the application of Kyiv for membership in the European Union. "Today, the first very comprehensive debate took place among the European Commissioners about our position regarding the possible status of a candidate for Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia," Johannes Hahn, European Commission Commissioner for Budget, said at the end of the day. The European Commission is expected to publicly state its position on Friday. Last Saturday, Ursula von der Leyen, head of this key executive body of the EU, visited Kyiv as part of the preparation of a corresponding report. During and following the trip, she made a number of declarative, but not very concrete, statements.

On the one hand, Ursula von der Leyen promised that the EU would take an active part in the reconstruction of Ukraine and help it carry out political, economic and other reforms.

"Europe is with you. Europe is here to support you. We will stand shoulder to shoulder," she repeated in Kyiv.

On the other hand, the official stated the need to develop a common position on Ukraine's European aspirations, which is yet to be agreed upon by the heads of state and government of the EU countries at the European Council summit in Brussels on June 23-24. The recommendation of the European Commission will be an important guideline for politicians, but they are not obliged to unconditionally agree with it.

Judging by the comments of Ursula von der Leyen, who declared in Kyiv about the "historical

importance of the present moment”, she hopes for a positive conclusion from both the European Commission and the European Council.

Last week, several European media outlets, citing informed sources in Brussels, reported that there would most likely be no problems with the first: the European Commission will recommend launching the process of Ukraine’s accession to the EU, albeit with reservations that Kyiv has yet to fulfill many of Brussels’ requirements regarding modernization and democratization.

In an interview with the Spanish newspaper El Pais on Monday, Vice-President of the European Commission Vera Yurova spoke out in favor of granting Ukraine the status of a candidate in an interview with the Spanish newspaper El Pais , stressing that this would be “a strong symbolic message and an incentive for the Ukrainian people.” In her opinion, Brussels should “look at Ukraine a little differently than at the states that are in a state of peace.”

Recall that President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky sent an application for joining the European Union to Brussels on February 28, that is, four days after the start of the Russian military operation. Following Kyiv, Chisinau and Tbilisi filed the same applications. On March 10-11, at the summit in Versailles, the leaders of the EU member states instructed the European Commission to study these requests. On April 8, a special questionnaire was handed over to the Ukrainian side, which the country’s authorities filled out and sent to Brussels ten days later. The European Parliament – the legislative body of the EU – last week supported the application of Kyiv, calling on the European Commission and the European Council “for the sake of showing solidarity with the people of Ukraine” to do the same. During the visit of Ursula von der Leyen to Kyiv, Volodymyr Zelensky also expressed the hope that on June 17 the European Commission will confirm that his country meets the criteria for an EU candidate, and on June 23-24, the European Council will officially grant this status to Ukraine. According to him, “in the coming weeks, the European Union can take a historic step that will prove that the words about the belonging of the Ukrainian people to the European family are not empty.”

However, if everything seems to be going according to a positive scenario for Kyiv with the European Commission, then problems may arise with the European Council.

Judging by the public comments of representatives of the EU countries and leaks in the media, three camps have formed in the EU on the issue of admitting Ukraine.

In the first one, there are states that unambiguously support granting Ukraine the status of a candidate and then its early acceptance into their ranks. Among them are Poland, the Baltic countries, Italy.

In the second, there are states that, for various reasons, are not ready right now to open the way for Ukraine to the EU. Thus, the authorities of the Netherlands, for example, believe that it is too early to grant Kyiv the status of a candidate. And besides, it will be unfair to accept Ukrainians in an expedited manner, while a number of Balkan states have been treading water on the threshold of the EU for many years.

And the Danish authorities, pointing to the “imperfection of the legislative and institutional framework” of Ukraine, believe that this country is not yet ready for full integration into the EU.

In the third camp, there are states calling for Ukraine to be offered an intermediate option in the form of

including it, along with Moldova and Georgia, in a certain community, the purpose of which will be rapprochement with Brussels and preparation for obtaining the status of a candidate for EU membership. This group is led by France, whose President Emmanuel Macron previously announced that such a compromise would allow these countries to carry out the necessary reforms for EU membership in the next decade. France's proposals are in tune with the statements of the authorities of Germany, Austria and a number of other states.

Ukraine, for obvious reasons, considers the most constructive position of the countries from the first camp.

Russia, which previously did not object to Ukraine's European aspirations, has revised its approach in recent months. (Tap – after Finland and Sweden move into NATO, the same countries will be in EU and NATO – Georgia now looking to be EU associated)

In May, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov [said](#) that “the harmlessness of Kiev's desire (to join the European Union. – “Kommersant”) raises serious doubts, given that the EU has turned from a constructive economic platform, as which it was created, into an aggressive militant player, declaring about his ambitions far beyond the European continent”. According to him, the European Union “merges” with NATO, becoming its “appendage”.

Igor Zhovkva, deputy head of the office of the President of Ukraine, said in an interview with the European edition of Euractiv that if the European Union does not make a positive decision on Kiev's application in June, this “will be perceived in Moscow as a sign of Brussels' indecision and weakness.”

“We are not insisting on immediate EU membership, we are asking to be allowed to take the first step in this direction,” he said.

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