

Accession procedure step by step

I. Preparatory phase

1. Political accession perspective

„European perspective“; „potential candidate“

2. Preparatory contractual relationship

E.g. “Stabilization and association agreements”, “Europe agreements”

3. Application of the country wishing to accede

This step is legally not dependent on the previous ones

4. Council decision on the transmission to the Commission

in order to give an „avis“, a reasoned opinion of the Commission
= formal Council decision

The application of Morocco ended here in 1987

5. (First) opinion of the Commission

Analyses the situation of the candidate country and gives a recommendation concerning the opening of the negotiations.

May be repeated as often as necessary, until the Commission recommends the opening of the accession negotiations.

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II. Accession negotiations

6. Council decision to launch accession negotiations

7. Screening of the EU acquis

By the Commission in cooperation with the candidate country

May be conducted in parallel to step 8

8. Opening of the Accession Conference

- **For each of the (presently 35) negotiation chapters**
in the format: all member states + one candidate country
 - **Opening of the chapter**
Provided that the **opening benchmarks** for the relevant chapter are fulfilled.
For each point of a (temporary) exception from the acquis:
 - Application from the candidate country
 - Commission recommendation for an EU-position
 - Negotiation at the level of representatives (COREPER level)
 - Negotiation at the level of chief-negotiators (Council level)
Until there is agreement on this point
 - **Closing of the chapter**
If all **closing benchmarks** are fulfilled
- At the end: **Drafting conference for the treaty of accession**
Format: all member states + all candidate countries

9. Agreement on the closure of the negotiations

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III. Conclusion of the treaty of accession and monitoring

10. (Second) opinion of the Commission

Formal endorsement by the Commission that the accession negotiations have been concluded in accordance with the treaties

11. Approval by the European Parliament

With the majority of its members

For each candidate country individually

12. Council decision to open the accession treaty for signature

Corresponds to an initialling, i.e. fixation of the treaty text

13. Signature: Start of the interim period

From now on the „candidates“ become „accession countries“ and „**active observers**“: Participation in the deliberations (but not the decision making) in all Council formations and preparatory bodies

14. From now on: (poss) monitoring via safeguard clauses

(poss.) deferment of the accession via „super-safeguard clauses“

15. (poss.) referenda, if deemed necessary

Austria 1994: already before signature

Up to now only referenda by accession countries, not old m.s.

16. Ratification by all accession countries and m.s.

17. Accession

18. Continued monitoring via safeguard clauses

(poss.) suspension of specified rights of membership