

Society

ÖGfE survey: No majority for EU enlargement in Austria

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*Vienna; Photo: pixabay*

VIENNA – Austrians remain skeptical on a further enlargement of the European Union – no (potential) candidate country could currently count on majority approval, show the results of a current survey by the Austrian Society for European Policy (ÖGfE).

“Austrian governments traditionally have been staunch supporters of EU enlargement, in particular regarding the accession of the Western Balkan countries. However, citizens in Austria have – traditionally – a rather different view. There is currently no clear support for an expansion of the Schengen zone either. Yet, public opinion is divided here, reflecting the domestic political discourse. The feeling is that consolidation of the EU should be given priority before embarking on new, ambitious integration

steps”, says Paul Schmidt, Secretary General of ÖGfE.

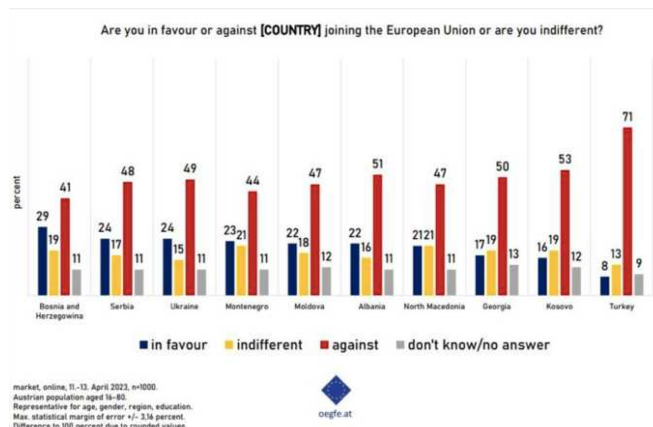


Photo: ÖGfE

Asked which country of the Western Balkans should join the European Union, Bosnia-Herzegovina still has the highest approval rate among Austrians: 29 percent would welcome the country’s membership, while 41 percent would reject it (19 percent are indifferent, 11 percent “don’t know / no answer”).

The approval ratings for Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, and North Macedonia are between 24 percent and 21 percent, and even fewer – 16 percent – welcome Kosovo’s membership. The explicit rate of rejection in this group of countries ranges from 44 percent (Montenegro) to 53 percent (Kosovo).

Support for Turkey becoming an EU member is even lower: only 8 percent would welcome this step, while 71 percent would reject it (13 percent “indifferent” | 9 percent “don’t know / no answer”).

Compared to the last survey from July 2022, support for the accession of Serbia and Albania has increased by 8 percentage points each, we can also see stronger support for Bosnia-Herzegovina.



24 percent of respondents would welcome Ukraine's EU accession, while 49 percent reject it. 15 percent are indifferent, and 11 percent cannot comment on it. Compared to July 2022, the opinion on this question has hardly changed.

"The Russian attack on Ukraine has brought a new dynamic to the faltering enlargement process. A policy that strongly supports EU enlargement should use this momentum and explain why the integration of our neighbors is important, especially for Austria and what can be done to speed things up," says Schmidt.

According to him, the accession of Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia can realistically not be expected in the near future. "It is all the more important to deepen cooperation and underline their European perspective."

[EWB Interview] Schmidt: If the EU doesn't reform, enlargement will probably never take place



After two years of blockade, EU member states during July reached a consensus on opening negotiations with North Macedonia and

