# Ukraine and Moldova Begin EU Accession Talks Amid Russian Influence Shift



Ukraine and Moldova have initiated formal negotiations to join the European Union, marking a significant milestone in their shift away from Russian influence. The negotiations began on June 25, 2024, at an intergovernmental conference in Luxembourg, with Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal describing it as a historic day for both countries and the EU. The European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, emphasized the challenging yet opportunistic path ahead.

Ukraine and Moldova applied for EU membership in early 2022, shortly after Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The process of accession involves aligning national laws and standards with those of the EU across 35 policy chapters, a procedure that can take over a decade.

Hungary, a known ally of Russia within the EU, has previously impeded Ukraine's progress on various issues but eventually relented to the start of talks. However, Hungary retains the capacity to slow down future negotiations.

Ukraine faces significant challenges due to the ongoing conflict, making it difficult to meet the accession criteria. Moldova also encounters hurdles, such as the unresolved issue of Transnistria, a breakaway region seeking closer ties with Russia.

Both nations have substantial work ahead to align with EU standards, including combating corruption and implementing broad institutional reforms. The EU's expansion to include Ukraine and Moldova will have significant implications for the bloc, potentially shifting its center of gravity eastward and impacting policies and budget allocations.

Despite the long and complex road ahead, the commencement of these talks is a substantial step towards EU integration for Ukraine and Moldova.