

# Montenegro & the European Union

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## From accession momentum to project opportunity

Closing speech • Podgorica

**The question is not only when Montenegro joins the EU — but who is ready to compete, partner and shape priorities before accession.**

# 1) The Brussels perspective: momentum is real — but conditional

## What Brussels sees

- Montenegro remains the frontrunner in the Western Balkans accession process
- All 33 screened negotiating chapters are open
- Recent chapter closures have shifted the mood from commitment to delivery

## What has changed

- Closing benchmarks on rule of law created a more credible pathway
- The accession treaty process has become a practical institutional discussion
- EU institutions are preparing for enlargement with stronger safeguards
- Ad hoc working party for the drafting of an accession treaty being set up

## What still decides the pace

- Implementation over legislative output
- Judiciary, fundamental rights and anti-corruption track record
- Broad political consensus and administrative capacity



Sources on slide: European Commission Enlargement Package; Council of the EU accession conferences; DG NEAR public updates.

# The “last mile” is about trust in delivery

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## Rule of law

Credible institutions, judicial independence and anti-corruption track record

## Administrative capacity

Ability to absorb, manage and report EU funds and programmes

## Public procurement & financial control

Transparent procedures, accountability and audit readiness

## Innovation governance

Policy coordination across ministries, agencies, academia and business

**Brussels is not only asking: “Are you aligned?” It is asking: “Can you deliver, coordinate and sustain results once inside the system?”**

## 2) Opportunities are already available before formal accession

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### EU programmes

Horizon Europe, Erasmus+, Creative Europe, Digital Europe-related actions, LIFE-type green priorities, Interreg and IPA cooperation.

### Single Market readiness

Standards, procurement, value chains, data, skills, sustainability reporting and regulatory alignment.

### Policy networks

European partnerships, stakeholder consultations, Brussels events, platforms and sectoral alliances.

Montenegro today



EU participation



Membership

**The winners will be those who behave like European players before the accession date.**

# Research, innovation and modernisation: Montenegro can move from participation to positioning

## Why it matters

European programmes are where policy, business, public administration and international cooperation meet. They can become a practical bridge between accession reform and economic competitiveness.

In the longer term, society as a whole benefits through economic success and social stability

## Programme access

Montenegro is associated to Horizon Europe and other EU programmes, which gives local entities a route to participate broadly in Europe's flagship programme.

## What raises success rates

**Early intelligence, strong European consortia, policy fit, impact logic, credible partners and institutional learning over time.**

**Success in EU programmes is not only about having a good idea. It is about being visible, connected, credible and aligned with Europe's priorities.**

Sources on slide: European Commission DG RTD — Montenegro association to Horizon Europe; Horizon Europe country profiles.

### 3) A full-scope EU support offer for Montenegro's R&I ecosystem

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#### Brussels connection

Connect institutions with EU bodies, platforms and stakeholder communities in Brussels.

#### Influence capacity

Help local actors understand and contribute to EU R&I priority-setting and consultations.

#### European partnering

Connect Montenegro's organisations with universities, SMEs, clusters, research centres and innovation actors across Europe.

#### Consortia & projects

Build consortia and design projects aligned with EU priorities, evaluation logic and impact expectations.

Examples: Horizon Europe, EIC, EDF, DIGITAL EUROPE, LIFE, Health Action Programme....

#### Donor alignment

Align innovation initiatives with UNDP, IOM and other international organisations active in Montenegro.

#### Performance building

Provide early intelligence, training, educational activities and exchange of European best practices.

**Our offer is not mere 'proposal writing'. It is a capability platform: intelligence + networks + influence + project design + learning.**

# What this means for different actors in Montenegro

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## Universities & research institutes

Strategic EU research partnerships  
Future call intelligence  
More competitive Horizon proposals

## Companies & SMEs

Innovation partnerships  
Applied R&I and pilots  
European value-chain visibility

## Municipalities & public bodies; international institutions

Project pipelines for green, digital and social innovation  
Better donor and EU alignment

## Agencies, associations chambers & other intermediaries

European ecosystem links  
Peer learning and best practices  
Consortium-building services

**One ecosystem — different needs — one coordinated European support logic**

# Improving performance in EU programmes: from awareness to influence



**The highest value comes early — before calls are published, before consortia are closed, before priorities are fixed.**

## 4) Partnership invitation: let us build a stronger European presence together

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### We are ready to partner with Montenegrin actors to:

- strengthen links with Brussels and European networks
- build a stronger pipeline of partnerships and projects
- improve participation and performance in EU programmes
- connect national priorities with EU and international agendas

### Today's collaboration

We welcome the opportunity to work with NTP Science Park Podgorica as a strategic partner in strengthening Montenegro's innovation ecosystem in Europe.

Podgorica



Brussels



Europe

# Closing message

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## Montenegro is closer than before

Accession momentum is now a practical reality — but delivery, capacity and trust remain decisive.

## Opportunities already exist

Research and innovation actors as well as other communities can use EU programmes today to build competitiveness, networks and credibility.

## Preparation wins

**The next leap requires intelligence, partnerships, influence, project quality and a sustained European presence.**

**Montenegro should not only participate in Europe’s innovation future — it should help shape it.**

Final line: “The question is no longer only whether Montenegro will join the EU — but who in Montenegro will be ready to act, partner and lead when it does.”



**Please reach out – Let's stay in touch!**

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