

# Opinions on Ukraine's EU membership

ANALYSIS BY REPUBLIKON INSTITUTE



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## INTRODUCTION

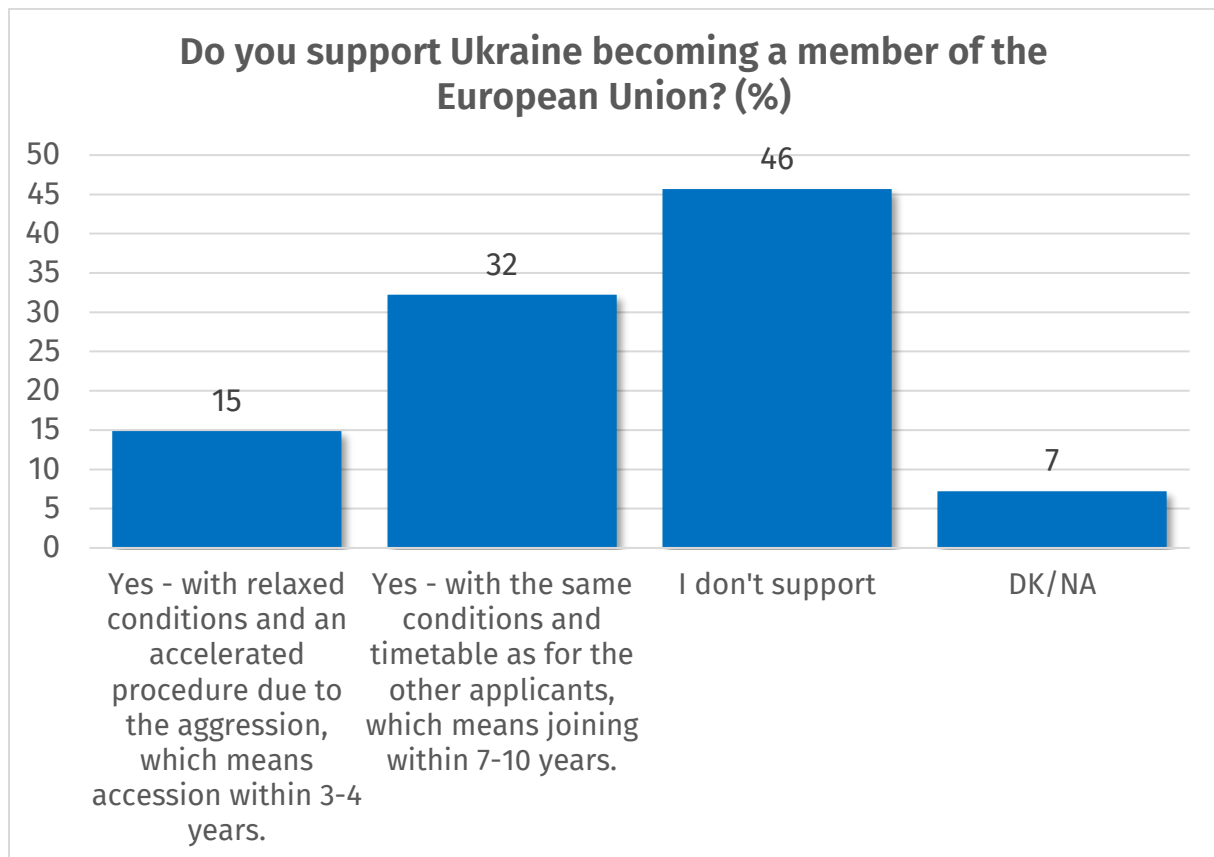
On 24 February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine. In more than three years since then, much has changed in world politics, including the perception of the warring parties. These three difficult years have been a sad reminder of how deeply entrenched Russian influence has become in the Central and Eastern European region and the post-Soviet space. In Hungary, particularly, we have witnessed what the Russian political and propaganda machine is capable of when the Kremlin feels the need to accelerate. Three years ago, in March 2022, Republikon Institute asked the Hungarian public how they felt about the Russo-Ukrainian war and about aid to the Ukrainians. In 2022 not only Péter Szijjártó, the Hungarian Foreign Minister, but also the Hungarian public's Sovietisation of opinion had not reached the levels of 2025. In 2022, Péter Szijjártó declared his absolute support for Ukraine, and two-thirds of Hungarians agreed that "Hungary has a duty to help our Ukrainian neighbours, even if this may have negative economic consequences for Hungary". More than 80 percent of opposition voters and 55 percent of Fidesz-KDNP voters also agreed with this statement, while only 28 percent of government party voters disagreed with unconditional assistance to Ukraine. Much has changed in the last three years. Today, Ukrainian President Zelensky is featured on the newest posters of the ruling parties, alongside the current Brussels bogeymen. Politicians from the ruling parties have embarked on a nationwide tour to campaign against Ukraine's accession to the EU. The Hungarian government's campaign to oppose Ukraine's accession came just as the Russian side in the US-Russia negotiations on Ukraine's EU membership was conceding, leaving the issue of Ukraine's EU membership to EU member states. The Hungarian government has thus taken the role of making Ukraine's EU membership impossible and has launched a vote on Ukraine's EU membership in the form of a national consultation. The strongest opposition challenger, Tisza Party, has initiated its own vote, which also includes the issue of Ukrainian membership. Despite all this, there is little information on what Ukraine's accession to the EU would mean for Ukraine, or indeed how it would take place, or even when it would happen. Political communication is silent on how long EU enlargement would take. Republikon Institute therefore asked<sup>1</sup> Hungarian voters whether they would support Ukraine's accession to the EU, differentiating between the answer options by timeframe.

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<sup>1</sup> The survey was conducted by telephone among 1000 people between 26 March and 1 April 2025. The survey is representative of the adult Hungarian population by gender, age, level of education and type of settlement. Margin of error: +/- 3.5%.

## RESULTS

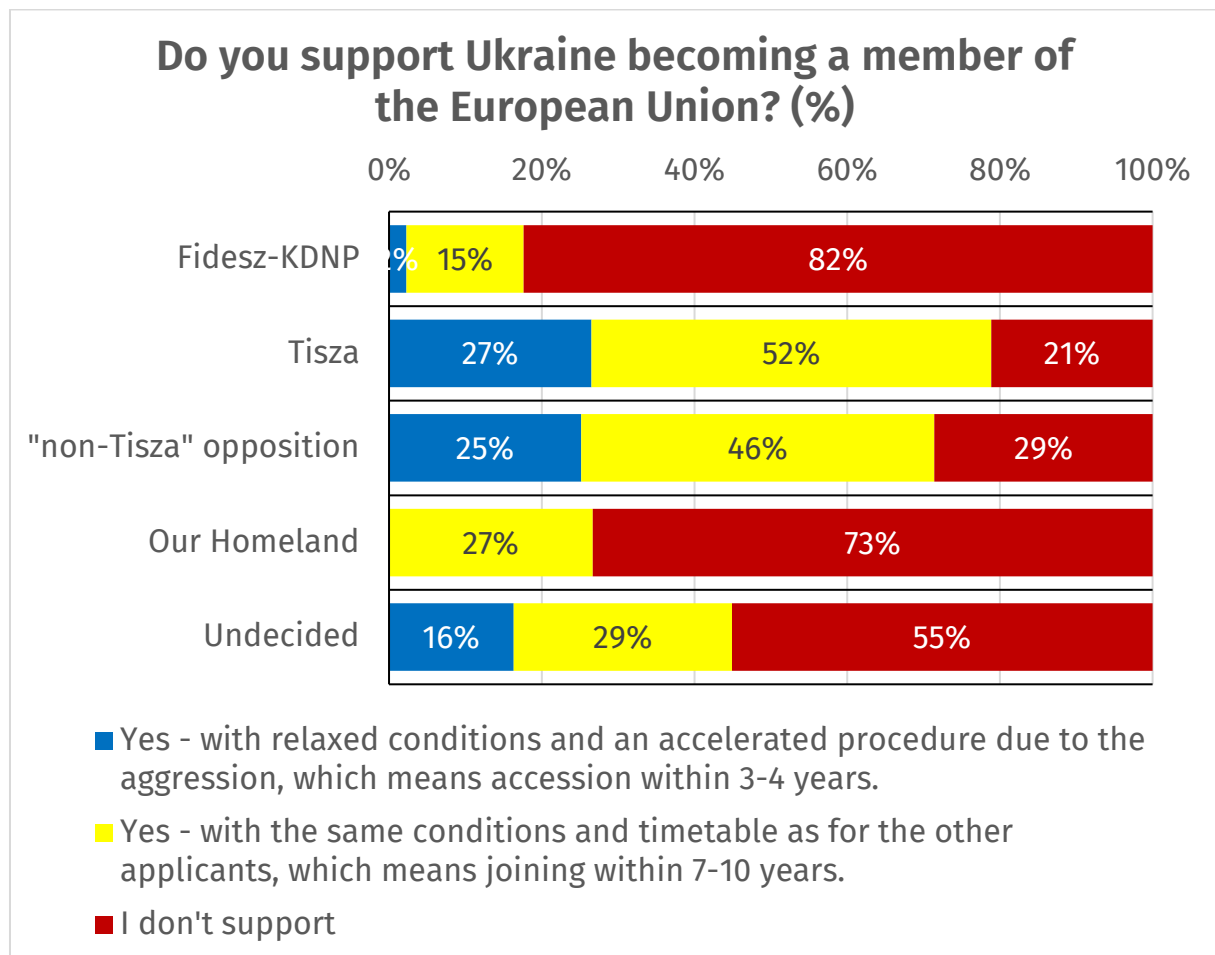
Medián recently surveyed the attitudes of Hungarian respondents towards Ukraine's EU membership, and found that although society is divided, the majority of Hungarians are against it. Differentiating the response options by the timeframe of accession gives a slightly different picture.



**Figure 1: Support for Ukraine's EU membership (%)**

Hungarian society is indeed divided on Ukraine's accession to the EU, but if we make a distinction between fast-track accession and accession with the same conditions and timetable as the other candidates, the tables will turn, and the supporters of accession will be in the majority. 46% of Hungarian respondents do not support Ukraine's accession to the European Union at all. A third of respondents would support the admission of Ukrainians if it follows the same rules as for other candidates, roughly in 7-10 years. A further 15% would also support accelerated accession for Ukraine if it means accession in roughly 3-4 years. In total, 47 percent of the total population supports Ukraine's EU membership, a fraction more than those who oppose it. If we take the undecided

respondents out of the equation, the balance is 51-49 in favour of membership. There is a sense that the ruling parties have made the issue of Ukraine's accession a top agenda item, with the focus currently on the downside of Ukrainian membership. The opposition politicians are trying to not to take up the gauntlet on this issue. This can be seen in the breakdown by party too.



**Figure 2: Support for Ukraine's EU membership by party affiliation (%)**

Only 17% of pro-government respondents support Ukraine's accession to the EU, of which 2% would also support a fast-track admission procedure. Fidesz-KDNP voters - as always - were quick to switch (although they have had three years to gradually become aware of their anti-Ukrainian stance), with 82% rejecting Ukraine's EU membership. The sample of Our Homeland voters is small, but the trend is clear. A majority of them opposes Ukraine's accession to the EU, but interestingly less so than governing party voters: 27 per cent of the Our Homeland camp would support Ukrainian membership if it followed the rules and timetable for everyone else, and

"only" 73% oppose Ukraine's accession. 55 percent of the undecideds reject Ukrainian membership, 45 percent support it overall, with 16 percent supporting it in 3-4 years and 29 percent in 7-10 years. In general, the undecideds' views are closer to those of opposition voters, but we have observed over the past few years that fear of war is very much a feature of their views, and they fall somewhere between the opposition and the governing parties on most issues.

The views of Tisza voters and other opposition party voters are close. A quarter of both camps support fast-track membership, but a significantly higher proportion of Tisza voters support joining within 7-10 years, 52%, compared to 46% of the "non-Tisza" opposition camp. Ukrainian membership of the EU is rejected by 21 percent of Tisza voters and 29 percent of other opposition voters. Overall, an overwhelming majority of opposition voters would support Ukraine's accession, with 79 percent of Tisza voters and 71 percent of other opposition voters agreeing.

Despite the opposition parties' avoidance of this rather sensitive issue, most of their voters are clearly in favour of Ukraine becoming a member of the EU. However, in such a tense political situation, losing a quarter or a fifth of the camp is equivalent to total defeat, so the opposition is playing a security game and leaving the framing of the issue to the ruling parties, who are focusing on the negative economic consequences and the threat of Russian revenge. Ukraine's accession to the EU was not part of the public discourse before the escalation in 2022. Hungarians did not have a strong opinion on the issue, and in the first months of the war the European community was mostly receptive to Ukraine's accession. If, for example, instead of negative predictions, the emphasis had been on the possibility of the Hungarians of Transcarpathia joining our European community, or on the fact that Ukrainian membership would settle the issue of language use by the Hungarian minority in Ukraine, public opinion would be very different today.