

Juncker: Ukraine is totally corrupt

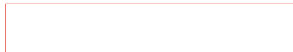
Former European Commission chief bashes Kyiv's EU candidacy.



"Making false promises" to Ukrainians regarding EU accession "would be neither good for the EU nor for Ukraine," Jean-Claude Juncker said | Kenzo Tribouillard/AFP via Getty Images

BY LAURA HÜLSEMAN

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Former European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker has slammed the possibility of Ukraine joining the EU, lambasting the country as massively “corrupt.”

“Anyone who has had anything to do with Ukraine knows that this is a country that is corrupt at all levels of society. Despite its efforts, it is not ready for accession; it needs massive internal reform processes,” Juncker said during an interview with German outlet [Augsburger Allgemeine](#) published Thursday.

“Making false promises” to Ukrainians regarding EU accession “would be neither good for the EU nor for Ukraine,” added Juncker, who was boss at the Berlaymont in Brussels from 2014 to 2019.

“You shouldn’t make false promises to the people in Ukraine who are up to their necks in suffering,” Juncker said. “I am very angry about some voices in Europe who are telling Ukrainians that they can become members immediately.” Kyiv has been fending off Russian President Vladimir Putin’s full-scale invasion which began in February 2022.

EU membership for aspirant countries like Ukraine and Moldova must be connected to “internal reforms” and be backed by a “qualified majority,” Juncker argued. Ukraine has faced questions for years over its track record on fighting corruption.

Current European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen and European Council boss Charles Michel are both much more bullish than Juncker on Ukraine’s accession to the bloc.

On Tuesday, POLITICO reported that the EU is gearing up to open negotiations with Ukraine on its future accession with a formal announcement expected as soon as December, according to three diplomats.

During German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock’s visit to Kyiv on Tuesday — part of the first-ever informal meeting of EU foreign ministers outside of the bloc — she underlined that “the future of Ukraine lies in the European Union. In our community of freedom, which will stretch from Lisbon to Luhansk.” In September, Baerbock also noted on a trip to Kyiv that Ukraine needed to do more to root out corruption.

Von der Leyen has been positive on Ukraine’s case for membership and pushed for an expanded European Union of 30 countries during her State of the Union speech in September.

In August, two high-ranking Ukrainian officials were named as suspects in an embezzlement scheme involving the procurement of humanitarian aid, while then-Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov came under fire in January over a military catering contract.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who has been leading the anti-corruption crackdown in Ukraine, has been criticized for his decision to equate corruption with treason, which officials and watchdogs have warned would give more power to the state security service.

“We have had bad experiences with some so-called new members, for example when it comes to the rule of law,” Juncker said. “This cannot be repeated again.”

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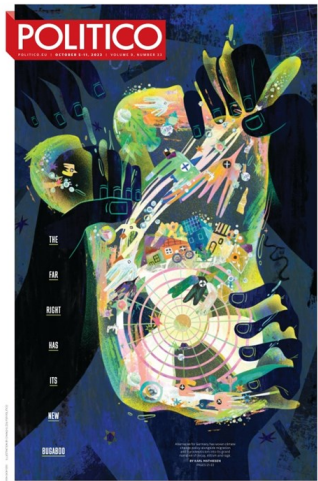
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