



## Open letter to the federal government

Dear Chancellor,  
Dear Mr. Vice-Chancellor,  
Dear Mr Foreign Minister,

### ***EU membership of Montenegro until 2024 with the support of Austria***

Montenegro's accession to the European Union by 2024 is realistic. The citizens of Montenegro will then be able to vote in the 2024 European Parliament elections. Just as Austria made it possible for Croatia in 2013 - against the resistance of many and at the peak of the Euro debt crisis - Austria should now work just as hard for a quick accession of Montenegro.

The following speaks in favor of the inclusion of Montenegro:

1. Montenegro has the Euro as its currency since 2002
2. Montenegro has implemented all required economic and legal reforms
3. Montenegro is economically close to Bulgaria and very successful
4. Montenegro is almost ready to adapt to the EU legal framework
5. Montenegro is in solidarity with the common security and foreign policy of the EU
6. Montenegro fully supports all EU sanctions, including against Russia
7. Montenegro has been a NATO member since 2017 and is therefore an ally of 23 EU countries
8. With Montenegro, we are again 28 member states in the EU, which we once were
9. Montenegro is very small, the impact on the EU budget is small
10. With the admission of Montenegro we are showing the Western Balkan countries that we are serious about enlargement

Montenegro has turned away from Serbia and the fateful Russia policy and is clearly EU-oriented. Serbia is increasingly turning away from the EU and towards Russia, partly because they are increasingly doubting the seriousness of the EU's readiness for admission. Currently, Serbia is not ready and not willing to join. Serbia's orientation towards Europe will return when through to the rapid admission of Montenegro there is finally movement towards EU enlargement.

Austria's support for Serbia's accession to the EU under the current conditions leads to profound problems within the EU. With Vucic, Orban would have an ally within the EU to fulfill Putin's wish - to weaken Europe by destroying the EU. What the EU needs are member countries that strengthen the European Union and do not weaken it. Montenegro shows very clearly which side it is on, namely the EU side. EU accession should reward countries that undertake profound reforms and work hard to become fit for the community of the European Union, by strengthening democracy, the rule of law and

respect for human rights, etc. Montenegro is doing this very actively. To keep it that way, rapid progress is now needed on the way to EU membership.

A treaty between Montenegro and the Serbian Orthodox Church was signed in the last few days. This is very controversial because it grants one religion more rights than other churches and religions, and as a result the Serbian Orthodox Church also increases the influence of Serbia and thus Russia in Montenegro. The critics of this agreement see this as endangering Montenegro's path to the EU. It is now even more important to act quickly. Montenegro's current EU orientation has to be used before the influence of Serbia and Russia turns the situation on its head. A change in course by Montenegro would be disastrous for European security.

At the EU level, Austria must use all its political means to enable Montenegro's EU membership by 2024. Courageous and determined action by Austria is required here. Austria's committed commitment to EU enlargement to include the Western Balkans must focus on the rapid admission of Montenegro, not Serbia, as the next step. The resistance and blockades from other member countries must be overcome. Here Austria can make full use of its role as mediator and bridge builder.

The issue of corruption as an excuse and reason for blocking admission to the EU should be treated with caution by Austria. Not that anyone is questioning the legitimacy of Austria's EU membership. Corruption is also a problem in EU member states. This should not be kept secret, but tackled with the same level of commitment as is being demanded of the accession candidates. This requires appropriate framework conditions and efforts within the EU in order to continue the fight against corruption even after accession. Montenegro is already working very intensively and seriously on the fight against corruption. With the admission of Montenegro and strict regulations within the EU, this can be continued even more effectively after Montenegro's accession.

Austria and Montenegro have a common history. The coastal towns of Kotor and Budva were part of Austria for 100 years (1814 to 1918), the port towns of Tivat and Herceg Novi were strategic naval bases of Austria. In Montenegro, no one has forgotten this and they wonder why we have forgotten it. It is unfortunate that we like to suppress our colonial past and war crimes in World War I in Austrian-occupied Montenegro. An apology from official Austria is the right start on which to build a common future in the EU.

Incidentally, our former naval bases are now the most modern marinas in the Adriatic and the real estate prices in Tivat are almost on par with Vienna. Tourism is booming and the motorway from Vienna to Podgorica will hopefully be financed by the EU after the completion of the Peljesac Bridge and will also be built by EU companies, and fast. The Austrians should see the success and beauty of Montenegro with their own eyes, so that the incomprehensible rejection of Montenegro's EU accession turns into enthusiasm. Montenegro is an asset to the EU and the EU is an asset to Montenegro.

Specifically, we call on you to also support Montenegro's accession in 4 sectors:

1. Montenegro's foreign policy must focus on EU accession by 2024 and regionally on the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), not on Vucic's parallel project "Open Balkans", which aims to open the Balkans to Russia.
2. Promote cooperation between the nine federal states of Austria and the regions of Montenegro:
  - a. Tuzi Region <=> Burgenland
  - b. Kotor Bay Region <=> Oberösterreich
  - c. Budva-Cetinje Region <=> Salzburg

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|--------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| d. Bar-Ulcinj Region                       | <=> Kärnten          |
| e. Niksic-Danilovgrad                      | <=> Niederösterreich |
| f. Podgorica                               | <=> Wien             |
| g. Pljeva-Bijelo Polje                     | <=> Tirol            |
| h. Pluzine-Savnik-Zabljak-Mojkovac-Kolasin | <=> Steiermark       |
| i. Rozaje-Berane-Plav-Andrzejivca          | <=> Vorarlberg       |

### 3. Bilateral cooperation on EU preparations in the areas

- a. Economy, infrastructure, mining and energy
- b. Youth, sport, education and culture
- c. Tourism and regional development in the alpine area
- d. Environment and elimination of Yugoslavia's environmental legacy
- e. Opening of the labor market in Austria for workers from Montenegro

### 4. Joint Historical Commission Montenegro-Austria

Austria's committed support is needed for Montenegro's rapid accession to the EU. As elected representatives of Austria – an EU member country !!! – it is your responsibility to take the Austrian population with you on Austria's European path. This not only affects Austria itself, but also the European Union as a community of which Austria is a member. The attitude of Austrians towards their own EU membership is one thing, that towards further development of the European Union is another.

Politicians are doing far too little in both areas. There is no other way to understand the latest survey results from the Gesellschaft für Europapolitik. Only 22% are in favor of Montenegro joining the EU. There are similarly bad values for the other accession candidate countries and the EU enlargement in general.

Such a negative attitude is due to a lack of commitment on the part of politicians, who are obviously not willing or able to convey the simplest facts to the population and to convey the importance of the EU for Austria and for Europe, the continent on which we live. You prefer to leave such important issues to the populists and the tabloids, and thus to the Russian propaganda machine. But this is the wrong way. More efforts are needed here on the part of Austrian politicians, especially the top representatives of the republic.

As a representative of Austria, support the rapid admission of Montenegro, even against resistance. What has become of Austria's strong role, which campaigned with conviction and commitment for peace and prosperity in Europe? Start arguing again for Europe and especially for the EU peace project. The current Russian war of aggression against Ukraine on the battlefield and against all of Europe on energy and through disinformation campaigns should have woken us all up by now to the importance of rapid EU enlargement. Only when we have also successfully integrated the countries of Eastern and Southeastern Europe into the EU can there be lasting peace on our continent. There is still a long way to go and there are still many obstacles and rifts to be overcome. But we must set out to walk this path and overcome these obstacles. One of the first steps on this path is the rapid admission of Montenegro.

Lead the way, in the European Union and in Austria. Argue for Montenegro's accession and EU enlargement. Do not leave this issue to the populists and destroyers of the EU. A frozen, incapable of acting, weakened or even destroyed EU would not only be bad for Europe, but especially for Austria.

Austria for Montenegro's EU accession by 2024. WE are committed to this and hopefully YOU will also be committed to it.

Best regards,

Gunther Fehlinger  
President Montenegro goes Europe

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