

EU agrees to open Ukraine membership talks in shock win for Kyiv

BRUSSELS, Dec 14 (Reuters) - European Union leaders granted Ukraine a major political win on Thursday by agreeing to start membership negotiations at a time when its counter-offensive against Russia's invasion has failed to make major gains and U.S. military aid has become more uncertain.

EU diplomats and officials said the unexpected green light for talks took place as Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban - who had for weeks said he would block such a deal - agreed to leave the room, knowing the other leaders would go ahead and vote.

Orban confirmed that he had abstained from the vote at the EU summit on what he called a "bad decision". It was unclear at this stage what exactly he could be getting in return.

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