

Iceland votes ‘No’ to resuming EU talks

AFP | Reykjavik, Iceland

Iceland voted ‘No’ to resuming membership negotiations with the European Union, referendum results showed yesterday, dealing a blow to Brussels which had been keen to welcome a new wealthy member.

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Prime Minister Kristrún Frostadóttir, who favoured a

‘Yes,’ stressed she didn’t “see this as a setback”.

“I see this as a victory for democracy,” she told reporters, pointing to voter turnout of over 80 percent.

“I want to make it absolutely clear, this government is not going forward with the accession talks this term.”

This means any discussions of Icelandic accession are frozen at least until 2028 -- an apparent disappointment to Brussels, which had appeared willing to compromise on thorny issues

to facilitate Iceland’s accession.

EU chief Antonio Costa nonetheless told Frostadóttir the bloc “fully respects the democratic choice” made by voters, a spokesperson said.

“Iceland remains one of the EU’s closest and most trusted partners,” said the spokesperson.

Far-right, eurosceptic leaders in Britain and France hailed the result.

“At a time when some are pushing for greater federalism and the transfer of sovereignty

to the European Commission, this vote reminds us that another Europe is possible, a Europe of free, sovereign nations cooperating voluntarily on matters of common interest,” France’s Marine Le Pen wrote on X.

“Congratulations to Iceland on voting to keep their independence,” Reform UK leader Nigel Farage, who was one of the faces of Britain’s Brexit, wrote on the same platform.

Iceland, a country of just under 400,000 people applied to join the EU in the wake of the

2009 financial crisis that devastated its economy.

Membership talks were then suspended in 2013 when a eurosceptic government came to power.

The island is, however, already closely linked to the EU as a member of the European Economic Area and the free-movement Schengen zone, ties which will remain unchanged.

The referendum result was non-binding but the government had vowed to respect it.

Venezuela says retains ‘sovereignty’ in US oil deal

AFP | Caracas, Venezuela

Interim leader Delcy Rodríguez assured the public Saturday that Venezuela retains control of its oil under a new agreement that allows the United States significant access to it.

The United States will have majority control of 65 billion barrels of Venezuela’s proven reserves in what President Donald Trump described Friday as “the biggest oil deal in world history.”

“One thing must be absolutely clear: Venezuela retains ownership and sovereignty over its resources,” Rodríguez said in a speech on state television.



A cargo ship docks at La Guaira Port, Venezuela

The agreement with the United States aims to turn “cold, inert” resources underground to “a source of social and economic well-being for the people of Venezuela,” she said.

Caracas says the deal involves \$100 billion in private investment aimed at revitalizing the industry in a country with the world’s largest proven oil reserves.

But a lack of transparency is raising concerns among Venezuelans, including supporters of the government. A flood of social media comments decried loss of sovereignty, meager benefits and

political costs.

“We don’t know who this will benefit -- whether it’s Venezuela or (the United States),” said Jesus Salazar, a 68-year-old security guard.

“I have my doubts, but we’ll have to wait and see what happens.”

Venezuela’s government has operated under intense pressure from the Trump administration since American forces ousted and captured long-time ruler Nicolas Maduro in January.

Venezuela’s ruling party said

Saturday it supports economic measures that “prioritize national interests and make it possible to overcome the impact of more than a decade of economic sanctions, unilateral coercive measures, and unjust blockades.”

The party consistently blames US sanctions for the collapse of Venezuela’s economy.

Petrol and poverty

Rodríguez has pushed through reforms in Venezuela’s mining and petroleum industries, opening once tightly controlled

sectors to private capital and foreign investment.

Washington, for its part, has eased sanctions imposed on Venezuela’s oil sector under the Maduro government.

Oil production rose by 29.8 percent between January and July, reaching 1.2 million barrels per day -- still well below the three million barrels per day produced a quarter of a century ago.

The US deal aims to restore production to those levels, but analysts agree it would take time.

“The increase in production won’t be seen for at least three or four years,” said engineer Oswaldo Felizzola, a professor at the Institute of Higher Studies in Administration (IESA) in Caracas.

He welcomed the United States acting as a “guarantor” for investments in Venezuela, which has failed to attract significant capital for more than a decade.

“Without this, these fields would not be developed over the next 10 or 15 years,” because state-owned Petroleos de Venezuela (PDVSA) “does not have the financial resources to do so.”

An initiative of this magnitude could accelerate long-awaited economic recovery in Venezuela, a country still reeling from the brutal 80 percent contraction between 2014 and 2021 that plunged millions of Venezuelans into poverty.

Many survive on a monthly minimum wage equivalent to \$0.16, plus government subsidies that can reach \$240 per month -- still far short of the estimated \$730 needed to buy basic food necessities for a family of five.

Carlos Baco, a 74-year-old government employee, hopes

oil revenues will start flowing under the new deal, but said he hasn’t felt the effects of the increase in oil production over the past few months.

“Consumer goods and food are more expensive... the dollar is rising and prices are going up,” he said. “It’s impossible here.”



Venezuela has the world’s largest proven crude-oil reserves – about 303 billion barrels, roughly 17% of the global total. Yet its oil production has been far below its potential, largely because most of its reserves are extra-heavy crude and the sector has suffered from underinvestment, sanctions and deteriorating infrastructure.

Funeral of Norway’s late King Harald set for September 9: palace



Mourners gather at a makeshift memorial to pay tribute to King Harald V of Norway who passed away, at the Royal Palace square in Oslo

AFP | Oslo, Norway

The funeral for Norway’s late King Harald, will be held on September 9, the royal palace announced yesterday.

Presiding Bishop of the Church of Norway Olav Fykse Tveit will lead next Wednesday’s funeral ceremony in Oslo Cathedral from 1:00 pm, the palace added.

King Harald V of Norway, who died Friday morning aged 89, enjoyed massive support despite the slew of scandals that dogged his family in the final stretch of his 35-year reign.

Just before the funeral announcement, the palace said the king’s casket, which was moved from the hospital to the Royal Palace’s Red Salon Friday evening, would be moved to the palace’s chapel on Monday afternoon.

Then from 2:00 pm (1200 GMT) on Tuesday, members of the public “who wish may walk slowly past the casket to say farewell to King Harald” until the day before his funeral.

Norway’s new king, Haakon VIII, will also swear an oath of allegiance in parliament on Tuesday.

Trump calls for ‘punishment’ of NBC reporter

AFP | Washington, United States

President Donald Trump yesterday threatened a prominent NBC broadcast journalist with possible punishment by US media regulators as the Republican expressed disappointment with coverage of his candidate endorsements ahead of November’s midterm elections.

Trump took to his Truth Social platform to attack Kristen Welker as the “unpopular ‘hostess’ of the once great Meet the Press” talk show for stating that the president had “mixed results” on his endorsement of political candidates in party primaries, insisting the results went his way 98 percent to 100 percent of the time.

“Because of this purposeful inaccuracy, she will be reported to the FCC for rebuke or punishment,” he said, referring to the Federal Communications Commission, which assigns and oversees licenses for radio and television broadcast frequencies.

“Unfortunately, she is not the only one. The Radical Left News is going out of their way to harass, demean, and libel anything

news organizations and major broadcast networks. Several of them have filed lawsuits against the FCC, arguing such pressure constitutes political retaliation that violates the First Amendment of the US Constitution, which protects freedom of speech.

Relations between Trump and Welker have been under pressure for months. In June the president abruptly cut short an interview with her following a tense exchange.

“I hope that Chairman Brendan Carr, and the fine people of his Commission, will take this Threat to our Country very seriously,” Trump said.

The latest attack is part of the Trump administration’s months-long offensive against media outlets it deems overly critical.

Such efforts are facing growing resistance from

change, during which he grew irritated by Welker’s questioning, particularly on the war against Iran.

NBC News did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Experts argue the FCC lacks the legal authority to punish broadcasters or reporters for their viewpoints.

According to a 2025 paper by the Yale Journal on Regulation, the US Supreme Court has confirmed that US law “does not grant the FCC the power to ban controversial speech.”

