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*Plenary sitting*

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**B9-0158/2019**

22.10.2019

## MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statements by the Council and the Commission

pursuant to Rule 132(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on opening accession negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania  
(2019/2883(RSP))

**Stelios Kouloglou, Konstantinos Arvanitis, Niyazi Kizilyürek,  
Dimitrios Papadimoulis, Petros Kokkalis, Elena Kountoura,  
Martina Michels**

on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group

**European Parliament resolution on opening accession negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania  
(2019/2883(RSP))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the Commission 2019 reports on North Macedonia and Albania (SWD(2019)0218, SWD(2019)0215) accompanying the Commission communication of 29 May 2019 on EU Enlargement Policy (COM(2019)0260),
  - having regard to the European Council conclusions of 20 and 21 June 2019, and 17 and 18 October 2019,
  - having regard to the its resolution of 29 November 2018 on the 2018 Commission Report on the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia<sup>1</sup>,
  - having regard to the conclusions of the General Affairs Council of 26 June 2018 and 18 June 2019 on enlargement and stabilisation and association process,
  - having regard to the European Council conclusions of 28 June 2018 endorsing the Council conclusions of 26 June 2018 on enlargement and stabilisation and association process,
  - having regard to the Commission communication of 6 February 2018 entitled ‘A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans’ (COM(2018)0065),
  - having regard to the Sofia declaration of the EU-Western Balkans summit of 17 May 2018 and the Sofia Priority Agenda annexed thereto,
  - having regard to the Prespa Agreement of 17 June 2018 between the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Greece, and the Treaty on Friendship, Good-Neighbourliness and Cooperation of 1 August 2017 between the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Bulgaria,
  - having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas during the EU-Western Balkans summit, which took place in Sofia on 17 May 2018, EU leaders reaffirmed their unequivocal support for the European perspective of the Western Balkans, and the Western Balkan partners recommitted to this perspective as their firm strategic choice;
- B. whereas in response to the Commission’s recommendations of April 2018 to open accession negotiations with the Republic of North Macedonia and with the Republic of Albania, the European Council agreed in June 2018 to respond positively to the

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<sup>1</sup> Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2018)0480.

progress made by both countries and set out the path toward opening accession negotiations with the two countries in June 2019;

- C. whereas on 29 May 2019, the Commission reiterated its recommendation to the Council to open accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia after its assessment showed that the two countries, especially North Macedonia, had delivered on important reforms;
  - D. whereas, the historic Prespa Agreement between North Macedonia and Greece resolved a 27-year dispute over the country's name, setting an example of reconciliation to the other countries in the region; whereas together with the bilateral treaty with Bulgaria, this is a major step toward strengthening good neighbourly relations throughout the region;
  - E. whereas it is not only the candidate countries, but also the European Union, which need to be reformed to meet the expectations of the citizens of the EU Member States and the accession countries;
  - F. whereas in June 2019, the European Council agreed to reach a clear and substantive decision on the opening of accession negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania by no later than October 2019;
  - G. whereas the European Council failed to meet its promises; whereas this indecision reflects double standards in the assessment of candidate countries by some of the Member States; whereas the failure to open accession negotiations did not respect the principle of own merits applicable to the accession process of the Western Balkan countries;
- 1. Deplores the fact that the European Council conclusions of 17 and 18 October do not call for the opening of accession negotiations with North Macedonia and, on the basis of the General Affairs Council conclusions of 18 June 2019 in respect of Albania, instead deferred the decision until the EU-Western Balkans Summit in Zagreb in May 2020; stresses that this constitutes a failure on the part of the European Council to live up to its commitments and support peace, stability, prosperity and European perspectives for the Western Balkan countries, which is indicative of the EU's lack of vision and the crisis it is currently facing;
  - 2. Notes with concern that the decision to defer the issue was taken despite the recommendations of the Commission and Parliament to the contrary;
  - 3. Stresses that the opening of accession talks is only the first step in the long and demanding accession process; acknowledges the great efforts by both countries to reform and the progress achieved, especially in North Macedonia, and calls on the people of North Macedonia and Albania to continue their efforts to advance reforms that will benefit citizens and society, especially those relating to the rule of law, fundamental rights, the functioning and independence of democratic institutions, freedom of expression, the protection of civil and ethnic minorities, sustainable and inclusive growth, employment, education, the protection of the environment and the fight against organised crime and corruption;

4. Notes that all countries in the Western Balkans need a clear and credible vision if they are to successfully drive reform and foster reconciliation both internally and in the region overall;
5. Points out the importance of the momentum created by the signing of the Prespa Agreement between North Macedonia and Greece and the Treaty on Friendship, Good-Neighbourliness and Cooperation between North Macedonia and Bulgaria; calls on the European Council to take into serious consideration the hope that these agreements instil in the people and leaders of the countries of the region the sense that similar regional issues can be resolved; stresses that the Council decision will damage political stability, regional cooperation, good neighbourly relations and peaceful coexistence in the region;
6. Expresses its deep concern at the rise of nationalism and irredentist ideas in the region, which jeopardise peace and stability; stresses that the European Council conclusions will in fact only serve to reinforce these phenomena and ideas;
7. Calls on the European Council to ensure that the principle of own merits remains a part of its long-term enlargement strategy, allowing the countries of the Western Balkans to proceed in their EU integration process as long as their citizens wish them to do so; calls on the European Council to abandon its practice of coupling or grouping accession countries, which effectively delays, for no justified reason, the accession process of countries that have achieved the necessary reforms and wish to proceed;
8. Calls for the EU to honour its commitments to the Western Balkan countries and support a parallel, self-critical review of the enlargement process based on the interests of the citizens of both the EU and the accession countries;
9. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the President of the European Council, the President of the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the governments and presidents of the parliaments of the Member States, and the governments and parliaments of North Macedonia and Albania.