



Plenary sitting

B9-0159/2019

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))

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on behalf of the S&D Group

B9-0159/2019

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

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the European Council decision of 16 December 2005 to grant North Macedonia the status of candidate for EU membership,
- having regard to the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and North Macedonia, of the other part¹,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 29 May 2019 entitled ‘2019 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy’ (COM(2019)0260), accompanied by the Commission staff working document entitled ‘North Macedonia 2019 Report’ (SWD(2019)0218), recommending opening accession negotiations in the light of progress achieved and in view of the sustained commitment to reforms,
- having regard to the recommendations adopted at the 16th meeting of the EU-North Macedonia Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC), held on 28 March 2019 in Strasbourg,
- having regard to the ‘Jean Monnet Dialogue’ process with the parliamentary leadership and political parties in the Assembly of North Macedonia (*Sobranie*), launched in Ohrid on 17 and 18 May 2018,
- having regard to the Final Agreement for the Settlement of the Differences as described in the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 817 (1993) and 845 (1993), the Termination of the Interim Accord of 1995 and the Establishment of a Strategic Partnership between Greece and North Macedonia of 17 June 2018, also known as the Prespa Agreement,
- having regard to the political agreement (the so-called ‘Pržino Agreement’) reached between the four main political parties in Skopje on 2 June and 15 July 2015, and the four-party agreement on its implementation of 20 July and 31 August 2016,
- having regard to the European Council decision of 26 and 27 June 2014 to grant Albania the status of candidate country for EU membership,
- having regard to the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Albania, of the other part²,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 29 May 2019 entitled ‘2019

¹ OJ L 84, 20.3.2004, p. 13.

² OJ L 107, 28.4.2009, p. 166.

Communication on EU Enlargement Policy' (COM(2019)0260), accompanied by the Commission staff working document entitled 'Albania 2019 Report' (SWD(2019)0215), recommending opening accession negotiations in the light of progress achieved and in view of the sustained commitment to reforms,

- having regard to the recommendations adopted at the 13th meeting of the EU-Albania Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee (SAPC), held in Brussels on 15 October 2018,
- having regard to Article 237 of the Treaty of Rome, which states that any European country has the right to apply to become a member of the European Union,
- having regard to the Presidency conclusions of the Thessaloniki European Council of 19 and 20 June 2003 concerning the prospect of the Western Balkan countries joining the EU,
- having regard to the Berlin Process, launched on 28 August 2014,
- 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 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 joint letter of 3 October 2019 by Presidents Tusk, Sassoli, Juncker and President-elect Von der Leyen on the opening of accession talks with North Macedonia and Albania,
- having regard to the European Council conclusions of 28 June 2018, which endorsed the conclusions on enlargement and the stabilisation and association process adopted by the Council on 26 June 2018, laying a clear path towards the opening of accession negotiations in June 2019,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 18 June 2019, in which it decided to revert, no later than October 2019, to the issue of the Commission's recommendations to open accession negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania,
- having regard to the European Council conclusions of 17 and 18 October 2019, in which it decided to revert to the issue of enlargement before the EU-Western Balkans summit in Zagreb in May 2020,
- having regard to the role of the President of France,
- having regard to the agreement between the political leaders in North Macedonia to hold extraordinary parliamentary elections on 12 April 2020, following the decision of the European Council to revert to the issue of enlargement in May 2020,
- having regard to its previous resolutions concerning North Macedonia and Albania,
- having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

- A. whereas by implementing robust and inclusive democratic reforms and actively improving neighbourly relations, the governments of both North Macedonia and Albania have demonstrated continuity in their commitment to their European path;
 - B. whereas the Prespa Agreement of 17 June 2018 on the settlement of differences and the establishment of a strategic partnership between North Macedonia and Greece sent a much-needed positive signal for stability and reconciliation in the whole Western Balkans region, improved the spirit of good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation and paved the way for the country's European integration;
 - C. whereas the Commission has recommended the opening of accession negotiations with North Macedonia since 2009;
 - D. whereas on 28 June 2018, the European Council endorsed the 26 June 2018 Council conclusions, laying a clear path towards the opening of accession negotiations in June 2019;
 - E. whereas on 18 June 2019, the Council decided to revert, no later than October 2019, to the issue of the Commission's recommendations to open accession negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania;
 - F. whereas on 17 and 18 October 2019, the European Council decided to revert to the issue of enlargement before the EU-Western Balkans summit in Zagreb in May 2020;
 - G. whereas the President of France played a major role in bringing about this delay;
 - H. whereas each candidate country is judged individually on its own merits, and it is the speed and quality of reforms that should determine the timetable for accession and the pace of negotiations;
 - I. whereas political consensus and wide public support for the EU accession process exists in both North Macedonia and Albania;
 - J. whereas the decision of the European Council to revert to the issue of enlargement in 2020 has triggered early elections in North Macedonia;
 - K. whereas the European Council's constant indecisiveness and the continued postponement of its decision on enlargement could cause instability in the countries concerned, as well as in the region as a whole;
1. Deplores the fact that the decision of the European Council to start EU accession negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania was blocked; regrets the role of the President of France, and of the leaders of other Member States, in this regard;
 2. Calls on the Council to take its responsibility and finally act in accordance with its own commitments; condemns any decision that weakens the EU's commitments to North Macedonia and Albania; recalls that the Commission has recommended the opening of accession negotiations with North Macedonia since 2009; points to the mutually beneficial outcomes of nearly two decades of institutional and political intertwining between the EU and the two countries concerned;

3. Recalls the renewed consensus on enlargement that was approved by the European Council in December 2006 and subsequently endorsed in the European Council conclusions of June 2016; calls on the European Council to recognise the fair and rigorous conditionality and the principle of own merits enshrined in the EU enlargement policy; stresses the importance of ensuring that the EU can maintain and deepen its own development, including its capacity to integrate new members;
4. Reiterates that the inability of the EU to reach an agreement and to start accession negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania undermines its credibility, not only in the Western Balkans but also globally and vis-à-vis EU citizens, as a successful and serious global actor;
5. Welcomes North Macedonia's determination to advance on the EU reform agenda and the delivery of tangible and sustained results, fulfilling the conditions identified in the June 2018 Council conclusions for the opening of accession negotiations;
6. Welcomes the strong political commitment of the Government of North Macedonia to fully implement the Pržino Agreement, which has led to intensified efforts on EU-related reforms, based on cross-party and inter-ethnic cooperation and consultations with civil society, and underlines the importance of pursuing these efforts for the European future of the country;
7. Highly commends the positive diplomacy of North Macedonia and its active trust-building efforts which have led to compromise, the settlement of open bilateral issues and the promotion of good neighbourly relations; welcomes the Prespa Agreement of 17 June 2018 between North Macedonia and Greece, and the Treaty on Good Neighbourly Relations between North Macedonia and Bulgaria, which represent a historic diplomatic effort and political achievement, and set a positive example for the region and beyond; commends all sides for their significant efforts to reach a mutually satisfactory solution to the name issue;
8. Underlines the important achievements of the Jean Monnet Dialogue process with the Assembly of North Macedonia, launched in Ohrid on 17 and 18 May 2018, and its follow-up in Skopje on 22 and 23 June 2019; welcomes the commitment in the framework of the Jean Monnet Dialogue, by the Speaker and the Parliamentary leadership of the *Sobranie*, to develop a modern European parliamentary culture where democratic dialogue and consensus-building are used to achieve concrete reforms, including a new Code of Ethics and a revision of the Rules of Procedure; calls for the continuation of the Jean Monnet Dialogue process as a key instrument of support in strengthening the Assembly of North Macedonia and the development of a culture of compromise and constructive political dialogue, especially among the Members of Parliament;
9. Commends the conclusions of the Leaders Meeting of North Macedonia on 20 October 2019, which reaffirm the country's commitment to the European accession process and stress that there is no alternative for North Macedonia;
10. Welcomes the fact that Albania has demonstrated its determination to advance on the EU reform agenda and has delivered tangible and sustained results, in line with the conditions identified in the June 2018 European Council conclusions for the opening of

the accession negotiations;

11. Welcomes the fact that the Government of Albania has consistently demonstrated the political will to move forward, despite a polarised political atmosphere;
12. Holds the view that the progress of each of the candidate countries towards fulfilling the criteria for entry into membership talks must be viewed in its own right; believes that this assessment must not be coloured by the EU's ability or inability to reform its own processes or the domestic political agenda of any of its Member States;
13. Underlines the Commission's recommendation and the ensuing Council decision to set October 2019 as the date for opening accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia in recognition of their encouraging reform efforts; considers that a swift opening of the screening process and accession talks will sustain and increase the momentum of reform; considers that the opening of negotiations would provide further incentives for democratisation and enhance scrutiny and accountability within the two countries and across the Western Balkans region as a whole;
14. Calls for Parliament to further step up its democracy support activities (Jean Monnet Dialogues and capacity building) in the region in order to ensure that parliaments play their full role as engines for democratic reform and that they deliver on the European aspirations of the citizens of the region;
15. Calls for Parliament, in this respect, and in response to the deadlock in the European Council, to convene a regional parliamentary dialogue with the leadership of the parliaments of the Western Balkans, in order to develop a strategy on the role of Parliaments in driving forward the EU reform agenda and in delivering concrete measures that meet the European aspirations of the people of the region;
16. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the Governments and Parliaments of Albania and North Macedonia.