



Plenary sitting

B9-0157/2019

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 Verts/ALE Group

B9-0157/2019

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

The European Parliament,

- 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 European Union,
- having regard to the Sofia Declaration issued at the end of the EU-Western Balkans Summit of 17 May 2018,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 16 October 2013 on the Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2013-2014 (COM(2013)0700),
- having regard to the Commission’s visa liberalisation roadmap,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 17 and 18 October 2019 on enlargement,
- 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 the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia of 17 June 2018, also known as the Prespa Agreement,
- 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)
- having regard to the Commission communication of 29 May 2019 entitled ‘2019 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy’, accompanied by the Commission Staff Working Document entitled ‘Albania 2019 Report’ (SWD(2019)0215),
- having regard to its previous resolutions on Albania and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, in particular the resolutions of 15 February 2017¹ and of 29 November 2018² on the 2016 and 2018 Commission Reports on Albania, and of 14 June 2017³ and of 29 November 2018⁴ on the 2016 and 2018 Commission Reports on the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia/North Macedonia,
- having regard to Albania’s accession to NATO in 2009 and the fact that North

¹ OJ C 252, 18.7.2018, P.122.

² Texts adopted, P8_TA(2018)0481

³ OJ C 331, 18.9.2018, p. 88.

⁴ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2018)0480

- Macedonia is currently on its way to becoming the 30th member of NATO,
- having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
 - A. whereas in 2003, the Thessaloniki European Council underlined its support for the future integration of the Western Balkan countries into European structures and stated that their ultimate membership into the Union was a high priority for the EU and that the Balkans would be an integral part of a unified Europe;
 - B. whereas at the EU-Western Balkans Summit of 17 May 2017, the EU reaffirmed its unequivocal support for the prospect of EU membership for the Western Balkans;
 - C. whereas each enlargement country is measured individually on its own merits against progress made on the criteria set by the European Council, and the speed and quality of reforms determine the timetable for accession to the EU;
 - D. whereas the prospect of EU membership has been a fundamental incentive for reforms in the Western Balkan countries; whereas the enlargement process has played a decisive role as regards the stabilisation of the Western Balkans;
 - E. whereas regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations are essential for the countries' progress on their path towards EU accession;
 - F. whereas the 2016 and 2018 Commission progress reports have recommended the opening of accession negotiations with both Albania and North Macedonia;
 - G. whereas the Prespa Agreement of 17 June 2018 on the settlement of differences and the establishment of a strategic partnership between the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Greece is a landmark agreement that represents a model for stability and reconciliation in the whole region of the Western Balkans, which has improved the spirit of good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation and should pave the way for North Macedonia's European integration;
 - H. whereas in August 2017, Bulgaria and the then Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia signed a bilateral treaty on friendship that put an end to the controversies between the two countries and brought them closer through an EU-oriented partnership;
 - I. whereas good progress has been made with the judicial reform in Albania, which sets out to improve the independence, accountability, professionalism and efficiency of the country's judicial institutions and increase people's trust in judicial bodies;
 - J. whereas due to the veto of the President of the French Republic, the European Council of 17 and 18 October 2019 was unable to agree on the opening of accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia; whereas this represents the third time that the European Council has proved itself incapable of reaching a positive decision on enlargement after the June 2018 and 2019 European Councils; whereas the European Council concluded that it would revert to the issue of enlargement before the EU-Western Balkans summit in Zagreb in May 2020;
 - 1. Expresses its regret at the decision of the European Council to postpone once again the

opening of accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia;

2. Stresses that by failing to deliver on its promises and commitments to both countries, the EU risks losing its credibility; strongly believes that the EU's enlargement policy is a two-way street in which both sides need to uphold their commitments and deliver on promises made in order to remain credible actors and reliable partners in an increasingly volatile environment;
3. Reminds the Member States that the enlargement policy needs to be driven by objective criteria and not by considerations of internal politics or bilateral controversies in individual Member States; states that the EU's enlargement policy has been the most effective foreign policy instrument of the Union and that its further dismantlement might lead to an unstable situation in the EU's immediate neighbourhood;
4. Recalls that since 2016, the Commission has recommended the opening of accession negotiations with Albania and, since 2009, it has recommended the same with North Macedonia because they both meet the objective criteria;
5. Welcomes the Prespa Agreement of 17 June 2018 between Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and commends both sides for their significant efforts to reach a mutually satisfactory solution to the name issue, which has long been made responsible for the country's stalemate in making progress on its path to European integration; welcomes the Republic of North Macedonia for its contribution to peace in the Balkans and for being a prime example of finding a peaceful solution to longstanding disputes;
6. Fully endorses the Commission's recommendation on Albania in recognition of the encouraging reform efforts; considers that a swift opening of the screening process and accession talks will sustain and increase the momentum of the reform; considers that the opening of negotiations would provide further incentives for democratisation and enhance scrutiny, accountability and the full respect for rights of minorities in both countries;
7. Recalls that the youth in the region have high expectations as regards EU accession and believes that a future without a clear perspective will lead to migration from the region;
8. Calls upon the Commission to move ahead together with the Member States and Western Balkan partners to implement flagship initiative six on reconciliation and good neighbourly relations of the 2018 enlargement strategy, including supporting initiatives such as the Regional Commission for the Establishment of the Facts about the War Crimes and other Violations of Human Rights Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia between January 1, 1991, and December 31, 2001 (RECOM), the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) and multi-perspective history teaching and memory work in line with Council of Europe standards;
9. Urges the European Council, at its next meeting on 12 and 13 December 2019, to assume its responsibility and find a concrete compromise that allows for the start of accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia; endorses starting the parallel process of reforming the methodology of the EU's enlargement policy, as long as this reform is not used as a way to stop the enlargement process, and stresses that this

process is not precluded by starting accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia;

10. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, Albania, North Macedonia and the remaining Western Balkan countries.

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