Resolution on opening accession negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania

2019/2883(RSP) - 24/10/2019 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 412 votes to 136, with 30 abstentions, a resolution on opening accession negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania.

The text adopted in plenary had been tabled as a joint resolution by the EPP, S&D, Renew, Greens/EFA and GUE/NGL groups.

Parliament expressed its deep disappointment at the EU's failure to agree on opening accession talks with North Macedonia and Albania due to the blocking of France, Denmark and the Netherlands, since both countries have made considerable efforts and meet the EU's requirements for opening accession negotiations.

Strategic mistake

Members stressed that a non-decision is a strategic mistake and has a detrimental effect on the EU's credibility given that the integration of eligible countries helps the EU to uphold its international role and protect its interests, while progressing on the path towards EU accession also has a transformative effect on the candidate countries themselves. Furthermore, this decision sends a warning signal to other candidate countries and potential candidate countries in the Western Balkans and creates openings for other influences, and that it could slow down or even completely halt the implementation of pro-European reforms in other accession countries.

Opening negotiations

Parliament commended North Macedonia for its historic and satisfactory settlement of difficult, open bilateral issues and the promotion of good neighbourly relations, notably through the Prespa Agreement with Greece, and the Treaty on Friendship, Good Neighbourliness and Cooperation with Bulgaria. It called on the Council to take into consideration the positive messages of these agreements and the counter-effects of its decision on political stability, regional cooperation and peaceful co-existence.

Members welcomed the fact that Albania has demonstrated its determination to advance on the EU reform agenda and has delivered tangible and sustained results.

Parliament considered that the opening of negotiations would constitute a powerful catalyst for implementing reforms and consolidating democratic institutions and would contribute to enhancing EU scrutiny, accountability and full respect for the rights of minorities in both Albania and North Macedonia. Member States are called on to show responsibility towards Albania and North Macedonia and to take a unanimous positive decision on the opening of negotiations at their next meeting.

Continued dialogue

Parliament considered that the incoming Commission should immediately take stock of the enlargement policy, taking into account the effects of the Council's recent decision, while emphasising the advantages of enlargement both for candidate countries and for Member States and that it should re-evaluate and amend its February 2018 Strategy for the Western Balkans accordingly.

In response to the deadlock in the European Council, Parliament is called on 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.