

Press release – Failure to open accession talks with Albania and North Macedonia is a mistake



Parliament expresses deep disappointment over the failure to agree on opening EU accession talks with Albania and North Macedonia at the EU summit on 17-18 October.

MEPs regret the move by France, Denmark and the Netherlands to block the decision and say that Albania and North Macedonia have made considerable efforts over the last few years and meet the EU's criteria to start membership talks.

Praising North Macedonia's efforts to settle difficult bilateral issues with its neighbouring countries, MEPs also welcome recent judiciary reforms in Albania.

A strategic mistake

Parliament stresses that the "non-decision" by EU leaders is a strategic mistake, which damages the EU's credibility and sends a negative message to other possible candidate countries. It could also allow other foreign actors – whose activity might not be in line with EU values and interests – to engage more closely with both Albania and North Macedonia, MEPs add.

A reform of the enlargement process, advocated by some countries, should not hinder Albania and North Macedonia, which already meet the requirements to be assessed on their own merits and objective criteria, and not judged by domestic political agendas in other countries, says the text.

Time to open negotiations is now

MEPs urge EU countries to act responsibly towards Albania and North Macedonia and to take a unanimous positive decision at the next meeting. Parliament should step up its democracy support activities to ensure that the national parliaments in the Western Balkans play their role as engines for democratic reform, they add.

The text was adopted by 412 votes in favour, 136 against and 30 abstentions.