

North Macedonia urges EU to ‘finally’ open accession talks

Written by Martin Banks on 15 October 2019 in News
News

The foreign affairs minister of North Macedonia has made an impassioned plea to the EU to “finally” open accession negotiations with his country.



Photo credit: Press Association

Speaking in Parliament on Monday, Nikola Dimitrov told MEPs there was “huge expectation” among North Macedonians that the green light would be given for talks to start.

“A lot is at stake,” he told the foreign affairs committee, warning that failure to start negotiations on EU membership would lead “some to push for alternatives.”

His comments came on the eve of a General Affairs Council meeting on Tuesday where EU ministers will decide whether to open accession negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania.

RELATED CONTENT

- [Pro-Western Pendarovski wins North Macedonia presidential election](#) [1]
 - [Failure to implement Macedonia name change will be 'disastrous', warns MEP](#) [2]
 - [Macedonia name dispute rages on](#) [3]
 - [Charles Tannock: There is renewed focus in EU enlargement in the Balkans](#) [4]
 - [Boyko Borissov: If the Western Balkans do not get a clear European perspective now, this could have severe consequences for EU](#) [5]
 - [Western Balkans enlargement a priority, says EU Parliament](#) [6]
-

Dimitrov, in an exchange of views with the committee, told members that some 90 percent of citizens in North Macedonia "believe in the EU project" and support accession to the 28-strong bloc.

He said such support for the EU was important at a time when the bloc faces multiple challenges such as the looming UK exit.

He said, "The EU still acts as a lighthouse for us. Yes, we have made mistakes but we're on the right path."

Dimitrov said he had "lost count" of the number of times he had made similar appeals, saying "we have been waiting years" for accession talks to start.

"Failure to start talks would say that it is not worth resolving difficult issues as we have done. People will, if talks do not begin, start questioning if the EU is serious" **Nikola Dimitrov**

"It is important this year that we finally become a candidate country."

Referring to the reforms implemented in the country at the behest of the EU, he said, "Failure to start talks would say that it is not worth resolving difficult issues as we have done. People will, if talks do not begin, start questioning if the EU is serious."

He added, "I do not want to focus just on the time we have been waiting but we believe we have delivered on reforms asked of us and if we now get no reaction from the EU side this will create a legitimate question mark and you have to ask if all this is realistic?"

"This is what is at stake this week."

He warned some in the country may "push for alternatives" if talks do not commence, adding that there would also be a feeling of "victimhood."

"People will see the world as being so unfair. The opposition will also press for early elections if accession talks do not start."

He added, "The most important thing, though, is the sense of hope and huge expectation that is at stake. Many things have been done on the reform process but the balance between cynicism on the one side and the sense of hope on the other is slim."

“We believe the start of negotiations are very well deserved and all Member States should know that North Macedonia has done well on reforms and that it wants to continue with this good work” **David McAllister MEP**

“The decision this week will have a huge impact on us but this [accession] will be a win-win situation both for us and the EU if we do it properly.”

“Whether it is Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday I hope we will have a reason to celebrate.”

Committee chairman, EPP member David McAllister told the minister, “This is a crucial week for your country. A large majority in Parliament, especially in this committee, fully support the start of access talks.”

“We believe the start of negotiations are very well deserved and all Member States should know that North Macedonia has done well on reforms and that it wants to continue with this good work. It has been one of the few good news stories to come out of the Western Balkans in recent years and I hope we will soon be able to start discussing opening accession chapters.”

Dutch Socialist committee member Kati Piri told Dimitrov, “We are all with you in hoping you get the green light this week.”

The committee hearing came just ahead of a meeting on Wednesday between Parliament’s President David Sassoli and North Macedonia’s Prime Minister Zoran Zaev.

Last month, European Council President Donald Tusk visited the Macedonian capital Skopje where he expressed his commitment to opening EU accession talks.

Speaking separately on the same issue, European Green Party co-chairs Reinhard Bütikofer and Monica Frassoni, said in a statement, “North Macedonia has exceeded all expectations by resolving a long and bitter dispute with Greece and attempting to put itself on a more open, tolerant and pro-European path.

“This gargantuan effort on behalf of both North Macedonia and Greece to agree on the name change should not now fall on deaf ears. It is clear that North Macedonia's future belongs in the EU. It is now incumbent on EU leaders to give a ringing endorsement of this act of political courage and vote to open accession talks.”

Their comments come after the EU commissioner for migration, home affairs and citizenship Dimitris Avramopoulos recently signed two arrangements with Albania and North Macedonia, implementing an action on countering terror.

About the author

Martin Banks is a senior reporter at The Parliament Magazine

Tags

[Enlargement](#) [7]

[Foreign Affairs](#) [8]

[Justice and Rights](#) [9]

Categories

[Western Balkans strategy](#) [10]

[International Relations](#) [11]



Site Sections

- [Home](#)
- [Content](#)
- [Policy](#)
- [Magazines](#)
- [PM+](#)
- [Thought Leader](#)
- [Climate Crisis](#)
- [Editorial Calendar](#)
- [Policy Events](#)
- [Event Coverage](#)
- [MEP Awards 2020](#)
- [Contact Us](#)

Services

[Dods PeopleDods](#)
[MonitoringDods](#)
[ResearchDods](#)
[EventsDods](#)
[Training](#)

Media & publishing titles

[Politics HomeThe](#)
[HouseThe](#)
[Parliament](#)
[MagazineHolyrood](#)
[Total PoliticsPublic](#)
[Affairs NewsCivil](#)
[Service](#)
[World](#)
[PublicTechnology](#)
[Training](#)
[JournalDods](#)
[Parliamentary](#)
[CompanionVacher's](#)
[Quarterly The](#)
[European Union and](#)
[Public Affairs](#)
[Directory](#)

Dods events

[Westminster](#)
[Briefing Digital](#)
[Health & Care](#)
[Scotland MEP](#)
[Awards The Skills](#)
[Summit Scottish](#)
[Public Service](#)
[Awards Public Sector](#)
[Procurement](#)
[Summit Public](#)
[Sector ICT](#)
[Summit Cyber](#)
[Security](#)
[Summit Cyber](#)
[Security](#)
[2017 Training](#)
[Journal Awards](#)

Partnership events

[The Health and](#)
[Care Innovation](#)
[Expo Civil Service](#)
[Live Civil Service](#)
[Awards Chief](#)
[Nursing Officer for](#)
[England's](#)
[Summit Women into](#)
[Leadership The](#)
[Youth Justice](#)
[Convention Socitm](#)
[Spring](#)
[Conference NHSCC](#)
[Annual Members'](#)
[Event Dods at Party](#)
[Conference](#)

Source URL: <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/north-macedonia-urges-eu-%E2%80%98finally%E2%80%99-open-accession-talks>

Links

- [1] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/pro-western-pendarovski-wins-north-macedonia-presidential-election>
- [2] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/failure-implement-macedonia-name-change-will-be-%E2%80%98disastrous%E2%80%99-warns-mep>
- [3] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/macedonia-name-dispute-rages>
- [4] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/opinion/there-renewed-focus-eu-enlargement-balkans>
- [5] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/interviews/boyko-borissov-if-western-balkans-do-not-get-clear-european-perspective-now>
- [6] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/western-balkans-enlargement-priority-says-eu-parliament>
- [7] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/tags/enlargement>
- [8] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/tags/foreign-affairs>
- [9] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/tags/justice-and-rights>
- [10] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/categories/western-balkans-strategy>
- [11] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/categories/international-relations>