



Commission reports on progress made by Albania and North Macedonia

Brussels, 2 March 2020

Today, the Commission presented updates on the progress made by Albania and North Macedonia in further addressing rule of law related reforms, in particular in the areas set by the [Council in June 2018](#). Both countries have delivered further tangible and sustainable results and therefore the Commission's recommendation to open accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia remains valid.

Upon the presentation of the reports Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Olivér **Várhelyi** commented: *"After the February adoption of the revised methodology for the accession process, we are today presenting our updates on Albania and North Macedonia. They show that the countries stepped up their work and delivered further tangible and sustainable results in the key areas identified in the Council Conclusions of June 2018. The Commission stands firmly by its recommendations to open accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia and I hope that the Member States will take a positive decision in the coming weeks."*

2020 – working on a three-track approach

The Western Balkans are a priority for the Commission, which is following a three-track approach in 2020. On 5 February, the Commission has set out [its proposal](#) to drive forward the EU accession process by making it more credible, more dynamic, more predictable and give it a stronger political steer. In parallel, the Commission stands firmly by its recommendations to open accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia, as both continue to deliver on the reforms. Thirdly, in preparation of the EU-Western Balkans Summit in Zagreb on 6 and 7 May, the Commission will come forward with an economic development and investment plan for the region.

In today's updates, the Commission factually and objectively describes the progress of both countries from June 2018 to today in the areas highlighted by the Council.

In the case of Albania, the update outlines progress in the implementation of justice reform and the vetting process of judges and prosecutors, on the track record demonstrated in the fight against corruption and organised crime, including when it comes to cannabis cultivation and hard drugs trafficking. It also points to other relevant issues, such as agreement on the way forward to electoral reform and efforts to tackle unfounded asylum claims.

In the case of North Macedonia, the update covers significant steps taken to strengthen independence of judiciary, including the recent adoption of the revised law on the Public Prosecutor's Office. It shows an improved track record in the fight against corruption and organised crime as well as progress in the reform of intelligence services and public administration.

Background

In April 2018, the European Commission recommended to open accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia. In June 2018, the Council acknowledged progress and set out the path towards opening accession negotiations, depending on progress made in certain key areas.

Following further positive recommendations by the Commission in May 2019, the Council postponed its decision to June and then October 2019 before deciding to revert to the issue of enlargement before the Zagreb Summit in May 2020.

The General Affairs Council in March 2020 is expected to discuss the way ahead for enlargement policy, based on the revised methodology, as well as progress made by North Macedonia and Albania, with a view to opening accession talks. The European Commission will present in a few months a more detailed assessment of the general state of play in all the enlargement partners in its annual enlargement package.

For More Information

[Update on Albania](#)

[Update on North Macedonia](#)

[Press release: A more credible, dynamic, predictable and political EU accession process - Commission lays out its proposals](#)

Factograph: [Albania on its European path](#)

Factograph: [North Macedonia on its European path](#)

Website: [Delegation of the European Union to Albania](#)

Website: [Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of North Macedonia](#)

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