

ALDA'S GOVERNING BOARD STATEMENT

On the EU accession process of North Macedonia

In December 2020, North Macedonia didn't get the long-expected date for start of the negotiation process for EU accession due to opposition from its neighbour country, Bulgaria. This EU member state is opposing to North Macedonia starting EU accession before resolving some historical questions.

While considering the reasons of every parts and the importance of history in building up the future, this step represents a disappointment for ALDA because of the strategic importance it gives to the accession of the countries of the Balkans to the EU.

North Macedonia is candidate country since 2005. Since, Macedonian authorities have been undertaking commitments for EU integration processes. North Macedonia has shown good will in establishment of good neighbourly relations, by signing the "Treaty on Friendship" with Bulgaria and the "Prespa agreement" with Greece which led to change of the constitutional name of the country.

The Governing Board of ALDA – the European Association for Local Democracy (www.alda-europe.eu) is expressing its concern related to the decision of the EU not to start yet the negotiation talks with North Macedonia and not adopting the proposed negotiating framework. The EU needs to prove its commitment towards this region, show that the EU accession processes are merit-based and make proof of how important good-neighbouring relations are.

ALDA - as a European organization that actively promotes local democracy, human rights and rule of law, believes that maintaining good relations between member states and neighbouring countries is crucial for ensuring stability and peace within EU and at its borders. Bilateral disputes should be resolved bilaterally and should not affect the enlargement and negotiating process. Mutual cooperation is important not only for the economy and trade but also for the prosperity of the enlarged region.

Based on its extensive expertise of citizens' engagement, community dialogue, and local development, gained during 20 years of work in approximatively 40 countries, ALDA express its openness and willingness to contribute at establishment of decentralized dialogue between communities and people to people actions that will increase tolerance and intercultural dialogue in the region.

Only the language of cooperation and a full understanding of the long- term perspectives in the Western Balkan Region can successfully overcome this obstacle. ALDA have always supported the enlargement process of the Western Balkans countries.

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alda



European Association
for Local Democracy

We continue working with our members and partners both in North Macedonia and Bulgaria to support cooperation between the people, while respecting the shared history and common cultural heritage of the two countries.

In this regard, we continue nurturing the European values of peace and prosperity.

Strasbourg, January 2021

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