



EESC supports the implementation of the Prespa Agreement and the start of the EU accession negotiations

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Luca Jahier, EESC President

Statement by

I have been following closely the latest developments and I fully support the swift entry into force and full implementation of the Prespa Agreement between Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on the change of name of the latter into Republic of North Macedonia.

I hope that the resolution of this long-standing issue, which is an example of reconciliation for Europe, will pave the way for the opening of the EU

accession negotiations with this Western Balkans country in June 2019, as foreseen by the Council Conclusions adopted in June 2018.

After the soon-to-be completed ratification of this historic agreement that finally brings some good news and hope from the Balkans, and provided that the Commission assesses that all the conditions are met, I don't see any reason why the Council in June could not unanimously back the country's deserved opening of the EU accession negotiation. The EU cannot and should not ignore the European aspirations of the Western Balkans.

The EESC wishes to raise the current cooperation to an even higher level and to re-launch the regular meetings of the Civil Society Joint Consultative Committee - a joint body established under the Stabilisation and Association Agreement - as soon as negotiations start.

This statement follows the meeting between Luca Jahier, President of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), and H.E. Agneza Rusi Popovska, Head of Mission of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to the European Union, held on 1 February 2019.