
EUROPE NEEDS BALKANS AND BALKANS NEED EUROPE, SAYS ALBANIA PM

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Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama calls for clearer enlargement prospects for the Western Balkans, saying it would be a huge mistake for the EU not to continue its engagement with the countries in the region. EURACTIV.fr reports.

Edi Rama was appointed prime minister of Albania in 2013.

French President Emmanuel Macron has made cautious declarations on the future of the Western Balkans in the European Union, what do you think of these declarations?

I already have had the opportunity to meet with President Macron, in Paris and Sofia. During these meetings, we discussed several different subjects such as the future of the Balkans and Albania, the reform of the European Union, etc.

I have said this for several months now, Albania is moving into a new phase. We received a clear recommendation from the European Commission to open negotiations, and I think we should start these negotiations, as we have worked hard to get here. This does not mean immediate accession, the aim is not to join today, but we will work to become a member within the years to come.

Speaking of becoming a member in the years to come, what do you think would be an appropriate accession date for Albania and the rest of the Western Balkans?

I don't think it's reasonable to set a deadline. I fully agree with Macron in that first we need to reform the EU before further enlargement.

A prior strengthening of relations is entirely legitimate, and I believe it is right. But the only thing that needs to be harmonised is a parallel strengthening of relations with the Balkans. The EU needs to give us the instruments to strengthen relations. Negotiations on accession were made to be a tool for stronger relations.

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