

Conte Pushes for Albania and North Macedonia to Join EU

Emily Hayes (October 18, 2019)



In the wake of an official Brexit deal between the UK and the European Union, leaders deadlocked last night on whether to allow Albania and North Macedonia to join, leaving Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte disappointed with the outcome.

Leaders in Europe failed to reach a decision on whether to allow Albania and the Republic of North Macedonia to join the European Union for the third time last night, resulting in discontent from leaders in those countries as well as Prime Minister of Italy Giuseppe Conte.

“I am very close to the Albanian community of North Macedonia, and they have made great efforts,”



Conte said.

President of the European Council [Donald Tusk](#) [2] and German Chancellor [Angela Merkel](#) [3] also supported negotiations for the inclusion of Albania and the Republic of North Macedonia.

The country changed its name from Macedonia to the Republic of North Macedonia last year after a 27-year-long dispute with Greece. The deal was made to stifle Macedonia's claims on a northern Greek territory of the same name.

Leaders also pointed out that the Republic of North Macedonia was instrumental for the European Union member states in handling the migration crisis of 2015. The neighboring country reduced the number of asylum seekers crossing the Balkans into Europe, according to an exchange between a European Union minister of Austria, Alexander Schallenberg, and a reporter at Politico.

However, President of France Emmanuel Macron led the opposition to negotiation and accession talks at the European Union Council Summit last night, claiming changes to the process are needed before any country should start going through it, and that Albania and North Macedonia also may not be ready.

Conte said the failure to start negotiating entrance into the European Union with Albania and North Macedonia was a "historic mistake, for which I am very sorry."

The prime minister was in the Albanian capital of Tirana earlier this week to reaffirm Italy's support for Prime Minister of Albania Edi Rama.

Conte said it was not just about the accession process, but about keeping an "open mind" with more opportunities for investment, trade and partnerships with neighboring countries that have strong historical ties.

Chinese and Russian influence in the Balkan countries continues to build, causing concern for the European Union and a need to maintain beneficial relationships, according to a [report](#) [4] by Euronews.

Tusk put the issue on the agenda for another upcoming summit of European leaders. On Twitter, he shared a message for Albania and the Republic of North Macedonia: "Don't give up! You did your share and we didn't. But I have absolutely no doubt that you will become full members of the European Union."

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[2] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donald_Tusk

[3] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angela_Merkel

[4] <https://www.euronews.com/2019/10/18/france-resists-eu-membership-talks-for-north-macedonia-and-albania>