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## **ALBANIA PM EDI RAMA WELCOMES EU APPROVAL OF ACCESSION TALKS**

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CISION PR News (29 June 2018)

Prime Minister Edi Rama today welcomed the European Council's statement supporting further progress towards the Western Balkan region's integration into the European Union. He described as historic the Council's decision to set June 2019 for the start of formal accession negotiations with Albania.

While acknowledging that the start date had disappointed some in Albania, the Prime Minister said the delay would have no material effect on the eventual timetable for accession. He said preparations for the formal negotiations would begin immediately and would simply follow on from informal talks that have been under way since 2009. He noted that a European Commission team will arrive in Tirana in July to begin the pre-negotiation screening process which involves comparative analysis of Albanian legislative instruments against EU standards.

Mr. Rama thanked the 25 EU nations who backed a faster start to formal talks. But he also thanked France and the Netherlands for their willingness to, "Listen again and again to our arguments until finally giving us due credit and becoming part of the solution, notwithstanding their internal issues and the approach they actually have on the enlargement process that is different compared to others."

He noted that the formal talks will begin after next year's European Parliament elections, which he said had been a, "significant political obstacle" to agreement on an earlier negotiating date with both Albania and Macedonia.

"However, the fact of the matter is that by this solution neither Albania nor Macedonia waste a single day; this is not wasting us 12 months, but rather giving us 12 months to deepen the implementation of our reforms and take all the mandatory steps under the preparatory stage of negotiations that are a must, even if the date had been set for today."

The Prime Minister pointed out that no new conditions had been set for compliance. "All conditions at this stage are precisely what we must and would do, either with or without a date set for the beginning of negotiations," he said.

Mr. Rama described the EU decision as a, "very critical moment for the future of Albania."

"Our Government views it as a validation of all the effort Albanians have made to raise standards, to build new institutions, to re-energise Albania's economy and to introduce a range of economic and political reforms," Mr. Rama said. "We will accelerate the efforts we are already making to bring our legislation into line with EU requirements so that the negotiations can be completed

quickly and efficiently."

He added: "We understand that the road to Europe is still long, but it is the best future we can hope for. We are pursuing reforms not for Europe's sake, but for our own sake. We will not stop now, we will make government more accountable to citizens, we will fight drugs and crime even more, we will continue with vetting even deeper, and we shall make Albania a better place to live in."

<https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/albania-pm-edi-rama-welcomes-eu-approval-of-accession-talks-686958001.html>

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