
GREEK PARLIAMENT SET TO VOTE ON MACEDONIA'S NATO PROTOCOL

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The Greek parliament is expected to vote on February 8 on the NATO accession protocol for neighboring Macedonia, bringing the end to a decades-old saga a step closer.

The vote comes after the former Yugoslav republic agreed with Greece last year to change its name to North Macedonia and following ratification of the deal by the countries' parliaments.

The vote is expected to take place in the evening.

Greece's objections to Skopje's use of the name "Macedonia" since the country's independence in 1991 complicated bids by the small Western Balkan state to join the European Union and NATO.

Athens asserted that the use of the name "Macedonia" suggests Skopje has territorial claims to Greece's northern region of Macedonia.

Negotiations between Greece and Macedonia were protracted and difficult. Nationalist groups in both countries opposed the deal, with many saying it gave up too much to the other side.

However, Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras and Macedonian counterpart Zoran Zaev were able to push through their accord as part of efforts to normalize relations.

Macedonian Foreign Minister Nikola Dimitrov on February 6 signed a NATO accession agreement, a key step toward Skopje's becoming the military alliance's 30th member.

Macedonia said it expected that Greece would be the first NATO member to ratify the accession protocol, after which the country will begin to call itself by its new name.

Greek lawmakers are expected to approve its neighbor's entry into NATO. Approval is expected to come from the other alliance members as well.

<https://www.rferl.org/a/greek-parliament-vote-on-macedonia-nato-protocol/29758337.html>

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