
FRENCH AMBASSADOR TO NORTH MACEDONIA: REFORMS MUST BE SUBSTANTIAL, NOT FORMAL

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The Ambassador of France to North Macedonia Christian Thimonier, has affirmed his countrys position on reassessing the enlargement process for the Western Balkans, speaking at the Defending European Values in the Accession Process civil society forum in Skopje on Tuesday afternoon, organized by Civil Rights Defenders.

Reforms in the accession countries must be substantial, not formal, assessed Thimonier, adding that the French opinion is very sensitive.

Expansion is reaching its limits. Do we really implement the same processes for accession? Do we really share the same values, or has the time come to start introducing additional steps?, said the ambassador.

In October, France rejected commencing enlargement talks for Albania and North Macedonia last month, and President Macron circulated an informal, six-page paper to EU diplomats on November 15, suggesting a revision to accession negotiations.

While little is still known about what these revisions may entail, or when negotiations will begin for Albania and North Macedonia, Ambassador Thimonier pointed out the example of Montenegro as a country which prematurely began opening chapters towards EU accession.

Does the accumulation of wealth in Montenegro indicate European values? Is that someone we want to share our sovereignty with? Wealth in Montenegro is concentrated within 10 or 12 families. That is why we would like to readdress and revisit enlargement rules. It has become about box-ticking rather than substantial progress, he added.

The civil society forum Defending European Values in the Accession Process brought together around a hundred human rights defenders from the Western Balkans, Turkey, and Eastern Europe, as well as key policymakers and representatives of EU member states.

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