

## **Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: The EPP Group wants a date for the opening of negotiations with the EU**

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"I want the European Union to fix a date, without delay, for the opening of EU accession negotiations for the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", said Joseph Daul MEP in Skopje where he is meeting the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister.

"The authorities in this country are determined to proceed with the necessary reforms to implement the *acquis communautaire* but they need a clear political signal from the European authorities in the form of a date for the opening of the negotiations. We mustn't wait any longer", said the Chairman of the biggest European parliamentary Group.

"I hope that the Belgian Presidency hears this plea."

On the controversial question of the country's name, Joseph Daul said that the talks between Skopje and Athens, which he fully supports, must be continued "in a purely bilateral context, under the auspices of the UN."

"This procedure is not linked to that of the accession negotiations. But turning the page on this chapter, which I hope will be soon, will create a calmer political atmosphere throughout the region."

Before visiting Albania (23-25 June), the Chairman of the EPP Group said: "Europe has an historic role to play in the Balkans."

"It is our responsibility to help these countries on the path to political and economic stability"

"We must invest politically and economically in the Balkans. Let us build a peaceful region where social cohesion is prioritised."