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ROMANIA AND BULGARIA CELEBRATE FULL SCHENGEN MEMBERSHIP WITH BORDER CEREMONIES

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By Jen Marsden with AP

Bulgaria's and Romania's full membership in the Schengen Area was celebrated on Wednesday, concluding years of negotiations for the Eastern European countries to join the ID-check-free travel zone.

On the first day of the new year, Bulgaria's caretaker prime minister, Dimitar Glavchev, symbolically lifted the border barrier at the Kulata crossing between Bulgaria and Greece.

"Today is a historic moment, the fruit of the efforts of many people. It is also a fact thanks to the border police, the military, Frontex staff and all our allies in the European Union. Together, we will all be much better able to protect the EU's external borders from Greece all the way to Finland," he said.

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