

FYR Macedonia: 2018 country report

During its November II 2018 plenary session, the European Parliament is expected to debate a resolution on the European Commission's 2018 enlargement report on the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYR Macedonia). The progress report acknowledges significant progress and a political will to advance the EU agenda.

Background

FYR Macedonia has been a candidate for EU membership since 2005. The Commission first [recommended](#) the start of accession talks with the country in 2009. A prolonged political crisis began with parliamentary elections in 2014. An EU-mediated [agreement](#) paved the way for renewed elections in 2016, which were followed by several months of [uncertainty](#) before a new government was installed in June 2017; since then, former prime minister, Nikolas Gruevski, recently fled to Hungary to avoid a two-year sentence over abuse of power. In 2017, FYR Macedonia and Bulgaria signed [a friendship treaty](#), setting the path for good neighbourly relations. Relations with Greece have long been [strained](#) by the name dispute; however, in June 2018 Athens and Skopje agreed to [re-name](#) the country the 'Republic of North Macedonia'. The [agreement](#) was confirmed by a September 2018 referendum. Although opposition parties [contest](#) the validity of the result due to low turnout, it opens a path to ending the 27-year dispute. Accordingly, the government [submitted](#) to Parliament four draft constitutional amendments on 2 November 2018, launching the second phase of adopting the name agreement. For its part, Greece has not yet started the [ratification](#) process. In July 2018, NATO welcomed the name agreement (full implementation of which is a condition for NATO membership) and invited FYR Macedonia to begin [accession talks](#) prison sentence over abuse of power.

2018 Commission report

In previous years, the Commission made its recommendation for the Council to open accession talks conditional on FYR Macedonia implementing the '[Urgent Reform Priorities](#)'; the 2018 [report](#) notes that substantial progress has been made on this. FYR Macedonia is commended for overcoming a deep political crisis; the [new reform-minded government](#) has brought in additional checks and balances, strengthening democracy and the rule of law. Public administration and financial reforms have progressed. Previous backsliding in the judiciary has been curtailed, with the adoption of new and credible judicial reforms; but sustained efforts will be necessary to guarantee its independence. There have been improvements in developing a functioning market economy. Although the level of preparation for the fight against corruption and organised crime has improved, these remain serious problems. Political interference and financial crimes remain key concerns. The report emphasises the importance of strengthening competent independent and regulatory bodies as well as providing them an adequate budget and skilled staff.

FYR Macedonia 2018 report – summary

	Progress	Level of preparation
Organised crime	None	Some
Fight Against Corruption	Some	Some
PAR	Good	Moderate
Judiciary	Good	Moderate
Economic Criteria	Some	Good
Freedom of Expression	Good	Good

European Parliament position

On 9 October 2018, European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) adopted a [motion for a resolution](#) on the Commission's report. It praises FYR Macedonia's strong commitments to reform, but also reiterates some of the concerns mentioned by the Commission, such as organised crime and the separation of powers. In particular, it encourages the Skopje government to honour the outcome of the referendum on the country's name, in line with the June 2018 [agreement](#) with Greece. It calls on EU Member States which are also NATO members to support FYR Macedonia's accession to NATO, as a step towards greater security and political stability in south-eastern Europe.

Own-initiative report: [2018/2145\(INI\)](#); Committee responsible: AFET; Rapporteur: Ivo Vajgl (ALDE, Slovenia).

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Author: Martin Russell with Amaia Garcés de los Fayos Alonso, Members' Research Service
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epprs@ep.europa.eu (contact) <http://www.eprs.ep.parl.union.eu> (intranet) <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank> (internet) <http://epthinktank.eu> (blog)