

**EUROPEAN UNION-FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF  
MACEDONIA  
JOINT PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE**

**11<sup>th</sup> Meeting**

**European Parliament**

**Strasbourg**

**22-23 May 2013**

**Declaration and Recommendations**

**(Adopted on 23 May)**

The EU - Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Joint Parliamentary Committee held its 11<sup>th</sup> meeting in Brussels on 22-23 May 2013 under the joint Chairmanship of Mr Jorgo CHATZIMARKAKIS (ALDE, Germany) and Mr Kenan HASIPI (Democratic Party of Turks, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia).

At this meeting, the Committee held an exchange of views with Mr Andrej Lepavcov, Ambassador, Mission of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to the EU, on behalf of the Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; Mr Aivo Orav, Head of EU Delegation in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, representing the Council of the European Union, and the European Commission.

The Joint Parliamentary Committee, pursuant to Rule 3 of its Rules of Procedure, addresses the following recommendations to the institutions of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and of the European Union:

The Joint Parliamentary Committee addressed the following issues:

The relations between the European Union (EU) and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia;

Recent developments in the context of the High Level Accession Dialogue:

- Rule of law, incl. Inter - community dialogue and reforms in the field of judiciary and public administration as well as fight against corruption;
- Freedom of expression and the media;
- Electoral reform with a view to the local elections held on 24 March and 7 April;
- Strengthening market economy by increasing social cohesion;
- Good neighbourly relations;
- Alternative ways for use of renewable energy sources.

Taking into account:

- A. the European Commission Progress Report on the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2012-2013 of 10 October 2012;
- B. European Commission Progress Report of 16 April 2013 on implementation of reforms in the country within the framework of the High Level Accession Dialogue, and promotion of good neighbourly relations;
- C. Declaration and recommendations from the 10<sup>th</sup> meeting of the EU-former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia JPC of 7<sup>th</sup> June 2012;
- D. the European Council conclusions of 13 December 2012;
- E. High Level Accession Dialogue, and in particular the joint conclusions of the latest meeting held on 9 April 2013 in Skopje;

On the relations between the EU and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

1. Welcomes and agrees with the Commission Progress Report of October last year, according to which the country made visible progress in a number of key areas, and the recommendation given for the fourth time that the country meets the criteria for a start of accession negotiations with the EU, and notes the past European Parliament annual Resolutions on the Progress Report for the country;
2. Welcomes the continuation of the High Level Accession Dialogue (HLAD), which provided a good platform for return of the reforms and the EU agenda in the focus of public debates and represented a significant catalyst for implementation of reforms between the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the European Commission and the joint commitments, providing valuable support to the accession process of the country by focusing on key reform priorities; however, recalls its previous opinion that HLAD is not a substitute for EU membership negotiations;
3. Points out that the dynamism brought by HLAD into the reform process was acknowledged by all 27 EU Member States in December 2012; having in mind the request by the Council to the Commission from December 2012 and the possibility for opening accession negotiations with the country provided certain conditions are met, and with regard to the Spring Report by the European Commission, calls on the European Council to grant the country a date for accession negotiations with the EU;
4. Welcomes the continued smooth implementation of the country's obligations under the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) and the Commission's standing proposal to pass to the second stage of the Association;
5. Welcomes the participation of the country within bilateral and regional framework and takes note of the steps taken in the bilateral relations with neighbouring countries in the framework of maintaining of good neighbourly relations; expects the formal talks on the name issue between the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Greece to bring new momentum for a mutually acceptable solution; takes note of the commitment to strengthening bilateral relations between the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Bulgaria and encourages both sides to further promote their mutual relations; commends the

country for the successful realisation of the SEECP Chairmanship, thus confirming its commitment for a constructive regional cooperation;

6. Takes note of the events of 24 December 2012 in the Sobranie; welcomes the political agreement of 1 March this year that ended the crisis, by which politicians demonstrated democratic maturity; expects all parties to this agreement to behave responsibly and implement it fully and without delays; points to the importance of establishment of the Committee of Inquiry, and agreement on the Memorandum of Understanding or an Assembly Declaration for a cross party commitment to EU integration;
7. Welcomes the efficiently conducted and competitive local elections on 24 March and 7 April in the country and the calm and orderly election days; at the same time, takes into account the preliminary conclusions of the report of OSCE/ODIHR and the mentioned shortcomings, including the biased media coverage and the interference by the government and party activities, which affected the equality in the competition between candidates; encourages the country's government and parties to continue working on a comprehensive electoral reform and in particular to fully implement the recommendations of OSCE/ODIHR in this regard;
8. Encourages inclusiveness and transparency of the reform process in the country, in particular the more intensive inclusion of the Parliament and the National Council of European Integration, as well as relevant civil society representatives in the HLAD;
9. Welcomes the recent legislative reforms in the field of freedom of expression and the media in line with European standards, including, most importantly the decriminalisation of defamation and insult; calls on continuation of the activities of the Media Working Group chaired by the Deputy-Prime Minister in charge of EU integration and inclusion of journalists in the adoption of reforms in this field; encourages wider debate on this issue with the aim of strengthening the confidence between the Government and the Association of Journalists;
10. Welcomes the Government report for further implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement and the inclusion of all communities in state institutions, through measures for employment, education, and assistance to the less represented communities in the country; expects the Report to be presented publicly, in order to generate a wider societal and political support for the multi-ethnic future of the state;
11. Recommends a strengthened political dialogue to be the key factor for further advancement in the field of multi-ethnic and multi-confessional society and in elimination of inter-ethnic incidents and risk of division across ethnic lines;
12. Welcomes the legal changes and information campaigns aimed to increase efficiency and transparency of the judicial system, especially with regard to the Academy of Judges and Prosecutors, professionalism and the merit based recruitment of judges that aim at strengthening of confidence of citizens in judicial institutions and at elimination of the risks for independence and impartiality of the judiciary in practice; and recommends the Government to fully implement these changes and to continue these efforts;
13. Welcomes the strengthening of the anti-corruption legal framework aimed at increased transparency of the special investigative measure and regarding conflict of interests, as well as the improvement of verification capacities of state authorities and their authorisations; however, urges the government to address all cases of corruption; and encourages the

country to establish a track-record for convictions in high-level cases; commends the achievements in the field of fight against organised crime and the joint work of state institutions; notes the good cooperation with Interpol and Europol;

14. Welcomes the updated Strategy on Public Administration Reform which was adopted by the Government in October 2012 and calls for its full implementation to guarantee transparency, professionalism and independence of the public administration; notes in particular the cooperation with SIGMA experts in the preparation and the methodology for employment of members of the communities on the merit -based principle;
15. Recognises the commitments of the country to maintain macroeconomic stability, good business climate and clearance of all outstanding payments; recalls on the importance of a consultative mechanism between the government, companies and trade unions for finding acceptable measures to alleviate the economic crisis; welcomes the measures for attraction of foreign investments and calls on cautious management of the public sector debt and public expenditure;
16. Notes the high structural unemployment, especially of the youth, posing a serious problem due to the economic crisis even in the European countries; welcomes the Action Plan on Youth Employment prepared in cooperation with "Decent Work Programme" of the World Labour Organization and the measures for self-employment, allocation of credits and subsidies; in that sense, supports the government to continue using benefits of the Pre-Accession Instrument (IPA) programmes;
17. Welcomes the adoption of the legal regulations in accordance with EU Directives for renewable energy resources and the target set for 21% of renewable resources by 2020; appreciates the envisaged measures for production of energy from these resources and the planned referential tariffs; encourages the government to continue with measures enabling entrance of direct investments, having in mind the country's potential and its geographic location.