

EUROPEAN UNION-FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

JOINT PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE

**9th meeting
3-4 November 2011
Skopje**

MINUTES

First working session

Opening of the meeting

Mr Kenan HASIPI and Mr Jorgo CHATZIMARKAKIS, *Co-Chairmen of the Joint Parliamentary Committee* opened the meeting at 15.15 on 3 November and welcomed the participants.

Mr Kenan HASIPI and Mr Jorgo CHATZIMARKAKIS introduced the meeting mentioning the high expectations this 9th *Joint Parliamentary Committee* raised in the context of the last Commission's progress report and introduced the delegations.

Mr Kenan HASIPI insisted on the need for constructive discussions and reminded that if the last *Joint Parliamentary Committee* was affected by several events, such as the parliamentary elections, the context was now stabilised and generally favourable. He mentioned the common will shared by the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Commission to start the accession talks, reminding how much the progress report was considered as a roadmap for national reforms programs. However, he pointed out the unanimous regret of the Sobranie of the absence of the adjective "*Macedonian*" in the progress report and called the Commission to examine its non-use in line with the terminology of the United Nations. He supported the view that bilateral issues should not block the whole process and re-emphasised the crucial importance of accession for the whole region and the need for the Macedonian credibility to be guaranteed, in line with its high assessments.

Andrej PETROV also highlighted that membership in the EU is in the strategic interest of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. He shared the existence of a consensus in the Sobranie about the objectiveness of the progress report and the regretful lack of the adjective "*Macedonian*". He mentioned the judiciary system, the Human rights corpus and the civil society participation as key challenges for the upcoming period.

Mr Jorgo CHATZIMARKAKIS affirmed that the European Parliament (EP) had taken full note of the resolution carried by the Sobranie and said to be aware of the impacts this shortcoming had on the general perception of the EU.

1. Adoption of the draft agenda

The draft agenda was adopted.

2. Approval of the minutes of the 8th meeting of the EU- Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Joint Parliamentary Committee held on 29-30 November 2010 in Brussels

The minutes of the 8th meeting of the EU-Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Joint Parliamentary Committee on **on 29-30 November 2010 in Brussels** were approved.

3. Exchange of views with representatives of the Government, of the Council of the European Union and the European Commission on the relations between the European Union and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Mr Robert LIDDELL, acting Head of EU Delegation in Skopje, mentioned the track record of this *Joint Parliamentary Committee* in building bridges and the various recent important developments occurred in the Enlargement Policy and in the Western Balkans. He recognised that by renewing its recommendations to start the accession negotiations, the Commission acknowledged the relevance and the quality of the undertaken reforms. In addition, he mentioned the foreseen conclusions on the enlargement package of the Council in December and described the general lines of the Commission's progress report.

On the political criteria, the Commission recognised that the parliamentary elections were generally in line with international standards, but outlined that the OSCE recommendations still needed to be fully addressed. The dialogue between the government and the opposition was interrupted and henceforth needs to be strengthened. He reminded the support of the Commission to the Sobranie in its effort to play its full constitutional role. Moreover, he confirmed the concerns about freedom of the media and freedom of expression and welcomed the launch of a dialogue between the government and journalists. He also referred to the progress made in judiciary and public administration calling for reforms' implementation. On the economic criteria, he shared the view that the country is reasonable advanced, even if public administration efficiency, deficiencies in the rule of law and unemployment issues still have to be tackled. Regarding the transcription of the acquis the progress report acknowledges good progress. He reminded the full commitment of the Commission in supporting this catching up process and mentioned the financial contribution for the period 2007-2011.

Ms Teuta ARIFI, Deputy Prime Minister in charge of European Affairs, insisted on the institutional roles of the Sobranie in the framework of the legislative approximation and harmonisation with the EU acquis and reminded its role in enabling political dialogue and establishing consensus.

She affirmed that the core activities of the last months were related to the list of tasks received from the EU and mentioned to this purpose the agreed action plan in relation to all the issues related to the integration process. Furthermore, she insisted on the dialogue process between the government and the journalists and the progress expected. On the regional dimension, she reminded that the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia had initiated the meeting of ministers for European Affairs in the Western Balkans. She repeated that the recommendations for launching negotiations were a signal of the EU acceptance of the undertaken reforms. She mentioned the special progresses attained in the decentralised implementation of the IPA fund. By those means, EU is seen as an objective reality which supports the country in a consistent

manner. Lastly, she reiterated that the whole accession process should not take hostage by bilateral issues.

Mr Nikola POPOVSKI, Foreign Affairs Minister expressed his satisfaction with the renewed recommendations from the Commission to start the accession talks and considered the progress report to be objective. He stated that the attractiveness of the EU was above all related to the share of common values as defined in the Charter of the Fundamental Rights. He affirmed that the commitment of the EU to advance these values by respecting cultural diversity, as for languages, was a key motivating factor for the membership. The whole enlargement process faced difficulties but bilateral issues were always overcome, which he considered to be achievable between Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in the respect of the European fundamental values. The decision for the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to make a step forward would be a win-win situation, whereas the delay of the talks can have an important demotivating effect.

Mr Richard HOWITT expressed his pleasure to have been appointed as a rapporteur of the EP's Foreign Affairs Committee on the progress report of the country, presented his commitment to the enlargement process and reminded the neutral role of a rapporteur. He mentioned his deep understanding of the multiethnic character of this country and his sensitivity on the situation of the Roma. Furthermore, he reminded that the European Parliament did not want this country to be forgotten in the process. He mentioned that the country had the strongest economy among the applicants in the region. When it comes to the sensitive issues, he expressed an open-minded attitude. In addition, he shared the concern of visa liberalisation, explaining that a strong debate was taking place within in the EU on migration and confirmed to be supportive of a visa-free arrangement. On the name issue, he considered that there was no obligation to put pressure and that the EU had an obligation to promote the enlargement process when a solution is found. Concerning the lack of the adjective "*Macedonian*" in the progress report, he assured that he will carefully take note of the arguments. As regards a concrete date, he supported the start of talks as soon as possible and made a point about the possibility of moving to the second phase of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, without considering it as an alternative to the start of talks.

Mr Kenan HASIPI mentioned a unanimously adopted resolution on the progress report by the Sобрание.

Mr Antonijo MILOSHOSKI, referring to the conclusions of the Sобрание, expressed this idea that a large consensus existed on the will to start negotiations and that a unanimous call of the protection of the dignity of the Macedonian citizens had been made. He mentioned that the popularity of the EU among the citizens stemmed on the belief that the EU was united on high human principles.

Mr. Samka IBRAIMOSKI declared his interest in what **Mr Richard HOWITT** had said about the Roma and reminded that the progress report stated that the position of the Roma in the country should be improved.

Speakers on this item:

Mr Robert LIDDELL, Ms Teuta ARIFI, Mr Nikola POPOVSKI, Mr Richard HOWITT, Mr Kenan HASIPI, Mr Antonijo MILOSHOSKI, Mr. Samka IBRAIMOSKI

4. Marking the 10th Anniversary of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, in the context of the cultural diversity in the state

Mr Arben LJABENISHTA explained the fundamental importance of the Ohrid Framework Agreement for the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as a multiethnic country which explains that its implementation and its interpretation remains one of the priorities of the government. Several problems were identified and required reforms to be implemented in the area of education, decentralisation, the use of languages and representation of minorities in institutions. He described the reforms that had been carried out so far. Furthermore, he mentioned the steps made in the increased representation of the various ethnic groups in the public administration while regretting a still low level in the private sector. He mentioned the regulated decision-making processes at the local level to guarantee citizens' participation. Moreover, he expressed the importance of the language component of the Ohrid Agreement Framework and amendments to the Law on the use of languages used by at least 20% of the citizens in the Republic of Macedonia that had been passed. Lastly, he emphasised that the goal in the education sector was to make possible for children to be educated in their own mother tongue and to avoid ethnic divisions in schools.

Mr Andrey KOVATCHEV affirmed that the Ohrid Framework Agreement proved to be the right formula and should be respected. He concentrated on the challenges ahead especially in the education area and the need for a public administration based on merits. He mentioned the importance of objective historical textbooks. He insisted on the need for a joint political will in the field of reforms. He then mentioned the necessity for opening the archives of communist secret services and publishing the names of the collaborators of the repressive apparatus of the communist regime. He then stressed that this should be done by an independent authority with sufficient resources and a clear mandate, which should have the necessary archives and secret files at its disposal at its own premises. He concluded by the need for bridges with Bulgaria and Greece and suggested confident measure among which common celebration of the common history and commemoration of common historical events and figures.

Mr Dimitar STOYANOV raised a question about the Macedonians who define themselves as Bulgarian and brought up the issue of a refusal to register a Bulgarian association in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. He reminded that the last time this fact occurred, the European Court for Human Rights imposed a sanction on the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. He reminded that those people were still afraid of being persecuted which had to be recognised. He mentioned the government funding for a movie which gave very damaging image of Bulgarians and explained how negative this sort of initiatives was.

Mr Aleksandar NIKOLOSKI affirmed that the Ohrid Framework Agreement had been successfully functioning and made a point on the smaller ethnic communities which are not mentioned in the Constitution. He reassured the JPC participants of the efforts made by the Sobranie and the Government to guarantee that no one is prevented from declaring its ethnic affiliation. He reminded the twenty years of good relationships between the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Bulgaria and the need for politicians to build their professional carrier on mutual respect and understanding.

Mr Dimitar STOYANOV indicated that it was exactly the point of his speech.

Mr Jorgo CHATZIMARKAKIS mentioned his presence at the tenth celebration ceremony of the Ohrid Framework Agreement and the excellent speech of the Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski saying that cultural diversity is wealth and of **Ms Teuta ARIFI** expressing her dream of a modern society where peaceful living together is guaranteed. However, he regretted that only the Albanian community stayed after the speech of the Prime Minister and called for a wider consensus on modern society definition.

Ms Silvana BONEVA pointed out the great realisations in term of reconciliation over the past decade. The unanimity on the resolution passed on the progress report was underlined as a proof of the full support from all the ethnic communities to the Macedonian one. She mentioned reforms to be continued in line with the progress report, the raising frustration among the population and its possible impact in terms of radicalism and the need for cooperation with Greece.

Mr Kenan HASIPI shared the view that in relation to the Ohrid Framework Agreement, the time factor had to be taken into consideration. The agreement was signed after serious conflicts and from there it prevented a larger scale conflict. A lot has been implemented but challenges remains, like the official use of mother tongue by community representing less than 25% of the population.

Ms Liljana POPOVSKA explained the different phases of the Ohrid agreement indicating that claims from smaller communities were now rising and that their frustration as well as the frustrations of the larger community had to be prevented. The NGOs and the civil society have a key role to play in reducing discrimination as they allow multicultural links.

Mr Richard HOWITT highlighted the existence of the women caucus and cross-party cooperation indicating how fruitful that sort of work could be.

Speakers on this item:

Mr Arben LJABENISHTA, Mr Andrey KOVATCHEV, Mr Dimitar STOYANOV, Mr Aleksandar NIKOLOSKI, Mr Jorgo CHATZIMARKAKIS, Ms Silvana BONEVA, Mr Kenan HASIPI, Ms Liljana POPOVSKA, Richard HOWITT

The JPC was adjourned at 18.30 and resumed at 09.00 the next day.

5. Reforms of the public administration, judiciary, the fight against corruption and organised crime, and the current visa liberalisation developments

Mr Antonijo MILOSHOSKI highlighted the different reforms undertaken in this domain and indicated that the reforms on public administration and judiciary were increasing with the strong determination of the Assembly and of the Government. The motivations are political and functional but also economic. In the field of public administration, the package of laws foresees possibilities for merit-based civil servants carriers. In the judiciary area, he mentioned the modest but increasing budget and its positive contribution to the possibility for increasing professionalism of judges. He spoke about the laws foreseeing new procedures for election of judges and public prosecutors. Concerning the fight against corruption, a change in mindset was outlined as well as a progress in the Transparency International ranking. He also described the visa liberalisation regime as a very positive achievement in favour of EU's reputation in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and reassured that measures will be taken to minimise abuses.

Ms Monica Luisa MACOVEI started by expressing her support for a date for starting of the accession negotiations. According to her, only Greece was blocking the process while all the other Member States had recognised the country under its constitutional denomination. She also affirmed that Greece was violating the agreement of 2005 where it committed not to obstruct the process of accession to any international organisation as long as the name "*Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*" was used. Concerning the judiciary, she stated that the random allocation of cases was operational and that the academy for training of judges and prosecutors was producing results, including the questionable one about having young judges. She mentioned important progress while accountability and the efficiency issues still

needed to be addressed as a result of an over-focus on independence. In terms of fight against corruption, she welcomed the inclusion in the criminal code of the illicit enrichment and extended confiscation while addressing some pending concerns about declarations of interests. However, she declared that the most important remaining issue was the funding of political parties and campaigns. Concerning the fight against organised crime, she mentioned the operational agreement with EUROPOL and the intelligence database to come.

Mr Stanimir ILCHEV addressed a question about the non sentence based confiscation of properties obtained through criminal activities.

Mr Antonijo MILOSHOSKI answered that the mechanism of freezing the account or the property of highly suspected person was increasingly used but that there was no position of the Constitutional Court on the confiscation before the Court judgment.

Ms Monica Luisa MACOVEI stated that tax authorities could fine 70% of the value of the property in case of tax fraud.

Mr Pavle TRAJANOV expressed his view on the general progressed towards stability made in the Balkans since the 1990's and affirmed that the concrete realization of the accession process was a guarantee for this stability to be sustainable.

Speakers on this item:

Mr Antonijo MILOSHOSKI, Ms Monica Luisa MACOVEI, Mr Stanimir ILCHEV, Mr Pavle TRAJANOV

Second working session

Before starting to discuss the points on the agenda, **Mr Jorgo CHATZIMARKAKIS** informed the delegations about the progresses made concerning the amendments and put a central amendment to the vote. The latter was discussed and adopted.

6. Civil society and citizens' participation in decision-making process, the freedom of expression and media - Overview of the situation

Mr Andrej PETROV concentrated his intervention on topics pointed out as needed additional efforts. On the freedom of association, he mentioned the special article dedicated to it in the Constitution and the action plan 2007-2011 on the cooperation with the civil sector undertaken by the Government. The parliament adopted a new law on associations and foundations stemming from the review of the practices and the regulations in this area on a European level. He stated that the idea of this regulation was to secure free association in accordance with European practices. The implementation should now be monitored and the Macedonia Centre for International Cooperation took over this task, which guarantees the transparency and the accountability of the process. Furthermore, he also mentioned the creation of a Joint Consultative Committee for the civil society between the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the European Economic and Social Committee. He insisted on progress related to public debates organisation and the fact that substantial proposals formulated by the civil society on this abovementioned regulation had been integrated. In addition, he recognised that more focus was needed in the field of freedom of expression, especially regarding the obligation of the public broadcasting service to provide a true picture of the political situation. He then mentioned that a roundtable organised with journalists led to an agreement on an action plan.

Mr Stanimir ILCHEV insisted on the role of civil society in a modern society, as citizens' participation often results in better options and should be codified and guaranteed. The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights reported credible allegations of insufficient separation between the State and political parties, as well as pressures on civil servants. He mentioned the progress made in electronic media area while regretting that some facts were undermining those achievements. The example of the nomination of members of the Broadcasting Council was taken as an example of politicised nomination. He recognised that the Government entered in an open dialogue with the media and insisted on the responsibility from both side not to manipulate historical facts. Lastly, He insisted on the expectation from the neighbouring countries to see a decrease in the negative publications and hate speeches.

Mr Andrej PETROV added a short note about the absence of negative feeling towards neighbouring countries among the citizens.

Mr Antonijo MILOSHOSKI acknowledged that some heritages from the cold war time were still producing effects while at the same time, using the European model and funds, all the countries should engage facilitating project for learning more about the other countries. He insisted on the human capital and on students' exchanges which can overcome difficulties posed by extreme groups.

Ms Liljana POPOVSKA made a point on the need for politicians to share views on the future while historical discussions should be left to historians. She emphasised the importance of the democratisation of the media, the developed civil sector and its inclusion in drafting of some related regulations.

Ms Silvana BONEVA mentioned her wish to see Greece overcoming its economic crisis so that both countries can build constructive bilateral relations. She underlined the wide range of media in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and considered that their existence was a proof of the openness of the society. Moreover, she underlined the necessity of students' exchanges to stop hate speech and the need for the society to face the past and open difficult chapters of history. She admitted the existence of negative feeling towards some neighbouring countries and expressed her confidence towards the Bulgarian support.

Mr Jorgo CHATZIMARKAKIS introduced a precision about the European Parliament commitment to the freedom of expression stating that this commitment also included monitoring in the founding EU Member States such as Italy and sent greetings to the Government for launching an open dialogue with the media.

Ms Monica Luisa MACOVEI mentioned the issue of journalists being charged for tax evasion insisting that if the charges were legitimate this was criminal law issue and not a freedom of expression concern.

Speakers on this item:

Mr Andrej PETROV, Mr Stanimir ILCHEV, Ms. Liljana POPOVSKA, Mr Antonijo MILOSHOSKI, Ms Silvana BONEVA, Mr Jorgo CHATZIMARKAKIS, Ms Monica Luisa MACOVEI

7. Economic situation, crisis in the Eurozone and the effects on the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia;

Ms Silvana BONEVA stated that over the past years, the reports welcomed the maintenance of macro-economical stability. Being a country with a small and open economy the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia boosted the level of its trade up to 40% of the GDP in 2010. The trade integration with the EU has been largely improved while price competition remained unchanged. The report notes improvements in the area of banks and financial conglomerates. Even more importantly, she mentioned the last report of the World Bank which gives the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia the twelfth position in reforms ahead of all the countries in the region. The global crisis however presents important risks for the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The rising oil prices had an impact on the global price level which in turn had global impacts on the whole economy and on trade and budget deficit. The situation in Greece was described as an important challenge for the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in terms of trading and cooperation. From 2009, exports to Greece kept dwindling while they grew for the whole EU area. Imports from Greece have grown with a negative impact on trade deficit. If cross border movement are complicated, it will have additional negative impacts. The diminution of Greek foreign direct investments presents a risk of outflow of liquidity. She considered that the ongoing strikes in the Greek tax administration delay gathering revenues which had strongly impacted the budget. Concerning the banking system, she presented a low exposure to Greek entities which can be easily subject to capitalisation. Eventually, she supported the conclusion of the Euro-zone Summit on the fiscal compact.

Mr Jorgo CHATZIMARKAKIS started his intervention with the banking crisis and a summary of the chronology of the crisis. He pointed out that the uncertainty maintained by Germany about the possible bail out of any country of the Euro-zone made the crisis possible as a result of financial actors' speculation on countries bankruptcy. He mentioned that Greece now has to implement unfeasible austerity policies and made a summary of the political events in Greece concerning the referendum proposed by Prime Minister Papandreou and the vote of confidence. He welcomed the volunteer contribution of banks which still has to be detailed. He called for a rescue package that would contain a sort of “Marshall Plan” and ended saying how important was the creation of a fiscal union in the Eurozone and the conflict emerging between the different Member States on this issue.

Ms Liljana POPOVSKA confirmed the concerns about the Greek economy and her support for the idea that an excessive pressure on citizens would be counterproductive. She deplored a schematic approach towards this crisis.

Speakers on this item:

Ms Silvana BONEVA, Mr. Jorgo CHATZIMARKAKIS, Ms Liljana POPOVSKA

8. Transport corridors in the state and the use of European funds for their implementation

Mr Oliver SPASOVSKI presented a comprehensive review of the ongoing reforms in the field of transports. He mentioned the undertaken reconstruction efforts on corridor X and the finalisation of a motorway towards the Serbian border. The important participation of IPA fund, ERBD loans and World Bank credits were welcomed by him. In addition, he mentioned the reconstruction of the section towards Greece. On the other hand, he mentioned the importance of corridor VIII, linking the Black Sea and the Ionian Sea, and due to its liaison with Albanian ports. Concerning the railway corridors, he mentioned studies to be carried out and the demands from the private sector for investments in this sector due to its lower costs. Incoming improvements of the Skopje railway main station were also presented. The reconstruction of local and regional roads was also described as an area of concern with attention to constructing new networks and modernising existing roads. He eventually

mentioned the joining of the CARGO 10 network by the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the efforts made in the area of legal framework and approximation with EU legislation.

Mr Michael CRAMER considered that the EU model was not a good one as 30% of the CO2 emissions were due to transport and 72% of them to the roads. He affirmed that the pollution in the transports sector had increased over the last decades. Furthermore, he claimed that to stop climate change one should concentrate on a change of mobility, upgrading railroads and public transports, and undertaking tax reforms, to make them more attractive. Lastly, he made a remark on the possible negative impacts of tourism and advocated introduction of eco-tourism.

Ms Silvana BONEVA approved the overall idea of improving cross border movement towards Bulgaria and to all other neighbours.

Mr Romeo TRENNOV welcomed the efforts undertaken to connect villages closely linked in the past and claimed the great importance of the area between Staro Konjarevo and Gabrene.

Speakers on this item:

Mr Oliver SPASOVSKI, Mr Michael CRAMER, Ms. Silvana BONEVA, Mr Romeo TRENNOV

9. Consideration and adoption of the Recommendations

In the following section of the meeting, the nine amendments tabled by members of the JPC were debated and voted.

As a result the text produced as a whole has been accepted by the Committee (attached).

10. Any other business;

None.

11. Date and place of the 10th meeting of the EU- Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Joint Parliamentary Committee.

The JPC agreed to hold the next meeting on 23-24 April 2012 in Brussels.

The meeting ended at 12.00 on 4 November



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

EUROPEAN UNION-FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA JOINT PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE

9TH MEETING
Skopje, 2-4 November 2011

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Members of the European Parliament

	Group	Country	Committee
Full members			
Mr Jorgo CHATZIMARKAKIS <i>Chairman</i>	ALDE	Germany	Budgetary Control
Ms Anni PODIMATA	S-D	Greece	Industry, Research and Energy; Economic and Monetary Affairs
Mr Michael CRAMER	Verts/ALE	Germany	Transport & Tourism
Mr Dimitar STOYANOV	NI	Bulgaria	Legal Affairs
Substitute member			
Mr Stanimir ILCHEV	ALDE	Bulgaria	Constitutional Affairs
Mr Andrey KOVATCHEV	PPE	Bulgaria	Foreign Affairs; Security and Defence
Ms Monica Luisa MACOVEI	PPE	Romania	Budgetary control; Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs
AFET rapporteur			
Mr Richard HOWITT	S-D	UK	Foreign Affairs

Abbreviations:

EPP: European People's Party in the EP;
S&D: Progressive Alliance of Socialists & Democrats in the EP;
ALDE: Alliance of the Liberal & Democrats for Europe;
Greens/EFA: Greens/European Free Alliance in the EP;
NI: Non-attached

Participants of the Assembly of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

	Name and surname	Parliamentary Group
1.	Kenan Hasipi	DPTM
2.	Andrej Petrov	SDSM
3.	Ermira Mehmeti	DUI
4.	Silvana Boneva	VMRO-DPMNE
5.	Vladimir Gjorchev	VMRO-DPMNE
6.	Antonijo Miloshoski	VMRO -DPMNE
7.	Ilija Kitanoski	VMRO-DPMNE
8.	Aleksandar Spasenovski	VMRO-DPMNE
9.	Ivan Stoiljkovikj	DPSM
10.	Arben Ljabenishta	DUI
11.	Ziadin Sela	DPA
12.	Oliver Spasovski	SDSM
13.	Marinela Tusheva	SDSM
14.	Tanja Tomich	SDSM
15.	Stanka Anastasova	SDSM

Abbreviations:

"DPTM - Democratic Party of the Turks in Macedonia"

"VMRO-DPMNE- Internal Revolutionary Organization - Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity"

"SDSM - Social Democratic Union of Macedonia"

"DUI - Democratic Union for Integration"

"DPA - Democratic Party of Albanians"

"DPSM - Democratic Party of Serbs in Macedonia"

Secretariat of EP delegation

Mr Benjamin REY, Administrator

Ms Marianne LORENTZEN, Administrative Assistant

Policy advisors of the political groups

Mr Marek HANNIBAL, PPE

Mr Ciprian MATEI, S&D

Mr Jeroen REIJNEN, ALDE

Mr Paolo BERGAMASCHI, Green/EFA group

EU delegation, Skopje

Mr Robert LIDDELL, Acting Head of Delegation

Ms Marina KURTE, Advisor on EU Integration and Legal Issues.

European Commission, Brussels

Ms Karin MAANDI, DG Enlargement

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

9th Meeting - Skopje, 3-4 November 2011

Recommendations
(Adopted on 4 November 2011)

The EU - Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Joint Parliamentary Committee held its 9th meeting in Skopje on 3-4 November 2011 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 Ms Teuta ARIFI, Deputy Prime Minister in charge of EU Integration, and Mr Nikola POPOSKI, Minister of Foreign Affairs, on behalf of the Government of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Mr Robert LIDDELL, Acting Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, on behalf of the European Union.

The Joint Parliamentary Committee addressed the following issues:

- ❖ The relations between the European Union and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia;
- ❖ Marking the 10th Anniversary of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, in the context of the cultural diversity in the state;
- ❖ Reforms of the public administration, judiciary, the fight against corruption and organised crime, and the current visa liberalisation developments;
- ❖ Civil society and citizens' participation in decision-making process, the freedom of expression and media - Overview of the situation;
- ❖ Economic situation, crisis in the Eurozone and the effects on the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia;
- ❖ Transport corridors in the state and the use of European funds for their implementation.

Taking into account:

- A. the European Commission Progress Report on the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2011-2012 of 12 October 2011;
- B. the Accession Partnership adopted by the Council of the EU in February 2008;
- C. European Parliament resolution on the 2010 progress report on the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia of 7 April 2011;
- D. the Sarajevo Statement by the Chair of the High-Level Meeting on the Western Balkans of 2 June 2010, marking the 10th Anniversary of the Zagreb Summit;
- E. the 10th Anniversary of the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement;
- F. conclusions of the "Speak Up!" conference on freedom of expression organised by the Commission on 6 May 2011 in Brussels, with media and civil society stakeholders from the Western Balkans and Turkey.

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:

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

1. Commends the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on the progress achieved since the last progress report; welcomes the Commission's third recommendation in a row to open accession negotiations;
2. Further to the unequivocal commitment taken at the Sarajevo 2010 Summit on the European perspective of all Western Balkan countries, a perspective deemed essential for the stability and development of the region, reiterates its call on the Council to confirm the Commission's recommendation without further delay and urges negotiations to begin in the short-term future, on the basis of fair conditionality in the framework of the Stabilisation and Association Process;
3. Takes note of the Assembly's resolution expressing concern for the absence of the term "Macedonian" in the EC Progress Report 2011 since 2009; regrets the negative reactions that this aspect provoked in the public opinion this year and expects that the European Commission and the European Parliament shall take this into consideration in the preparation of the next reports for the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia;
4. Strongly encourages the governments of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Greece to intensify their efforts in the framework of UN mediation talks as well as in direct bilateral talks, in order to find a solution to the differences over the "name issue"; in this regard, calls on both states to take constructive actions positively affecting their neighbourly relations;
5. Notes that the "name issue" is a bilateral matter which is not related to the opening of accession negotiations between the EU and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; reminds that accession negotiations are based on the fulfillment of the Copenhagen criteria and should not be used by any country to solve any bilateral issue;
6. Reiterates the invitation of the European Parliament to the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the Commissioner responsible for Enlargement to facilitate an agreement on the name issue and offer political guidance, with full respect for the ongoing process of negotiations and the provisions of the UN Charter;
7. Welcomes the fact that the parliamentary elections held in June this year were mostly in line with international standards and according to the OSCE/ODIHR mission findings were competitive, transparent and well organized in the country; however, recommends to the government to address the shortcomings and implement fully the recommendations of the OSCE/ODIHR election observation mission;
8. Welcomes the improvement of ability to assume the obligations of membership by the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the progress made in implementing the commitments under the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA), Title V in particular; however, urges the government to address the major shortcomings in effective enforcement of legislation in place and to ensure adequate human and financial resources for full implementation of the acquis; in this regard, supports the European

Commission's maintained proposal to the Council to agree to move to the second stage of the association as provided for by the SAA without further delay;

9. Notes that the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continues to sufficiently meet the political criteria and the fact that some progress has been made as regards the reform of the parliament, the judiciary, public administration and respect for and protection of non-majority ethnic communities; nevertheless recommends to address the remaining core challenges, in particular as regards freedom of expression in the media, independence of the judiciary, reform of public administration and fighting corruption and strengthened efforts for promotion of the political dialogue;

On the marking of the 10th Anniversary of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, in the context of the cultural diversity in the state

10. Notes that the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA), which has reached its tenth anniversary, continues to be an essential element for democracy and rule of law in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; welcomes the progress made in the further implementation of the Law on languages in state institutions, the decentralisation and the high increase of the number of all non-majority ethnic communities, Roma and Turks in particular in the equitable representation process; calls for further implementation of this principle, as well as for the need for greater representation of the aforementioned ethnic communities;
11. Points out that the 10th anniversary of OFA provides a good opportunity for enhanced dialogue between the communities in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and therefore recommends to the government to evaluate the achievements and propose actions for future implementation of OFA; in this regard, draws attention to the need for effective functioning of the Parliamentary Committee on Inter-Ethnic Relations in the legislative process, for strengthening of the functional and financial means of the Agency for promotion of the Rights of the Communities and for further implementation of the decentralization process;
12. Draws attention to the importance of further promotion and effective implementation of the Strategy on Integrated Education for fostering the multi-ethnic cohesion;
13. Welcomes the improvement of integration of the Roma in the education system, however calls on the government to increase efforts in improvements of their standard of living and anti-discrimination;
14. Regrets the abolishment of the census in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia started in October this year and calls on the government to present a credible and bias-free plan for implementation of the process in a short-term future;

On the reforms of the public administration, judiciary, the fight against corruption and organised crime, and the current visa liberalisation developments

15. Remarks that despite the fresh impetus to the EU reform process given by the new government and progress as regards the framework for public

administration with the creation of a Ministry responsible for public administration reform and the steps taken for 'one-stop-shop' system, the progress on overall implementation of the reforms remained limited; therefore recommends to improve the recruitment policy of the civil service and to respect for the principles of transparency, professionalism and independence; recommends to provide equitable and proper representation and financial framework for local level services lastly proposes to remedy the shortcomings of the Law on general administrative procedures in order to ensure effective provision of administrative services and protection of citizens;

16. Takes note of the adoption of wide-ranging legal package aimed at further legal strengthening the efficiency and independence of the judiciary; welcomes in that regard the efficient work of the Academy of Judges and Public Prosecutors, as well as the commitments to achieve independent, modern and transparent judiciary; recommends to continue implementing reforms;
17. Highly appreciates the adopted amendments by the Assembly of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in the Law on Courts and the Law on the Public Prosecutor's Council eliminating the voting right of the Justice Minister, thus fulfilling the recommendation of the European Commission for strengthening of the independence of the judiciary;
18. Notes that amendments were made to the legal framework for anti-corruption policy in line with GRECO recommendations; however notes that corruption is still present in some areas and continues to be a serious problem, therefore emphasises the need to focus on high-level corruption cases as well as to improve significantly transparency of public expenditure and of the funding of political parties; welcomes the progress made by the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, which was ranked as 62nd out of 178 countries in the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index 2010, which is more than 40 places up on the list compared to 2005;
19. Calls on the government to address the systemic deficiencies with regard to accountability within the law enforcement agencies, as reported in the 2011 Progress Report;
20. Welcomes the government efforts to improve the living conditions in several prisons throughout the country and calls for preparation of an effective national strategy for the prison system;
21. Takes note of the maintained full cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY); in this regard notes the adoption by the Parliament in July of an Authentic Interpretation of the Amnesty Law which stated that the amnesty should cover the suspects of all cases that will not be processed by the ICTY;
22. Emphasises the highest importance attached to the visa-free regime granted by the EU as of 19 December 2009 to the citizens of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; notes with satisfaction that since the visa liberalisation for citizens travelling to the Schengen area was granted with effect from 19 December 2009, the rules for visa-free travel have been respected by the vast majority of travellers and calls on the government to continue its current efforts to prevent any abuse thereof; takes note of the

Commission's post-visa liberalisation monitoring mechanism under the framework of the Stabilisation and Association Process, as well as its proposal to amend the visa regulation allowing for a temporary suspension of an existing visa-free regime with a third country in case of a sudden influx of persons;

23. Welcomes the conclusion of an operational agreement between Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Europol in order to significantly facilitate exchange of analytical data and improve the fight against organised crime and terrorism; takes note of the Act of Systematisation and of the changes it introduces to the Organised Crime Department of the Ministry of Interior to improve its functionality and integration into the national and international criminal investigation intelligence system; welcomes the new Criminal Procedure Code, which should improve the investigative procedures for complex organised crime and corruption cases;

On the civil society and citizens' participation in decision-making process, the freedom of expression and media - Overview of the situation

24. Notes that civil and political rights are in general respected and that some further progress was made in this field;
25. Welcomes the recently opened dialogue between the government and the media, by establishment of a working group that will identify the shortcomings in the field of freedom of the media and to prepare an action plan to overcome the problems, and recommends its continuation and further deepening, in particular regarding serious concerns about lack of freedom of expression in the media;
26. Expresses concern at reports according to which journalists and editors are still subject to political pressure, and asks for an increased engagement in favour of a greater diversity of views represented in the media; urges the Government authorities to improve the implementation of laws on media ownership and to apply them equally regardless of their editorial policy; to avoid illegal monopolist media ownership and political influence in the media, as well as to create provisions on transparency in government advertising; also calls for the protection and strengthening of the role of the public broadcaster;
27. Calls upon the authorities of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to adopt all necessary measures so as to facilitate the work of the press regardless of its opinion or political orientation; welcomes the initiative to establish a roundtable that will identify the main shortcomings in the media sector and prepare an action plan to overcome the current problems including the issue of defamation;
28. Notes with concern that the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was ranked 68th on the Reporters Without Borders Freedom Index 2010, falling down from the 34th place in 2009;

On the economic situation, crisis in the Eurozone and the effects on the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

29. Takes note of the new so-called "six-pack" of measures addressing financial and economic crisis in the European Union, including a Reform of the

Stability and Growth Pact and Surveillance of economic policies, agreed to by the EU institutions in October 2011;

30. Takes note of the recovery of the economy of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in the second half of 2010 and of the agreement with the IMF on a pre-cautionary credit line in late 2010; however, urges the government to address the high structural unemployment, as well as the inadequate institutional capacities of the public administration and of regulatory and supervisory agencies;
31. Welcomes the continued progress achieved in the field of fulfilment of the economic criteria for accession by the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; in particular the progress towards becoming a functioning market economy, notably by facilitating company registration, simplifying the regulatory framework and strengthening the contact with business communities;
32. Welcomes the Commission's evaluation that the country should be able to cope with competitive pressures and market forces within the Union in the medium term, provided that it vigorously implements its reform programme in order to reduce significant structural weaknesses;
33. Notes with satisfaction that the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia stood out at the ranking of the "2011 World Bank's Doing Business Report" as 22nd out of 183 countries, being third most reformatory economy in the world; notes that at the Global Competitiveness Index 2011-2012 rankings the country retained its 79th place out of 142 countries;
34. Welcomes the October 2011 agreement between the Government, trade unions and the associations of employers on the creation of a minimum wage; calls on the Government to take commitment to additional measures for workers earning less than the determined minimum wage;

On the transport corridors in the state and the use of European funds for their implementation

35. Welcomes progress in the area of trans-European networks and the continued development of the transport, energy and telecommunications networks; welcomes the active participation of the country in the South East Europe Transport Observatory and the Energy Community;
36. Welcomes the efforts by the Government, despite the difficulties, to complete the remaining link Demir Kapija - Smokvica on a level of motorway of Corridor X, as well as the railway links on Corridor X; also calls on the Government also to continue with activities to finalize the Corridor VIII railway links; welcomes the government's intention to upgrade or construct the railway links from Skopje to Belgrade, Sofia, Tessaaloniki and Tirana;
37. Takes note of the government efforts to rebuild the local road infrastructure in the country, aimed at improving alternative tourism and life of the citizens; in that regard, encourages the country to take a more dynamic approach in regional development projects under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) that will increase cross-border cooperation and the links among the countries in the region;

38. Calls on the authorities of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to open the cross-border line for hiking and biking between Stara Konjarevo and Gabrene to improve the section of the "Iron Curtain Trail" between Strumica and Petric by co-financing of the European Union;
39. Welcomes the progress made as regards the transposition of the EU environment acquis into national legislation; points out nevertheless that the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has made little progress on aligning and implementing EU climate change acquis and expects that the Government will invest additional efforts to align national legislation with the EU climate change acquis.