

# EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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*Committee on Foreign Affairs*

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## **DRAFT REPORT**

on the 2006 Progress Report on the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia  
(2006/2289(INI))

Committee on Foreign Affairs

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## MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

### on the 2006 Progress Report on the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (2006/2289(INI))

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the Presidency Conclusions of the Thessaloniki European Council of 19 and 20 June 2003, at which the promise was made to all Western Balkan states that they would in the long term join the European Union,
  - having regard to the Commission's 2006 Progress Report on the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (SEC(2006)1387),
  - having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (A6-0000/2007),
- A. whereas further enlargement of the European Union is not an end in itself, whereas strict compliance with the Copenhagen criteria is required of Member States and whereas every applicant country will be judged on its own merits,
- B. whereas, since the recognition of the status of applicant country by the EU on 17 December 2005, no accession negotiations have yet taken place with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia,
- C. whereas before the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia accedes to the EU there will have to be an internal agreement on all the outstanding issues in the area of the need for the various population groups to live together in peace, democracy and equality,
1. Notes with satisfaction that following the internal conflict of 2001, in close cooperation with the EU solutions have been found through the Ohrid framework agreement to enable inhabitants belonging to the two main language groups to live together in equality and peace, by strengthening the position of the Albanian language in government and education, through municipal reorganisation and by means of the qualified majorities (the Badinter model) that protect the position of ethnic minorities in parliamentary decision-making; and that in 2007 agreement has been reached on the national holidays of the different ethnic groups;
  2. Points out that the Badinter agreements are intended as a means to dialogue and consensus in a multi-ethnic state; notes that early in 2007 as a result of dissatisfaction with these agreements a majority of the Albanian-speaking MPs ceased parliamentary activity, and trusts that the present consultations will lead to enabling all parties elected to the parliament to resume their parliamentary duties;
  3. Recommends that all concerned should learn from the way in which Belgium, Spain, Italy and Switzerland have succeeded in building up a government and education system that takes account of substantial regional linguistic differences; calls for further agreement on the way in which the two largest population groups and the different minorities (including

Roma, Turks, Vlachs, Serbs and Bosniaks) can live with one another on an equal and harmonious basis, and hopes that government functions will increasingly be filled proportionately by members of all population groups;

4. Points out that there are a number of countries in Europe whose name coincides with that of part of the territory of a neighbouring state, and that each state chooses its name in freedom; welcomes the fact that national emblems are designed so that they do not refer to the three provinces in northern Greece that also bear the name Macedonia, and regrets the recent name change of the national airport to 'Alexander the Great';
5. Regrets that since the interim settlement of 1993, in which to obtain international recognition the provisional name 'Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia' was employed, no agreement has been reached with the neighbouring country of Greece on the difference in meaning of the name 'Macedonia' in the Slavonic tradition and in the Greek tradition, and on the implications for use of the name in bilateral and international relations, and urges both countries to bring talks on this issue to a successful conclusion before the end of 2007;
6. Regrets that in anticipation of the future status of Kosovo it has not been possible for any further frontier demarcation to take place; trusts that agreement will be reached on this aspect with all speed and welcomes the fact that the farmers concerned are able to go on using parts of their land that happen to lie on the other side of the frontier;
7. Draws attention to the desirability of a lasting settlement for easy frontier traffic with Kosovo, particularly in view of the intensive mutual contacts in the area of education, culture, employment and family ties;
8. Points to the need to protect water quality in the River Vardar, which drains most of the country and continues on Greek territory as the River Axiós, from the pollution caused by industry and urban residential areas;
9. Calls urgently for improvement and maintenance of the water quality and water level in the frontier lakes of Ohridsko Ezero, Prespansko Ezero and Dojransko Ezero and for effective agreements on this aspect with the neighbouring countries of Albania and Greece;
10. Draws attention to the need to prevent the creation and expansion of illegal rubbish dumps along roads, river banks and on the edge of woodland by means of a waste collection system that is separate as far as possible;
11. Calls urgently for the introduction of a statutory minimum wage as a way of combating poverty and social inequalities; underlines the need for different trade union federations to be able to coexist on an equal basis, and points out that the present requirement on trade unions to organise 33% of the relevant workforce before they can become contractual partners means that their current membership figures are constantly being called into question by interested parties;
12. Points out that foreign investors are assisted more by legal certainty, transparency and efforts to combat corruption than by lowering all tax rates to 12 or 10 %, which may result

in a major shortage of resources to fulfil essential government tasks in the area of social security, public services, the environment and infrastructure;

13. Takes it for granted that the authorisation of foreign banks should be founded on equal criteria for all, such as compliance with legal requirements in the area of foreign currency dealings, taxation and consumer protection, and rejects the favouring of certain companies or of the countries in which they have their registered office;
14. Draws attention to the importance of maintaining and improving the railway network, domestic rail traffic and the transit function between Greece and Serbia; welcomes the restoration of the rail link with Kosovo and regrets the lack of progress on the direct rail link with Bulgaria;
15. Calls urgently for maintenance of the independence of public broadcasting established in the Law of November 2005, which – unlike the previous situation of political interference – complies with European media standards;
16. Considers it undesirable that civil servants should lose their jobs with changes of government and in particular expects civil servants who are specially trained to meet the needs of the EU *acquis* to continue their work;
17. Expects the government to investigate the circumstances in which a German citizen, Khaled El-Masri, was abducted to Afghanistan in 2003 and calls urgently for the ending of any undertakings given to non-EU countries that may hinder respect for human rights or the prosecution of war crimes;
18. Points out that accession to NATO is a free choice for any country and does not need to precede membership of the EU;
19. Calls urgently for the full recognition of passports by all EU Member States, for the abolition of national supplementary visa payments and for improved admission at least of students, scientists, journalists and businesspeople;
20. Draws attention to the advantage of the experience of previous negotiations with Slovenia and Croatia which have inherited the same Community laws and practical experience from the former Yugoslavia, and regards the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as the country with the most chance of being the first to join the EU after Croatia, on the basis of its own merits and its existing agreements with the EU;
21. Calls, following the reaching of internal agreement between representatives of the two main language groups on current issues of language use, the government model and legislative processes, for the status of EU applicant country that was granted in 2005 to be succeeded as soon as possible by the actual start of accession negotiations;
22. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, and the government and parliament of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

## EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

### 1. General features of the country

Immediately beyond the European Union's external frontier, to the north of its Member State of Greece and to the west of its Member State of Bulgaria, lies the catchment area of the River Vardar. This area was for centuries, until 1912, part of the Ottoman Empire, and its principal city of Skopje (in Turkish 'Üsküb', and in Albanian 'Shkup') was then the capital of the 'wilayet' (province) of Kosova, which also included the adjoining area to the north that is at present awaiting future administrative status. As a consequence of the outcome of the Balkan war, the Vardar's catchment area belonged to Serbia in the period from 1912 to 1941, when it received the status of the province of Vardarska. After a period of Fascist occupation, in which it was divided for administrative purposes between Albania and Bulgaria along ethnic frontiers, it enjoyed a large measure of autonomy in the period 1945-1991 as a part-republic with the name of Macedonia. This name was taken from the designation favoured since the 19th century by the area's largest population group, but also coincides with part of Greek history and the use of the name for three bordering provinces in northern Greece. There has been a difference of opinion with its southern neighbour Greece since independence on the constitutional name of 'Republic of Macedonia'.

As a part of Yugoslavia it had close contacts with the Member States of the then European Communities until obtaining independence in 1991. Cross-border movement within Europe was relatively easy in the absence of the visa requirement that exists today. Together with Serbia and Croatia it fulfilled an important role as a transit area between the EU Member State of Greece and what later became the EU Member States of Austria, Hungary and Slovenia, and more distant countries. Partly as a result of these long-standing close contacts with the present EU area, domestic public opinion is, while divided over language use and political preferences, virtually unanimous in favouring early accession to the EU.

However, in the EU this country is relatively unknown, while it is even less well-known that after applying on 22 March 2004 it acquired the status of EU applicant country on 17 December 2005. What is rather better known in the outside world is the domestic language dispute and the difference of opinion with Greece over the country's name. In the process of joining the EU these two subjects are likely to receive at least as much attention as the usual issues in the area of administration, the rule of law, crime, the economy and the environment, which were given the most attention during the major round of enlargement of 2004 and 2007.

### 2. Cultural variety

After Greek and Illyrian occupation in the distant past the population has for many centuries consisted mainly of Slav Macedonians, with a language closely related to Bulgarian and Serbian and also written in Cyrillic script. In the west and north-west, chiefly on the Vardar's upper reaches around the cities of Gostivar and Tetovo, the language of the majority of the population is Albanian, with its Latin script. There have also long-standing distributions of minorities, with Roma, Turks and Vlachs on the one hand and other Slav groups related to Macedonians, such as Serbs and Bosnians, on the other. As a result linguistic and cultural

variety has long been a feature of this area. That variety also finds expression in party-political relations.

The long absence of self-determination greatly strengthened the nationalism of the Macedonian population group over a long period of time. Initially that nationalism turned against Turkish rule, then against the association with Bulgaria laid down in the peace treaty of San Stefano in 1878 and after that against the long period of incorporation with Serbia. By using symbols borrowed from Greek-Macedonian history it also came into conflict with Greece. Moreover this nationalism was seen by non-Macedonian population groups, especially the large Albanian-speaking group, as a threat to their language and culture. This applied particularly to the view that a monolingual state should be created, in which others would have to adapt to the use of the Slavonic Macedonian language as the only language of government and education.

### **3. Language facilities for Albanians and others**

Until 1912 all users of the Albanian language lived in areas that are now spread over Albania and four different regions of the former Yugoslavia (the west and north-west of Macedonia, the south-west of Serbia, most of Kosovo, which since 1999 has ceased to be administered by Serbia, and the south of Montenegro) were all governed from Istanbul's part of the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire. In the period 1918-1991 these areas remained, with the exception of Albania, united within Yugoslavia. As a result there have long been close contacts between the two largest concentrations of Albanian-speakers, Kosovo and the region on the upper reaches of the Vardar. The absence in the latter area of official Albanian-language higher education encouraged students to seek education in Kosovo in the period 1999-2001, further strengthening such contacts. In 2001 it became clear, in a violent manner, that good relations between users of the Macedonian language and those of the Albanian language had still not been achieved in the ten years since independence.

Partly as a result of mediation and support by the European Union, a solution was found in the shape of the Ohrid Framework Agreement. In addition to the cessation of hostilities and voluntary disarmament the following points were settled:

1. Local authority reorganisation, with more powers for local government.
2. Non-discrimination and proportional representation of minorities in public administration and politics.
3. Parliamentary procedures are changed so that votes on sensitive issues (such as minority rights, local self-administration and some appointments) require a 'double majority'. (This *Badinter majority* essentially means that there must be a majority not just in parliament, but also among the representatives of minorities.)
4. Equal status of languages in government and education. Any language spoken by at least 20 per cent of the population is an official language and the state will finance university education in those languages.
5. Diversity in identity, with local authorities being free to place symbols of the majority segment of the population on public buildings.

The Framework Agreement resulted in a total of 15 amendments to the Constitution and to a new Constitutional Preamble. Up to 2006 there was a continual process of legislative adjustment to the Ohrid Framework Agreement and increasing harmony. Since the elections and the forming of the government this year, in which the largest party of the Albanian-

speaking population group left the government, major arguments have arisen on the application of the Batiner majority. Following a boycott of parliamentary activities by the BDI (DUI) and PDP parties, talks are now taking place to reach a settlement.

#### **4. The country's name and the attitude of Greece**

The Sobranie, the parliament of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, adopted the new Constitution on 17 November 1991, in which the country was defined as a sovereign state using the name 'Republic of Macedonia'. Although under the Badinter criteria all the former Yugoslav republics would be able to obtain international recognition as independent states, the new country was not admitted to the United Nations until 8 April 1993.

The reasons why its membership was opposed lie mainly in the meaning of the name 'Macedonia', which historically is known as the country of Alexander the Great (356-323 BC) who managed for a short time to extend his empire as far as Pakistan. On the grounds of the language and culture of the time the southern neighbour, Greece, regards ancient Macedonia as part of its own history and the name Macedonia as an internal name. The use of the same name by a neighbouring state with different language and culture provokes considerable objections from public opinion in Greece. The Greek objections are not about denying the country's right to independence or rejecting effective cooperation with the northern neighbour, but a wish to express the idea, by adding concepts such as 'Vardar', Skopje' or 'North', that the state with the constitutional name of 'Republic of Macedonia' does not include the whole area that is regarded historically as Macedonia.

Under an interim agreement the United Nations has since 1993 provisionally designated the country as the 'former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia', often presented as the English abbreviation 'fYRoM', which is totally mystifying to public opinion both at home and abroad. However, the United States, Russian Federation, People's Republic of China and even a number of EU Member States use the constitutional name of 'Republic of Macedonia', omitting the reference to the previous administrative situation included in the term 'fYRoM'. Historical references of this kind are unusual. Moreover there is in Europe, in addition to the independent state of Luxembourg, also an adjoining Belgian province with the same name, while the independent state of Moldova coincides with the use of the same name for the north-east of neighbouring Romania. Again, the state of Azerbaijan, geographically part of Europe, bears the same name as two adjoining provinces of Iran. In all these cases the repeated use of the same name causes no problems. Clearly therefore, in this case the dispute is not so much over a name as over fears of claims on territory.

In this connection it is much to be regretted that the national airport, located to the east of Skopje, which until December 2006 was known as *Aerodrom Skopje* or *Petrovec Airport*, has since then been dubbed Alexander the Great (*Aleksandar Veliki*). This symbol gives rise to confusion with the existing international airport of *Megas Alexandros* to the east of the northern Greek city of Kavala, a name with the same meaning. For the sake of mutual confidence it is important that before accession to the EU a bilateral agreement is concluded between the two countries over the use of names in their mutual relations and over the removal of any continuing misunderstandings or irritations concerning symbols and territorial claims.



## **5. Other considerations**

The EU Schengen States' visa regime and the even more stringent conditions that Greece imposes on admissions is causing annoyance and isolating a young generation to a much greater extent than their parents once were from their European surroundings. While integration with the EU is not being speeded up, orientation towards the United States is increasing. This has found expression, amongst other things, in agreements not to hand over any American to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague and in the abduction of the German citizen Khaled el-Masri to CIA investigators in Afghanistan. More positively, participation in the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) and the Central European Free Trade Association (CEFTA), which is linked with the EU, may help to revive and strengthen the economy, which has been ailing since 1991. Internal legal certainty will increase this effect more than the current aim of reducing tax rates to the extremely low level of 10 %.