



Delegation to the EU-North Macedonia Joint Parliamentary Committee

D-MK_PV(2019)1023_0

MINUTES
of the meeting of 23 October 2019, 15.00-16.15
Strasbourg

The meeting opened at 15.06 on Wednesday, 23 October 2019, with Andreas Schieder (Chair) presiding.

1. Adoption of the draft agenda

The draft agenda was adopted.

2. Adoption of the minutes of the D-MK constitutive meeting of 26 November 2019

The minutes of the D-MK constitutive meeting of 26 November 2019 were adopted.

3. Announcements of the Chair

None.

4. Exchange of views on the political situation in the Republic of North Macedonia with

- Ambassador Agneza RUSI POPOVSKA, Mission of the Republic of North Macedonia to the EU

The Ambassador gave an account of the current mood in Macedonia. She stated there was an overwhelming feeling of disappointment, abandon and betrayal. The country did everything it was asked for even if the political stakes were very high (Prespa Agreement, reforms etc.). In less than 3 years, North Macedonia came from being a 'captured state' to being a shining example of democratic transformation and good neighbourliness. The Council decision not to open accession negotiations was a serious blow to the whole region and had already had direct consequences internally; the PM had called for early elections to be held on 12 April 2020. The Ambassador reiterated that all political leaders in the country reconfirmed the 'National consensus on EU membership' and refused any kind of other 'special relationship' between the EU and MK. The country was even more determined to continue implementing the reforms as

well as the agreements with Greece and Bulgaria. She declared her hope that nothing was set in stone and that the Council would 'rectify the injustice' before the May 2020 Zagreb Summit. She appealed on the MEPs to work on the level of their sister parties, especially in the pre-election period. She also appealed on the MEPs to keep the pressure on the Council and explain the issues also in their constituencies. The Ambassador also referred to the 'new reality' regarding the EU enlargement. Clarification would be needed from the EU on whether or not the membership perspective for the Western Balkans, as promised in Thessaloniki and most recently in Sofia, was still valid. She declared that taking away the membership perspective would destabilise the region and weaken the EU.

- Mr David CULLEN, Head of Unit for North Macedonia, Kosovo, DG NEAR

Mr Cullen underlined that the Commission was disappointed with the Council's decision not to open accession talks with North Macedonia and was grateful for the support of the European Parliament on the enlargement process. North Macedonia was a success story in the region and had come a long way with tangible results on issues such as corruption, the rule of law, the Prespa agreement and the Friendship treaty with Bulgaria. He underlined that the Commission was not saying that everything is perfect in North Macedonia, as many problems continued to persist, but the admittance to the accession process would have held North Macedonia to even higher standards. He urged North Macedonia not to give up on reform efforts and affirmed that the Commission would continue to support them in every possible way.

- Ms Elsa FENET, Head of Division 'Western Balkans', EEAS

Ms Fenet stressed that the enlargement process and the Western Balkans were a priority for the President-elect of the Commission and the VP/HR Borrell. On the reform process in North Macedonia, Ms Fenet noted that they were not expecting perfect results, but a transformation of the country, which was bringing the country closer to the EU. Furthermore, Ms Fenet highlighted the commitment by North Macedonia to work together with the EU on foreign policy and defence. However, a continued improvement on the alignment with the EU in terms of foreign policy remained important, but North Macedonia and the EU already shared a certain outlook on rest of the world. Lastly, she stated that work with the EU institutions and Member States needed to continue to end the current deadlock on enlargement.

All MEPs taking the floor expressed their support and sympathy and promised to keep up the pressure on the Council, starting with the resolution on North Macedonia and Albania, which should be adopted on 24 October by the EP plenary. Mr Yordanov (EPP, BG) stated that the recent developments demonstrated how Russia was attempting to destabilise the whole region. He proposed that the Delegation should visit North Macedonia to show the European Parliament's commitment to enlargement. Mr Bil ůk (EPP, SK) stated that the real strategical question was 'What will happen to enlargement?' so a real strategic debate on the future of the Enlargement Policy should be held. The recent developments caused questions from the whole region on the EU's honesty. He continued voicing that lasting damage had been done, the EU needed to rebuild trust and its own credibility in the region. 1st Vice-Chair of D-MK Ms Joveva (RE, SI) explained that the position of the French delegation was not that of the whole Renew Europe and that the majority would continue convincing their French colleagues. Ms Strik (NL, Greens) stated that it was high time for the leaders to take leadership and

create conditions for the popular support of enlargement. Ms Strik backed the proposal to visit North Macedonia in order to highlight the EU's commitment to enlargement. The Chair proposed to invite the North Macedonian Delegation into the European Parliament.

The Ambassador stated that North Macedonia had become a role model of a multi-ethnic state in the region. The EU membership perspective for North Macedonia was thus not only important from an economic perspective, but also for the peaceful coexistence of various ethnicities in the country. The Ambassador advised the Delegation to go visit Skopje rather than inviting the North Macedonian Delegation to the European Parliament and encouraged the MEPs to promote enlargement in their constituencies. Lastly, the political groups should work with their sister parties in North Macedonia and the stakes for the upcoming elections were as high as for the Prespa Agreement referendum.

5. Any other business

None.

6. Date and place of the next meeting

The Chair noted that the next meeting with North Macedonia would probably be during the December or January plenary in Strasbourg.

The meeting closed at 16.20.

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209 (7)		
216 (3)		
56 (8) (/Punto del orden del día/Bod po adu jednání (OJ)/Punkt på dagsordenen/Tagesordnungspunkt/ Päevakorra punkt/ μέρος της αgenda/Agenda item/Point OJ/To ka dnevnog reda/Punto all'ordine del giorno/Darba kārt bas punkts/Darbotvarkas punktas/Napirendi pont/Punt A enda/Agendapunkt/Punkt porządku dzennego/Ponto OD/Punct de pe ordinea de zi/Bod programu schôdze/To ka UL/Esityslistan kohta/Föredragningslista punkt)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ambassador Agneza RUSI POPOVSKA, Mission of the Republic of North Macedonia to the EU - Mr David CULLEN, Head of Unit for North Macedonia, Kosovo, DG NEAR, European Commission - Ms Elsa FENET, Head of Division 'Western Balkans', European External Action Service 	4	

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 Ilhan Kyuchuk |

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