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## **REPORT**

on the 2007 Progress Report on the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia  
(2007/2268(INI))

Committee on Foreign Affairs

Rapporteur: Erik Meijer

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## MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

### on the 2007 Progress Report on the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (2007/2268(INI))

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the Presidency Conclusions of the Thessaloniki European Council of 19-20 June 2003, at which the promise was made to all Western Balkan states that they would join the European Union,
- having regard to UN Security Council Resolutions 817 and 845 of 1993,
- having regard to the European Council decision of 16 December 2005 to grant the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia the status of candidate country for EU membership and the Presidency Conclusions of the European Councils of 15-16 June 2006 and of 14-15 December 2006,
- bearing in mind the 1995 interim agreement between the Republic of Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia,
- having regard to the conclusions of the Fourth Meeting of the EU-Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Stabilisation and Association Council of 24 July 2007,
- having regard to Council Decision 2006/57/EC of 30 January 2006 on the principles, priorities and conditions contained in the European Partnership with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia<sup>1</sup>,
- having regard to the Commission's 2007 Progress Report on the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (SEC(2007)1432),
- having regard to its resolution of 13 December 2006 on the Commission's Communication on the Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2006–2007<sup>2</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 12 July 2007 on the 2006 Progress Report on the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia<sup>3</sup>,
- having regard to the recommendations of the EU-Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Joint Parliamentary Committee of 29-30 January 2007 and 26-27 November 2007,

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 35, 7.2.2006, p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> OJ C 317 E, 23.12.2006, p. 480.

<sup>3</sup> Texts adopted, P6\_TA(2007)0352.

- having regard to its resolution of 24 October 2007 on the proposal for a Council decision on the conclusion of the Agreement between the European Community and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on the facilitation of issuance of short-stay visas<sup>1</sup>,
  - having regard to its resolution of 24 October 2007 on the proposal for a Council decision on the conclusion of the Agreement between the European Community and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on readmission<sup>2</sup>,
  - having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (A6-0059/2008),
- A. whereas although the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was granted the status of candidate for accession to the EU as long ago as 2005, as of today no date for the start of accession negotiations has yet been set; whereas this prolonged situation is adding frustration and uncertainty, having regard to the sustained pace of reforms undertaken lately by the Skopje authorities,
- B. bearing in mind that the EU/Western Balkans Declaration, which was unanimously approved by all the Foreign Ministers of the EU Member States and the Foreign Ministers of the Western Balkan States in Salzburg on 11 March 2006, reiterates the importance of good neighbourly relations and the need to find mutually acceptable solutions to outstanding issues with neighbouring countries,
- C. whereas a Member State, Greece, and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia are in the midst of a negotiation process taking place under aegis of the United Nations in order to reach a mutually acceptable solution to the name of the candidate state,
1. Welcomes the renewed political consensus on the accession of the country to the European Union and the considerable progress achieved since the last Progress Report, published by the Commission in November 2007;
  2. Welcomes the adoption of the Law on the Public Prosecutors and the Law on the Council of Prosecutors as well as the Law on the Committee for Inter-Community Relations, listing the laws to be adopted by the double-majority rule (Badinter principle), and the decision on the final appointment to the Judicial Council;
  3. Welcomes the establishment of the National Council for European Integration, which aims to achieve cross-party support for EU-related reforms and which is led by the leader of the opposition, as an important driving force behind the EU accession process; notes that the National Council sets the institutional priorities of the country in the preparatory stage of the negotiation process, by precisely allocating the necessary institutional set-up, human resources and budgetary funding; encourages the Government and the Parliament to maintain the momentum of reform and to continue with sustained, regular and constructive dialogue among all stakeholders involved, in a spirit of cooperation and consensus on the key issues of the country's European agenda;

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<sup>1</sup> Texts adopted, P6\_TA(2007)0454.

<sup>2</sup> Texts adopted, P6\_TA(2007)0453.

4. Welcomes the sustained efforts and the achievements of the government and parliament in the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement and the increased recognition of the multi-ethnic character of the state; welcomes the commitment of the government and parliament to further promote inter-ethnic relations, which has resulted in the adoption of legislation such as the amendments adopted on 8 February 2007 to the Law on Public Holidays which lays down the various ethnic and religious holidays, and the increased budgetary allocations for promotion of the cultural values and traditions of non-majority communities; points out the need to improve the equitable representation of members of non-majority groups, notably in the public administration, the police and the military forces, and applauds the agreement reached on the choice of 45 draft laws which can be adopted by a Badinter majority only;<sup>5</sup>. Points out that the renewed political momentum on the European integration of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia results from a strong commitment expressed by all political forces; welcomes the regular and intensive dialogue pursued between the leaders of the four major political parties (VMRO-DPMNE, SDSM, DPA and DUI), which has resulted in the adoption of a number of laws, as well as measures relevant for further EU integration;
6. Further welcomes the fact that, in accordance with the Ohrid Framework Agreement, more representatives of ethnic minorities are being employed in the public service, and hopes that the Ohrid Framework Agreement will continue to be consistently implemented;
7. Commends the commitment of the leaders of the major political parties represented in the parliament to continue to work towards achieving progress on the remaining issues on which there are differences, such as the use of languages and the social package for the victims of the 2001 conflict;
8. Welcomes the fact that marked progress has been achieved in the fight against organised crime and corruption in 2007, as well as significant progress in the fight against trafficking in persons and narcotics; calls on the government to continue implementing anti-corruption legislation and the reform of the judiciary, leading to a strengthening of the independence and the overall capacity of the judicial system;
9. Commends the government on the progress that it has made in the economic area, while maintaining macro-economic stability; welcomes the tax policy and the enhanced fiscal discipline that has resulted in increased state budget revenues; welcomes the improved business climate and the activities for reducing the legal and administrative barriers to business start-ups;
10. Looks forward to the adoption of the new Banking Law in line with the EU *acquis*; notes the importance of adopting a new law on the National Bank in 2008, thereby strengthening that bank's independence, as well as the administrative capacities for supervision;
11. Is concerned by level of unemployment, which remains high, and urges the government to address this issue; notes particularly the situation in the villages bordering Kosovo, where tackling unemployment is vital in order to give the local population opportunities to earn legal income;
12. Recalls the need for the continuous implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement

as an instrument for promoting transnational confidence-building, which is the key to stability in the region;

13. Recalls that the 2005 Law on the Use of Community Flags allows minority communities which constitute a majority within a municipality to use their flags; carefully notes that the Constitutional Court judgment of 24 October 2007 confirmed the right of a community to fly its flag alongside the state flag and that it also extended the right to fly an ethnic flag to all ethnic communities in a municipality and affirmed the right of ethnic Albanians to use the Albanian state flag as their ethnic symbol; stresses that the Court also sought to clarify the limits to this right because it considered that the state and community flags have different meanings, and concluded that community flags may not be flown permanently, for example during official state visits, or on state buildings; calls on all parties to discuss this issue in the spirit of the Ohrid Framework Agreement and international standards;
14. Welcomes the action taken by the government to respond quickly to the recommendations of the European Commission's 2007 Progress Report and to adopt the revised National Plan for the Adoption of the Acquis in line with the priorities of the proposed 2008 Accession Partnership;
15. Commends the work that is being carried out in the public administration in preparation for the EU accession negotiation process; calls on the authorities to continue the reform of the public administration in order to ensure its de-politicisation, professionalism, expertise and efficiency, and to refrain from any action that may jeopardise the administrative capacity already built up;
16. Considers it a shared challenge for all political forces and ethnic communities within the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to demonstrate that the country is now free of conflicts viewed negatively both domestically and abroad which go beyond normal political differences, including boycotting democratic government institutions, and thus to demonstrate that the country is ready for the process of integration into the European Union;
17. Supports the initiative of the Thessaloniki-based Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe and the Soros Foundation to publish textbooks on Balkan history, in both the Albanian and the Macedonian languages, intended for history teachers and secondary school students and aimed at incorporating different views on the common past, providing a balanced perspective and promoting reconciliation;
18. Notes that the draft Law on Revision of the Electoral Code, which would provide for the parliament to be enlarged by 13 seats in the interests of both representation of small ethnic minorities and representation of nationals living abroad, was given a reading on 27 September 2007; expresses its concern at the fact that the proposed Law would have the effect of bypassing the use of the Badinter majority rule as intended by the Ohrid Framework Agreement; emphasises that respecting the principle 'pacta sunt servanda' is crucial for the strengthening of mutual trust; considers it desirable, therefore, that a broad consensus, with the participation of the Albanian representatives, should be reached on any revision of the Electoral Code, and trusts that there will be further consultations in order to achieve this;

19. Draws attention to the continuing discrimination against the Roma community, particularly in the areas of education, social protection, health care, housing and employment; hopes that the National Strategy for Roma will be implemented in accordance with its stated objectives in the near future;
20. Welcomes the entry into force of the visa facilitation and readmission agreements with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; notes, however, that access to the EU countries still represents a big problem for Macedonian citizens and, generally, for citizens of the countries of the Western Balkans; underlines that the country must have access rules equivalent to those applying in respect of Croatia; supports, therefore, the launch by the European Commission on 20 February 2008 of a dialogue on visa liberalisation with the objective of establishing a road map leading ultimately to a visa-free regime, and calls on the Commission to make every effort to finalise this dialogue quickly;
21. In this regard, notes the introduction by the government of passports with biometric security features, the establishment of the National Visa Information System and the Visa Center, and the implementation of the Integrated Border Management System;
22. Welcomes the adoption of the new Law on the Legal Status of Churches, Religious Communities and Religious Groups, to be applied as of May 2008, which will make it possible to put an end, once and for all, to complaints by small faith communities, in particular communities which have arisen or developed over the last few decades as a result of foreign proselytisation or by seceding from existing churches, about their not being allowed to build, own or use premises serving as prayer rooms;
23. Welcomes the successful start of the second phase of the fiscal decentralisation in July 2007, when 42 out of 84 municipalities entered the process and a further nine municipalities joined;
24. Points out that additional measures have been taken to promote women's rights, and specifically equal opportunities; insists, however, that the protection of women against all forms of violence must be increased;
25. Points out that it is desirable, in accordance with the Broadcasting Law adopted in November 2005, to uphold the independence of public broadcasting from state bodies, give free rein to existing diversity of opinion and, in the process, prevent other media from being obstructed as a result of government meddling; urges the authorities to ensure public compliance with EU and Council of Europe standards on countering the resurgence of "hate speech", particularly in the media, against neighbouring States;
26. Notes that one-sided support for certain media products, e.g. in the form of government campaigns and advertisements by state-sponsored firms, leads to a distortion of competition in the media landscape and is thus prejudicial to other media, including those critical of the government;
27. Welcomes the start of preparations for implementing the Police Law, full and effective application of which is a crucial challenge and constitutes a key priority for European association;

28. Notes that the efforts with regard to the protection of water quality should be intensified on the basis of the new Law on Waters; points in particular to the great need to protect water quality and control pollution in the River Vardar, which drains most of the country and continues as the Axios carrying hazardous waste to Greek territory, and the frontier lakes Ohrid, Prespa and Dojran, and emphasises the need to conclude, and to ensure effective implementation of, the relevant bilateral agreements with the neighbouring countries of Albania and Greece;
29. Acknowledges that adoption of the Law on Waste Management has led to some progress on handling asbestos, waste collection and polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) and raw materials waste;
30. Draws attention to the fact that the attitude towards the environment in general needs to be improved, and appeals to the authorities of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to continue efforts to bring its environmental legislation into line with accepted EU standards;
31. Notes that on 7 November, a large police operation took place around the village of Brodec, north of Tetovo, with the aim of apprehending a number of alleged criminals, in which six members of the so-called "Brodec gang" were killed and a further 13 individuals from the village detained by the Ministry of Interior; notes that light and heavy weaponry was found in Brodec that included heavy machine guns and anti-aircraft missiles; points out that, according to the EU Monitoring Mission and the OSCE, the operation was carried out in a professional and effective manner resulting in no police or civilian casualties; welcomes the fact that the government has publicly stated that it will rebuild the mosque and other damaged infrastructure; expresses its concern about some reports that detainees may have been subjected to maltreatment on being arrested; calls in this regard on the Ombudsman to fully investigate the events and stresses that any outstanding questions relating to the police operation in Brodec should be addressed in an open, transparent and legally consistent manner;
32. Salutes the progress made in the field of legislation concerning intellectual property rights, but emphasises that greater efforts are needed to ensure enforcement of the legislation adopted;
33. Welcomes the active participation of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in the South East Europe Cooperation Process and its contribution to the establishment of the Regional Cooperation Council; equally welcomes its constructive position on the status of Kosovo; however, expresses concern over the delay in the technical demarcation of the border with Kosovo and considers that the issue should proceed as envisaged in the proposal put forward by Mr Martti Ahtisaari, former UN Special Envoy for the Kosovo status process; welcomes the active cooperation with Kosovo in trade, customs and police cooperation matters and the fact that, at the same time, good-neighbourly relations are being maintained with Serbia; welcomes the signing of free trade agreements with those two neighbours, and recommends a similar policy in relations with Albania, Bulgaria and Greece, especially in the field of transport and communications;
34. Welcomes the contribution made by the country to the EU Althea mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, acknowledges its role with regard to regional stability, and expresses its



deep condolences to the country and to the families of the 11 peacekeepers who tragically died in a Macedonian military helicopter crash on 12 January 2008;

35. Regrets the signing and the ratification by the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia of the Bilateral Immunity Agreement with the US authorities, granting citizens of that country exemption from the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court in The Hague; stresses that such an act runs counter to EU standards and policies all aimed at supporting the International Criminal Court as well as the EU guiding principles concerning bilateral immunity agreements; calls on the Macedonian government and parliament to bring its legislation into line with the principles and standards of the EU Member States;
36. Notes that further investment is needed in developing the country's infrastructure links with its neighbours, which would contribute to the economic development and stability of the region as a whole, and calls on the Government rapidly to complete the remaining rail link between Skopje and Sofia;
37. Welcomes the increased bilateral cooperation, as well as people-to-people contacts between the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Greece; notes with satisfaction that, since the adoption of Parliament's above-mentioned resolution of 12 July 2007, bilateral talks have been held in the region, under the auspices of the United Nations and assisted by Special Envoy Matthew Nimitz, with a view to finding a mutually acceptable solution to the difference that has arisen over the name of the country; notes the Special Envoy's proposal of 19 February 2008 and welcomes the fact that both countries have accepted that proposal as a framework for further discussions; calls on both sides to intensify efforts to resolve the issue, which should in no circumstances become an obstacle to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia's membership of international organisations, as provided for in the Interim Accord of 1995, which is still in force;
38. Recalling the Conclusions of the December 2007 General Affairs and External Relations Council, stresses the importance of regional cooperation, good neighbourly relations and the need to find mutually acceptable solutions to outstanding issues in the process of moving closer to the EU;
39. Supports the efforts of the government of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to establish joint committees on education and history with neighbouring EU Member States with a view to reviewing possible discrepancies and misinterpretations of history that may cause disagreements, and urges the authorities to promote the joint celebration of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia's common cultural and historic heritage with its neighbours;
40. Notes that, although the country has achieved significant progress since 2005 when it was given candidate status, of the three candidate countries it is the only country with which no accession negotiations have taken place to date; considers it desirable that this exceptional situation should end; calls on the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to ensure that the necessary reforms are undertaken; urges the European Commission, following on from its Communication on the Western Balkans, to develop a set of benchmarks the attainment of which by the country will lead to the opening of the accession negotiations before the end of 2008, which will further enhance the stability and strengthen the European prospects of the Western Balkans;

41. Welcomes the preparations by the Government for the implementation of the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA) which have facilitated signature of the Financing Agreement for IPA 2007 and the Framework Agreement for 2007-2013; reiterates the importance of the IPA for preparation for future EU membership; calls on both the Government and the Commission to speed up the preparatory work so as to allow for early implementation of a decentralised system for the management of the IPA in order to create greater efficiency and local ownership of the process;
42. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and the Government and Parliament of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

## **EXPLANATORY STATEMENT**

### **1. Priorities in the second annual report**

On 12 July 2007, plenary endorsed the first annual report on the candidate Member State designated by the European Union, and most of its Member States, as the 'Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia', which, in its own constitution, is called the 'Republic of Macedonia'.

That report addressed a host of issues, such as environmental problems, employer-worker relations and public broadcasting. More than on these and other questions, the focus then was on three main issues: on the position of the large Albanian community, relations with the southern neighbouring country, Greece, and the starting date for negotiations on EU accession. In the last year, these three issues have attracted even greater attention. Furthermore, the first two issues exert considerable influence over the third. In the second annual report, priority is given to the search for progress on each of these three issues.

### **2. Links between former Yugoslavia and the EU**

Between 1957 and 1991 the European Communities (the European Union's predecessor) and the Member States maintained good relations at all times with the former Federative Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia. To a significant extent, relations were different from those with other states in central and eastern Europe which were governed by parties calling themselves Communist and separated from western and southern Europe by an 'Iron Curtain'. No-one expected a military threat from Yugoslavia. The country remained outside the 'cold war', developed intensive contacts with the Third World, and attracted international attention by actively involving workers in industrial democracy. Between firms in western and southern of Europe and firms in Yugoslavia, cross-border cooperation took place on a large scale. A comparatively large number of Yugoslavia's inhabitants were in a position to visit states in western and southern Europe or work there long-term. For many people in other states, Yugoslavia (in particular the Alpine region, the coast and Lake Ohrid), was a major holiday destination. In the area of trade and transport, furthermore, the country was a significant link between Greece and other Member States of the European Communities. If Yugoslavia had not disintegrated, the entire country could probably have acceded to the EU, and possibly earlier than a number of current Member States. Accession, which, at an earlier stage, was likely, was seriously delayed not so much by the disintegration itself of the country, but more by the atrocities which accompanied disintegration. The territory of former Yugoslavia (and neighbouring Albania) is now completely surrounded by EU Member States.

### **3. Maintaining progress as a candidate country**

As part of the grand enlargement in 2004, only Slovenia (of the former Yugoslav republics) acceded to the EU. Negotiations with the candidate country Croatia are proceeding successfully and it should be possible to conclude them in 2009, as a result of which, within a

few years, the country will become the 28th Member State.

The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, too, has had candidate Member State status since 2005 and had expectations that the accession process could take place at the same time as that for Croatia. Only the fact that it lies in the south of former Yugoslavia, which always had a weaker economy than the north, could bring about complications and delays in concluding negotiations.

Candidate Member State status gave it a head start over the Yugoslav successor states Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia. That holds true to an even greater extent for the Serbian autonomous province of Kosovo, which has regarded itself as independent since the 1990s, has not been governable from Serbia since the 1999 war, and in 2008 is expected to gain the international recognition as an independent state it has aspired to for 17 years. Yugoslavia's successor states which have not yet obtained candidate status have to date only been offered Stabilisation and Association Agreements, with (since the 2003 Thessaloniki European Council) the prospect of accession in the longer term. The question now is whether the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia can keep the advantage it has gained over other successor states as a result of candidate Member State status. In the meantime, there is talk of granting Serbia candidate Member State status. The significance of that status is unclear, however, since, over the last two years, the expected accession negotiations with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia have not commenced. That has put the country in an exceptional position vis-à-vis the two other candidate Member States. There are negotiations not only with Croatia, but also with Turkey, which, at the start of negotiations, is unable to meet the criteria which, at a subsequent stage, will determine the final outcome. The delay which has arisen is regarded as extremely disappointing in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Should negotiations not commence promptly, there is a danger that the significance of that status will be considerably eroded not only for that country, but also for other countries seeking candidate status.

#### **4. The EU's reduced absorption and integration capacity**

Shortly after the end of the Cold War (1989), extending cooperation, restricted to western and southern Europe at the time, to states hitherto regarded as part of the 'other side' attracted considerable attention and approbation. Not only political leaders, but also public opinion was won over to admitting a large number of new Member States. The considerable prestige associated at the time with successful completion of a grand-scale eastward enlargement does not exist today. Public opinion has become more critical and expects attention to focus on resolving the problems regarded as a consequence of earlier enlargements. Newcomers are assessed more strictly; they are now having to pay the price for what did not go well during the previous enlargement. An objective assessment of the pros and cons for the EU, and its current Member States, plays a much more significant role than it used to. Anticipated problems and predictable costs may be grounds for being in no hurry to proceed with enlargement. Meanwhile, naming final dates for accession for newcomers and simultaneous admission of a large number of Member States are taboo. Each state is critically assessed on its own merits.

Moreover, there are now two contrasting schools of thought with regard to the successor states to former Yugoslavia:

- (a) a lasting solution needs to be found to the problems in those countries, in particular as regards relations within the country between members of different ethnic communities and the relationship with neighbouring states, before EU accession can be granted;
- (b) EU accession is urgently needed and is regarded as the best guarantee of peace, democracy, stability and economic development because the EU is expected to be able to make a significant contribution towards resolving problems, including relations between communities and with neighbouring states.

## **5. Ethnic diversity and conflicting interests**

The area that was known at the beginning of the 20th century as Macedonia, which was divided up between Yugoslavia, Greece and Bulgaria following the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, was characterised by a great diversity of peoples. In the northern part of Macedonia, on the territory of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the largest community speaks the Macedonian variant of the Slavic language group. In the north-west of the country, however, Albanian speakers are in a majority, making up about one quarter of the population. There are also smaller minorities such as Roma, Turks and Wallachians.

In other successor states to Yugoslavia, ethnic diversity, which exists on a smaller scale, led in the 1990s to violent conflicts and ethnic cleansing. By comparison with Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia (especially Kosovo), conditions in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia have remained orderly and peaceful. Following a short-lived armed conflict in north-west Albania, agreements were concluded on local government decentralisation and, instead of Slav domination, ever increasing emphasis is being placed on the multiethnic character of the state.

Even prior to the 2001 conflict, an Albanian community party was represented in the government of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In the previous government, that was the Party for Democratic Integration (DUI), which emerged from the 2001 conflict. In the meantime, that party has become the largest and, in fact, the majority party among Albanian-speaking voters. The fact that this community's largest party now bears government responsibility at local level only has generated tensions. In the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia - unlike in multilingual states such as Belgium, Spain, the United Kingdom and Italy - there is no intermediate layer of administration between local authorities and national level in which a large regionally powerful party can play the dominant role. The DUI is demanding participation in government at national level, and takes the view that less account is being taken of Albanian interests than was provided for in the Ohrid Framework Agreement in 2001. In protest at this, it boycotted parliamentary sittings for a time. In the meantime, agreement has been reached between the largest government party, VMRO-DPMNE, and DUI on a set of 45 draft laws which must be adopted by qualified majority (the 'Badinter majority'), and the parliamentary boycott has been ended.

## 6. Ending the dispute with Greece

The EU Member State Greece is very much interested in its northern neighbour. Greeks firms are the most important foreign investors there, and Greece is a supporter of rapid EU enlargement to include neighbouring and nearby states. The use of the name 'Macedonia' to identify the northern neighbouring state which became independent in 1991 has been rejected by Greece for many years, since this has been regarded as making a claim on part of Greek territory. Reference has been made exclusively to 'Skopje' (after the capital city) or 'FYROM' (the English abbreviation for Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), or it is pointed out that, within the former Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1929-1941), the area was referred to as the province of Vardarska.

This Greek position is now being significantly modified. It is acknowledged that its northern neighbour is part of the area which used to be designated Macedonia and that the inhabitants identify with that name. In an interview with Dora Bakoyannis, Greek Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Athens newspaper 'Kathimerini' reported on 14 October 2007 that she is seeking prompt and definitive agreement involving use of the name 'Macedonia'. The Greek preference is now for a mutually acceptable composite name which indicates that it does not refer to Macedonia in its entirety, but, rather, only to the northern, elevated part now governed by the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The soundings by Matthew Nimetz on behalf of the United Nations resumed in December 2007, with a visit to both capital cities. The name issue may be resolved before any decision in 2008 on NATO accession by the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia could give rise to fresh sensitivities in that area. That agreement may also speed up continuation of the EU accession process, partly because, from that point onwards, Greece can be expected to become an important advocate of it.

## RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

<b>Date adopted</b>	27.2.2008
<b>Result of final vote</b>	+:           56 -:           5 0:           1
<b>Members present for the final vote</b>	Monika Beňová, Elmar Brok, Colm Burke, Véronique De Keyser, Giorgos Dimitrakopoulos, Hanna Foltyn-Kubicka, Michael Gahler, Georgios Georgiou, Bronisław Geremek, Maciej Marian Giertych, Ana Maria Gomes, Alfred Gomolka, Klaus Hänsch, Richard Howitt, Jana Hybášková, Anna Ibrisagic, Metin Kazak, Maria Eleni Koppa, Helmut Kuhne, Joost Lagendijk, Vytautas Landsbergis, Johannes Lebech, Emilio Menéndez del Valle, Francisco José Millán Mon, Philippe Morillon, Pasqualina Napoletano, Vural Öger, Cem Özdemir, Justas Vincas Paleckis, Ioan Mircea Pașcu, Alojz Peterle, Hubert Pirker, Samuli Pohjamo, Bernd Posselt, Michel Rocard, Raúl Romeva i Rueda, Libor Rouček, Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, György Schöpflin, Hannes Swoboda, Charles Tannock, Geoffrey Van Orden, Ari Vatanen, Kristian Vigenin, Zbigniew Zaleski, Josef Zieleniec
<b>Substitute(s) present for the final vote</b>	Mariela Velichkova Baeva, Cristian Silviu Bușoi, Giulietto Chiesa, Andrew Duff, Árpád Duka-Zólyomi, David Hammerstein, Evgeni Kirilov, Jaromír Kohlíček, Erik Meijer, Nickolay Mladenov, Borut Pahor, Józef Pinior, Antolín Sánchez Presedo, Inger Segelström, Marcello Vernola
<b>Substitute(s) under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote</b>	Renate Weber