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Republic of Macedonia on the way to the EU

Joint Parliamentary Committee EU-RM

The Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia and the EU

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ministry of Culture

Republic of Macedonia: Fast Facts

- *International abbreviation (ISO):* MK
- *Independence:* 8 September 1991
- *Total area:* 25,713 sq. km
- *Population:* 2,022,547
- *Capital:* Skopje
- *Official language:* Macedonian*
- *Government type:* Parliamentary democracy
- *Legal system:* Based on civil law system
- *Administrative division:* Municipalities (84)
- *Religions:* Christians 65.2% (Orthodox Christians 64.8%), Muslims 33.3%, Others 1.5%
- *Currency:* Denar (MKD)
- *Time:* Central European Time zone (GMT+1)
- *Internet ccTLD:* .mk

*... In the units of local self-government where at least 20 percent of the population speaks a particular language, that language and its alphabet shall be used as an official language in addition to the Macedonian language and the Cyrillic alphabet... (Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia).

Dear Fellow Members of the Joint Parliamentary Committee,



JPC EU-RM Meeting in Skopje

First, allow me to send my best and warmest regards to each of you on behalf of your Macedonian counterparts and colleagues. We are looking forward to working closely with you throughout these next five years of this mandate of the European Parliament.

It has been a great pleasure of mine to meet many of you during my recent visit to Brussels. It is vitally important for me personally and for all of us in the Macedonian side of the Joint Parliamentary Committee to have strong and fruitful relationships with you, our European counterparts. Our aim and desire is that the working relationships within the JPC would yield the maximum possible benefit and that through our co-operation The Republic of Macedonia would grow closer than ever before to its European sisters and brothers.

With this in mind, we have decided to launch this newsletter for you, members of the European Parliament's Joint Parliamentary Committee with the Republic of Macedonia. In collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we will be sending

you news from the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia on a regular basis. Our goal is to keep you informed on our progress and aware of the many issues that we are tackling here.

Full integration in the European family is our great aim and fostering open and clear communication with the European Parliament is vital in this pursuit. I trust that you will find the JPC Committee Newsletter both interesting and beneficial.

On behalf of our two Vice-Chairs, Rafis Aljiti and Slavica Grkovska Loshkova and myself, we look forward to seeing you in early 2010 in Skopje at our 7th Meeting of the Joint Parliamentary Committee!

Until then, allow me to send you the assurances of my highest regard.

Sincerely Yours,

*Aleksandar SPASENOVSKI,
Chairman of the European Union- Republic of
Macedonia Joint Parliamentary Committee*

President of the Assembly meets the new rapporteur of the EP for Macedonia



Mr. Trajko Veljanoski and Mr. Zoran Thaler in Skopje

At the meeting, the President of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, Mr. Trajko Veljanoski once again emphasized the positive results of Macedonia and its institutions in the process of European integration. "The visa regime liberalization for the Macedonian citizens, as well as the Republic of Macedonia 2009 Progress Report and the recommendation for opening the accession negotiations are acknowledgements of our results and of our commitment for EU membership.

The Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia discussed in detail the Report of the European Commission and adopted Conclusions focusing on the need to work harder in the period after receiving of the date for opening accession negotiations. We are aware that this is the most difficult part of the process of integration in the EU, but we also know

that Europe is where we belong historically and culturally", said the President of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, Mr. Trajko Veljanoski.

Mr. Zoran Thaler said that the progress which the Republic of Macedonia has achieved is evident, and that this is of great importance not only for Macedonia but also for the whole region. He said that the European Parliament pays great attention to the process of EU enlargement, including the full integration of Republic of Macedonia and the other countries from the region. Underlining the existing cooperation between the Macedonian Assembly and the European Parliament, Mr. Thaler emphasized that he is prepared to assist Macedonia in its process of integration, as well as with regard to the parliamentary cooperation with the European Parliament.

MACEDONIAN PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION VISITS STRASBOURG

During their working visit in the European Parliament in Strasbourg from 23 to 26 November 2009, the Delegation from the Committee on European Issues of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia composed of Mr. Petar Pop Arsov, Ms. Slavica Grkovska - Loskova, Ms. Flora Kadriu, Mr. Nazif Bushi had meetings with Mr. Kristian Vigenin, Mr. Eduard Kukan, Mr. Alojz Peterle and Mr. Zoran Thaler, Mr. Olle Ludvigsson, Mr. Ioan Mircea Pascu, Mr. Martin Kastler, Mr. Monica Macovei and Mr. Cristian Dan Preda, MEPs in the European Parliament from different political parties.

The common opinion prevailed during the meetings that the negotiations with the name issue and the negotiations for membership in the European Union should go on two separate tracks, i.e. to use the Slovenian - Croatian model for finding solutions to the problems. They also stated that there should be a recommendation for start of the negotiations for the Republic of Macedonia in the Resolution of the European Parliament for the Enlargement Strategy of the European Commission for the Western Balkan Countries. The MPs from the Macedonian Delegation were also present at the preparatory meeting of the JPC - European Union and the Republic of Macedonia where Commissioner Oli Rehn addressed the parliamentarians, stating the significant progress made by the Republic of Macedonia in the past period by fulfilling the outlined benchmarks and expressed confidence that the Euro-integration process will continue with the solution on the name issue.



PARTICIPATION OF A MACEDONIAN DELEGATION AT THE PARLIAMENTARY SEMINAR ON FREE TRADE AND REGIONAL INTERNAL MARKET

Jointly organized by the European Parliament and the Parliament of the Republic of Croatia, the Parliamentary Seminar on "Free Trade and Regional Internal Market" was held recently in Zagreb. Members of Western Balkan parliaments, members of the European Parliament, as well as representatives of the European Commission took part at the Seminar.



The Delegation from the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia was composed of Mr. Vančo Kocev from VMRO-DPMNE, Roza Topuzova Karevska from LDP, Femi Jonuzi from DUI, and Mile Andonov from SDSM.

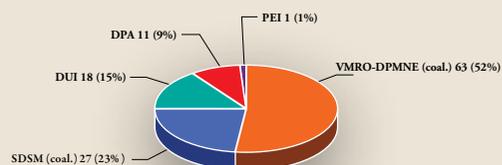
Ms. Silvana Koch-Mehrin - Vice-President of the European Parliament, the MEPs Mr. Zoran Thaler, Mr. Bastian Belder and Mr. Iuliu Winkler, as well as other high ranking officials addressed the meeting. The participants discussed various issues, such as the relations between the European Parliament and the national parliaments, the emphasis on regional cooperation in the Stabilization and Association Agreement as a political condition for European Union membership, the role of parliaments in the promotion of the regional economic cooperation, the renewed CEFTA and the goal of multilateral free trade, as well as the role of the Regional Cooperation Council in encouraging regional cooperation and trade.

Mr. Vančo Kocev from the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia had a presentation on the implementation of the commitments of the Republic of Macedonia in the area of regional cooperation and trade.

CURRENT COMPOSITION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

According to the Constitution, the Parliament is unicameral and can consist from 120 up to 140 MPs elected through a proportional model in general, direct and free elections by secret ballot. They are elected each four years from party lists based on the percentage of the overall vote the parties gain in each of six electoral districts in the Republic of Macedonia. In most of the cases, the party lists are submitted by the political parties, or by the party coalitions, but there are also lists submitted by a group of voters as independent candidates.

Currently, the Parliament consists of 120 MPs. The last parliamentary elections were held in June 2008, when the Coalition of VMRO-DPMNE won 65% (63 MPs), the Sun Coalition 27.23% (27 MPs), DUI 18.15% (18 MPs), DPA 11.9% (11 MPs) and PEI 1.1% (1 MP) of the total number of votes cast. The ruling coalition is led by the largest party, that is the center-right VMRO-DPMNE together with the Albanian party DUI and the opposition is led Sun Coalition is led by SDSM which is a party of the left, together with LDP, NSDP, LP, as well as the Albanian parties DPA and ND. In the current composition, mainly within the ruling coalition, are representatives of the Serbs, Bosniaks, Roma, Turks, Vlachs and other ethnic communities living in Macedonia.



Everlasting Moments:



Mount Sar Planina



Mount Korab



Mount Pelister

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