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Joint Parliamentary Committee EU -RNM

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ministry of Culture

MACEDONIAN LEGISLATION HARMONIZED WITH THE EU ACQUIS IN SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2018:

- Law Amending the Law on Protection of the Rights of the Patients
- Law Amending the Law on the Establishment of the Agency for Financial Support of Agriculture and Rural Development
- Law Amending the Law on Aviation

„GREATER EURASIA: DIALOGUE. TRUST. PARTNERSHIP“



FIRST INTERNATIONAL VISIT OF PRESIDENT SASSOLI TO THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

The President of the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia, Mr. Talat Xhaferi had a meeting with the President of the European Parliament Mr. David Maria Sassoli, who after assuming office, paid his first visit outside the EU to the Republic of North Macedonia. President Xhaferi expressed gratitude to Mr. Sasoli for the letter sent by the EU highest officials to the European Council asking a date for start of negotiations for North Macedonia and Albania, emphasizing that the decision will be a test for the capability of the Union to fulfill its promises and to look to the future. He also thanked for the European Parliament Resolution and its support for start of accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia, which outlines that the decision taken at the last summit has been a strategic mistake, damaging the credibility of the EU and sending a negative signal to candidate countries regarding good neighborly relations, and that it opens the door to other influences in the region.

President Xhaferi noted that there was great disappointment with the European Council's decision because we have justifiably expected recognition for the reforms implemented and for the country's serious political decisions taken to meet EU recommendations. If the reason for not getting a negotiation date is the need to establish a new methodology for accession negotiations that will make the process more efficient, it is acceptable to us, but any alternative to the membership such as a privileged partnership or putting the country in the EU neighborhood category is not acceptable, stressed President Xhaferi.

The President of the European Parliament, Sassoli noted that the disappointment of the citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia is also a disappointment for most of the EU member states who are convinced that the country is ready to start the accession process. He underlined that this is not a standstill, since the European Council did not say "no" but delayed the decision, i.e. instead of a historical mistake, we are talking about a historical standstill. President Sassoli noted that one opportunity is lost, but everything will be done to create a new opportunity. According to him, it is important to understand the remarks made by individual countries and work to overcome them. He expressed confidence that the issue of opening negotiations with the Republic of North Macedonia could again be put on the agenda, given the support of many member states, as well as the unique position of the European institutions, but that in the meantime the state should continue with the reforms. In the end, he stressed that he sees the future of the state in the common European family.



IMPORTANCE OF CROSSED BORDER COOPERATION DISCUSSED WITH THE PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

President Talat Xhaferi had a meeting with the President of the European Committee of the Regions, Mr. Karl-Heinz Lambertz, who paid an official visit to the Republic of North Macedonia. President Xhaferi noted that citizens expect local government units to meet a wide range of economic, environmental and social needs, and to this end great attention is paid to expanding local government competencies, increased fiscal decentralization and fiscal capacity and equitable enforcement of the Law on Equal Regional Development. He further informed that the country has managed to overcome the political crisis, make fundamental changes towards an inclusive and open political atmosphere and deliver tangible results. In terms of strengthening good neighborly relations, difficult and courageous

steps have been taken to resolve open issues with Bulgaria and Greece for wider regional stability and set an example of reconciliation in the region.

The President Lambertz emphasized that the country has resolved important issues in the field of decentralization, fiscal decentralization and regional development, but also that these are the key challenges all European states face. Emphasizing the importance of cross-border cooperation, President Lambertz briefed on the opportunities and mechanisms offered by the European Committee of the Regions, which again cannot be implemented without national legislation and expressed hope that further progress would be made in this regard.



MEETING WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE FRENCH PARLIAMENT

At the invitation of Mr. Bertrand Sorre, President of the Friendship Group at the National Assembly of the French Republic, Delegation of the Parliamentary Group of the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia, paid a working visit to the National Assembly and the Senate of the French Republic. MPs from North Macedonia emphasized that the political relations between the two states are characterized by continuous and in-depth political dialogue. They also stated that in order to strengthen regional stability, the state pays close attention to the good neighborly relations and serves as an example in the region for the manner of resolving mutual problems. Political representatives from the National Assembly and the Senate of the French Republic have said that following French President Macron's statement in Belgrade, the French Republic will be much more present in the Balkans. They stated that French Republic supports North Macedonia since its declaration of independence, the Ohrid Framework Agreement, and will continue to support its Euro-Atlantic perspective.

GENDER EQUALITY STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION DEBATED IN PARLIAMENT

The Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men held a public debate on the implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy for 2018 with representatives of the relevant ministries, agencies municipalities, institutes, NGOs and international organizations and Embassies.

After the debate, conclusions were adopted regarding the obligation of the ministries to submit unified reports, which will be previously harmonized with NGOs and MPs, the increase of financial resources to subsidize women entrepreneurs and the 50% quota commitment for women on the lists for both parliamentary and local elections. Also, they urged for the need for a by-law to enable reporting and protection of students from violence, to introduce comprehensive sex education as compulsory for both preschool and

school age, to oblige all mayors and ministers to open a new, special vacancy in the systematization of co-ordinator dealing with the issue of equal opportunities, as well as to organize, in collaboration with the Women Parliamentarians' Club, field visits with women in the textile and leather industry, as well as in detention units and penitentiaries where women are accommodated, in the light of the Ombudsman's observations. Participants called to attention on the patronage service and the availability of women to gynecologists in each municipality and the need of a hearing in the Assembly regarding the implementation of the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. They concluded that there should be an increased presence and participation of male MPs in the work of this Committee.

STRONG SUPPORT MESSAGE BY THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

President Xhaferi during his visit to Strasbourg, met with the AFET Chair David McAllister, JPC Co-Chair of the EU-North Macedonia Andreas Schieder, the Rapporteur Ilhan Kucuk and the Shadow-Rapporteur Tanya Fajon. At the meetings, it was emphasized if the decision depended solely on the European Parliament, the country would have started negotiations with the EU a long time ago. They repeated the support of the European Parliament and the cooperation within the frames of

AFET, JPC and the Jean Monnet dialogue.

The Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Policy, Mr. David McAllister stressed that for the European Parliament, the Republic of North Macedonia remains a priority, there is widespread support despite the Council's unfair decision. The error made cannot be corrected, but will not be allowed to be repeated in the future.



PRESIDENT XHAFERI MEETS EP VICE-PRESIDENT PAPADIMOULIS

The President of the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia, Talat Xhaferi met the Vice-President of the European Parliament of the Hellenic Republic, Mr. Dimitrios Papadimoulis.

President Xhaferi was pleased to meet him again as Vice President of the European Parliament and congratulated him on his re-election to this post. EP demonstrated concrete support for our country's Euro-integration processes, which for us is a signal for realization of all values for membership in the Union, hoping that in the new composition of the European Parliament the cooperation will continue at all levels as well, stated

Mr. Xhaferi. He briefed the interlocutor on the expected start of EU membership negotiations, viewed as an act of valorization of our reforms and the closure of open issues with neighbors. It will not in itself

not mean EU membership; it will be a start of a new phase in the European integration process whose completion would depend on it, ourselves and the dynamics of the reforms undertaken. Regarding the cooperation with the Republic of Greece, President Xhaferi said that he believes that the proposed parliamentary cooperation will continue with the current composition of the Greek Parliament. Vice-President Papadimoulis underlined that the Prespa Agreement is a cornerstone that provides a good basis for building step by step the European orientation of the country. At the same time, he conveyed the support of the EP, EC and the European Council for this agreement as a window to the whole region and its EU integration. However, at this point it is particularly important that each country be individually valued for the steps it



[has taken and be appropriately rewarded, as well as to send a message that despite the fact that some are leaving the Union, it remains open to accepting new member states.

EUROPEAN VALUES FOR SEE FUTURE – YOUTH POLICIES AND COOPERATION

The National Council for European Integration organized a public debate with the Youth Union within the frames of the 17th International Youth Conference, held from 26-29 September 2019 in Krusevo. The public debate gathered young motivators from 16 countries in the region and the EU. President of the Council, Mr. Nikola Poposki, stressed that the challenges that young people face today are related to democracy, the rule of law, fundamental rights, geopolitical movements, current migration and other challenges of the 21st century, and they demand priority action. The President of the Youth Alliance, Mr. Metodija Stojcevski noted that the active civil sector has accumulated knowledge, information and skills that can help system institutions and decision makers in creating sustainable policies for different target groups.

Young leaders presented key recommendations on different topics related to the awareness-raising campaign on the importance of the rule of law and democratic values, establishing an independent media union, initiating an inclusive process for evidence-based health policy making in SEE, as well as regular stakeholder consultations leading to new digital labor

policies, establishing a public instrument for the further development of non-formal education that would be followed by independent, student advisory boards, creating an online platform to connect and foster communication between local, national and regional institutions including all relevant actors in youth mobility programs. Regarding the needs of the young people today, they demanded promotion of research on specific needs and problems of young people conducted in partnership with representative stakeholders, establishing a national monitoring and reporting body on the implementation of the existing youth strategy and action plans in which youth work is recognized as a profession and annual summit - awards for solidarity activism in SEE countries. Participants called SEE governments to establish stricter public procurement rules, stimulate business practices that will enable the transition to a circular economy, inclusion of recycling and sustainability education items in the primary education curriculum, developing innovative educational materials, implementing stricter regulations that will encourage industry to comply with emission standards, and establishing an independent body to evalu-

ate the implementation of strategies and monitor standards compliance. Vice-President of the Council, Ms. Ivana Tufegljic rated the recommendations as excellent and expressed expectation that diplomatic corps representatives would familiarize their governments with their content. It is especially important for young people to get a chance to participate in policy-making and at the same time encourage CSOs to continue to make recommendations and open up important topics for debate.



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