

### Your contacts:

Chairman of the EU-MK JPC: [b.kasami@sobranie.mk](mailto:b.kasami@sobranie.mk)

Members: [jpc@sobranie.mk](mailto:jpc@sobranie.mk)

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Working bodies of the Assembly

Joint Parliamentary Committee EU -RNM

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ministry of Culture

### MACEDONIAN LEGISLATION HARMONIZED WITH THE EU ACQUIS IN NOVEMBER 2020 - JANUARY 2021:

- Law Amending the Law on Trade Companies.
- Law Ratifying the Additional Protocol 6 on Trade Services to the Agreement on Amendment of and Accession to the Central European Free Trade Agreement.
- Law on General Product Safety.
- Law on Phytopharmacy.
- Law on Population, Households and Apartments
- Census in the Republic of North Macedonia, 2021.
- Law on the Intelligence Agency.
- Law on Prevention and Protection from Violence of Women and Family Violence.
- Law on Equitable Regional Development.



### Dear colleagues,



As a newly appointed Co-Chair of the JPC Delegation in the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia, it will be my honor and pleasure to work with you during my mandate and to continue the decade's long and fruitful cooperation between our two parliaments. I sincerely hope that in the following years, despite the pandemic challenges we are all faced with, our Committee will manage to hold its regular meetings and personally contribute to our Euro-Integration process. As a country, we have passed

through turmoil on this path, but the will of majority of our citizens for membership in the Union kept us focused to continue with our efforts and work on an achievement of this goal. I am confident that as parliamentarians, we can help the current obstacles to be overcome with a sense of common reason, so that the country can open a new chapter in its European history and start negotiations for EU membership.

Sincerely,

Billal Kasami,

JPC Co-Chair

*Photo: Mr. Billal Kasami, Co-Chair of the JPC with H.E. David Geer, Head of the Delegation of the EU.*

## PRESIDENT XHAFERI MEETS PRESIDENT SOBOTKA

The President of the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia, Mr. Talat Xhaferi, virtually met his colleague the President of the Austrian National Council, Mr. Wolfgang Sobotka, who stated that Republic of Austria remains a strong supporter of the country for opening of accession negotiations and it represents this position at all institutional levels in the European Union. Regarding the Bulgarian veto, President Xhaferi pointed out that the channels of communication remain open and that he is confident that the differences in the negotiations will be overcome. If not, Euro-skepticism will grow, emphasized President Xhaferi. They both expressed satisfaction that despite the extraordinary circumstances, the cooperation between the two parliaments for establishment of a Democracy Workshop in the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia following the example of the Austrian Parliament will help and stimulate the interest for politics and democracy among the young people. President Sobotka expressed personal interest to be present at the official opening of the workshop.



## ONLINE MEETING WITH MEPS SCHIEDER, KYUCHYUK AND WALSMANN

The parliamentary leadership of the Assembly had a virtual meeting with the MEPs Facilitators of the Jean Monnet Dialogue Andreas Schieder, Ilhan Kyuchyuk and Marion Walsmann.

The meeting was held to make an update of the obligations taken from the Third Jean Monnet Dialogue in February 2020, and on the political climate after the parliamentary elections held on 15 July 2020. President Xhaferi expressed gratitude for the congratulations letter sent to him by the three MEPs and the statement about the smooth implementation of the elections under the challenging circumstances caused by the Covid-19 virus. He reassured the MEPs on the commitment for continuation of the Jean Monnet Dialogue, in times when coordination among political parties is held in full composition, meaning all coordinators of parliamentary groups can be informed and contribute to the functioning of the Parliament. President Xhaferi stated that the EC Progress Report is objective and that there is a room for improvement, but that shortened procedure is used only for acts related to the country's NATO and EU accession process. The pandemic and the long period of absence of parliamentary work imposed considerations of alternative modes of work. He concluded that democracy cannot be suspended in such a dramatic crisis, but that the Fourth Jean Monnet Dialogue will be held when the conditions will allow physical presence of all participants. The MEPs expressed readiness to continue with the process, having in mind that the last conclusions left important legacy for

the new parliamentary composition regarding amendments to the existing Rules of Procedure of the Parliament.



## NATIONAL EURO-INTEGRATION COUNCIL CHAIR NIKOLOSKI MEETS EU AMBASSADOR GEER

The Chair of the National Euro-Integration Council Aleksandar Nikoloski met with the Ambassador and Head of the EU Delegation. H.E. Mr. David Geer. Nikolovski informed his interlocutor on the composition and the competences of the Council and its inclusive character uniting various political and societal actors. Regarding the criteria for EU membership, Nikoloski expressed hope for a closer cooperation with the EU official representatives and announced active agenda of the Council. Ambassador Geer congratulated Mr. Nikoloski on his election and expressed his support on the work of the Council, pointing out that the state should inclusively make progress in the implementation of the reforms necessary for EU membership and that the Union remains dedicated to the enlargement process.



## EU COMMITTEE AFFAIRS CHAIR AT THE VIRTUAL MEETING ON THE DAYTON AGREEMENT

The EU Committee Affairs Chair Arber Ademi took part at the Conference titled "Western Balkans: 25 Years after the Dayton Agreement" held in the European Parliament in Brussels, under the auspices of AFET. Speaking about the Euro-Integration process in the region, he pointed out that the Republic of North Macedonia has taken historical steps to improve good neighborly relations with Greece and Bulgaria, which resulted with the NATO membership and works to fulfill the criteria for start of the first Inter-Governmental Conference as soon as possible. In this context, he called for full support by his colleagues in national parliaments of EU member states. AFET Chair David Macllister, EC President Joseph Borell and EC Commissioner Oliver Varhelyi confirmed the support for further EU enlargement with the Western Balkan countries, despite the current challenges in the region.



## CONSTITUTIVE SESSION OF THE YOUTH ISSUES AND POLICIES CLUB

The Youth Issues and Policies Club held its constitutive session in this parliamentary mandate to be chaired by the MP Jovan Jauleski. The members expressed their commitment to continue with development and promotion of youth policies, and the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies in particular.

President Xhaferi welcomed the constitutive session of the Club supported by the National Democratic Institute and Westminster Foundation for Democracy, wishing them to play the role of young legislators to the benefit of all young people in the state, being their voice, support and dialing code, as well as to be innovative, creative and show good example in their initiatives and work.



## VIOLENCE DOES NOT RECOGNIZE POLITICAL, PARTY, EDUCATION, INTELLECTUAL OF RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND

The Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men held a public debate on the Draft-Law for Prevention and Protection from Violence on Women and Family Violence. The Chair of the Committee Gordana Siljanovska-Davkova stated that the law should contain strong legislative oversight mechanism and that the National Coordinative Body for implementation of the Convention should include university members. The Labour Minister Jagoda Shahpaska spoke about the violence as a topic without political, part, religious, educational or ethnic affiliation and that the aim of this law is to provide an integrated and multi-disciplinary response to violence of women or to family violence, in accordance with international standards. The Interior Minister Spasovski claimed that the law will enable a standardized net of institutions on the principle of “due attention” that will increase the effective institutional reaction and offer greater protection from family violence.

Ms. Marta Markoska, representing the social workers pointed out that the law also provides continuous strengthening of the social institutions’ capacities for gender-based violence. Ms. Doroti Pachkova, an NGO activist, discussed about the need for the coordinative body to be managed by a gender equality expert and that “vulnerability” should be defined as predetermined or acquired in certain cases, or as a socially created vulnerability in other, like for the single mothers. Ms. Elena Dimush-evska from the National Network Against Violence of Women and Family Violence focused on the reintegration of violence victims in the society and the law for the first time offers support to this process, including housing, psychological support, financial assistance, training and education, as assistance for employment, although without specifying which institution will provide the assets.



## EU GREEN DEAL VIRTUAL MEETING

The Chair of the Economic Issues Committee Dime Velkovski took part at the virtual meeting dedicated to the Energy Community Green Deal and the preparation of National Plans organized by the Energy Community Secretariat. National Parliaments of Members States, MEPs, representatives from the Energy Community, experts and NGO representatives also took part at the meeting. The Chair Velkovski elaborated on the programs implemented for protection of the environment through subsidies for 5000 household inverter air conditioners during 2020, as a step for replacement of wood heating, planned to be implemented as well in the following years. He also referred to the opening of solar power plant as well in the country and the perspectives for opening similar plants in the state for energy production. Regarding gasification, Mr. Velkovski concluded that significant amount of money are allocated each year for finalization of the gas network and that the Republic of North Macedonia is the first country from the Energy Community that has a prepared Draft-version of the National Energy and Climate Plan.



## CONSTITUTIVE SESSION OF THE INTER-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The Inter-Party Parliamentary Group (IPPG) for People with Disabilities held its constitutive session in this parliamentary mandate.

The President of the Assembly, Mr. Talat Xhaferi addressed the audience, expressing confidence that the parliament will continue adopting legal solutions for equal treatment, access and possibilities for all citizens. "The hardest barriers are those created in our minds", said President Xhaferi. The Chairperson of the Group Jovan Mitrevski in his introductory address stated that the vision of this group is to improve the possibilities for people with disabilities in the society and that the group will actively work together with NGOs and experts in accordance with the principles of the Convention for the Rights of People with Disabilities.



## WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS MET THEIR COUNTERPARTS IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Women Parliamentarians in the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia as members of various committees and clubs, met online with their colleagues in the European Parliament to discuss leadership of women in times of global health crisis. The participants discussed about the key areas that MPs should focus in times of crisis, gender responsible budgeting, parliamentary gender oversight, introduction of quotas in the executive and local government mayors, hate speech against women parliamentarians and gender sensibility with male MPs. MEPs welcome the adoption of the Law for Prevention of Violence of Women and Family Violence with consensus. MEP Francis Fitzgerald presented the Draft-Resolution to be presented in the EP and stressed the importance of inclusion of women in decision-making related to issues with health and climate crisis and that it is the duty of parliamentarians to ensure respect of human and women rights. MEP Vladimir Bilcik outlined the importance of a critical mass on these issues and for the increase of women in politics in general.



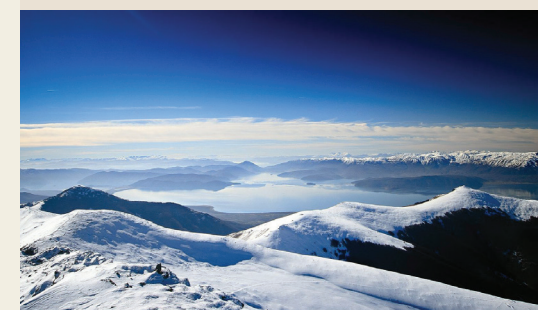
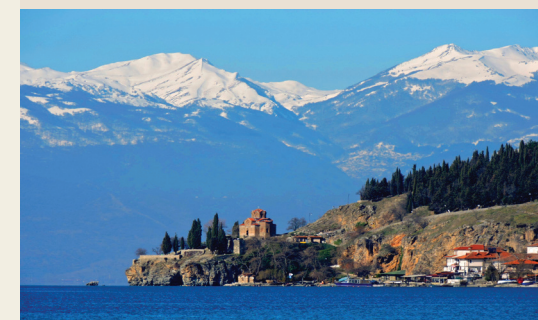
## CONSTITUTIVE SESSION OF THE INTER-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP FOR PROMOTION OF LGBTI PEOPLE RIGHTS



Group of parliamentarians, together with the National Network against Homophobia and Trans-phobia established the Inter-Party Parliamentary Group for Promotion of the LGBTI People Rights. The Group coordinator Maja Morachanin pointed out that it is a great pleasure to re-establish this group in the new parliamentary mandate and that significant results have been achieved so far for promotion of LGBTI people rights. Among others, the mentioned the Adoption of the Law for Prevention and Protection from Discrimination, inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity in the Law on Audio and Audio-Visual Media and in the Criminal Code as a base for protection from criminal acts made of hatred. The Group has participated in a number of public events for promotion of their rights, including the Pride Parade and for inclusion of the country in the Inter-Governmental Conference on Equal Rights (ERC) in 2019. The parliamentary member Ms. Gordana Siljanovska-Davkova spoke about the necessity to build a strong democratic parliamentary dam against verbal and physical attacks on LGBTI people and to enable them to become subjects, instead of objects in the society, since MPs have a legal, ethical, parliamentary and human obligation to fight against any form of discrimination against any individual.

Ms. Dragana Drndarevska from the National Network addressed the audience claiming that the adoption of the law implies election of professional and independent members of the Commission for Prevention and Protection from Discrimination that will efficiently protect all marginalized groups, including LGBTI people. She called for an independent expert to be elected as an Ombudsman, reorganization of the institution and provision of a greater protection of human rights of the citizens. The implementation of the LGBTI rights will mean decrease of stigma and hatred toward members of this community and this can be achieved only through continuous activities and measures by all relevant institutions, concluded Ms. Drndarevska.

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