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THE EUROPEAN FAMILY IS OUR COMMON GOAL

The President of the Republic of Kosovo, Vjosa Osmani-Sadriu, addressed the Assembly as part of her official visit to the country. In her address, she underlined that two countries are not only geographical neighbors, but that they share the same values and challenges. Our common goal, she said, is the European family. "North Macedonia and Kosovo have excellent neighborly relations. Not only in words, but also in deeds. Our connections are strong and frequent, and now they are faster. The Albanian people in North Macedonia have always been and will be a strong bridge of connection between the two countries. The relations between North Macedonia and Kosovo are a positive point of view in the Western Balkans, which contributes to the stability of the region and to the development of the economy," said Osmani-Sadriu. She expressed belief in the youth of both countries, and transformation of women and girls in the society, who have leading positions in many areas and in many important and complex processes. According to her, EU and NATO are the destination where we want to be together, their principles are standards that we should apply in our countries and in the region. Regarding the visa liberalization for Kosovo, for which she mentioned the strong support from North Macedonia, as a new chapter in the EU integration process, she concluded that borders divide us, but Europe will unite us all.



EXHIBITION OF CHILDREN'S DRAWINGS FROM THE PARLIAMENTARY CARAVAN



PLENKOVIKJ: FIND POLITICAL FORCES TO SPEED UP THE EU PATH



The Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia, Andrej Plenkovic, addressed the Assembly by emphasizing that country provides strong, concrete and continuous support for the European integration of North Macedonia. "I encourage you to find a way and political forces and accelerate the path to the European Union. With numerous examples, you have more than clearly proven your commitment to EU membership, showing political vision and courage in extremely challenging political moments for your country. I am aware and fully understand certain frustrations and dissatisfaction, bearing in mind the years of waiting at the door of the EU, but this time I want to encourage you not to lose faith and hope, but on the contrary to make additional efforts in implementing reforms and conditions in preparation for future membership of the Union. As difficult and uncertain as it may seem to you now, political opportunities and your clear determination for membership in the Union require you to take an extremely important step for your country, its citizens and future generations", said the Croatian Prime Minister.

ADDRESS OF THE AUSTRIAN PRESIDENT ALEXANDER VAN DER BELLEN



The Federal President of the Republic of Austria, Alexander Van der Bellen, addressed the Members of Parliament, within the frames of his first official visit to the country. He confirmed the extraordinary bilateral relations between two countries and the maintenance of close political contacts. He told the MPs to stay focused and continue to convince the EU with concrete results, for which, as he said, he is convinced that the citizens will be grateful. Van der Bellen also emphasized that country deserves international support and recognition for the achievement of the Prespa Agreement, as before, the country became an example of successful coexistence in the region with the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement. "In order to continue the process of expansion, another visible sign of confirmation of that diversity is now needed in the form of a change to the Constitution. I do not believe it is realistic that the July 2022 agreement will be renegotiated once again. It is important to look forward, not back. To look towards a common European future and to work on it. That is why it is worth taking the next step, which is not easy. Austria will continue to be your reliable ally," concluded van der Bellen in his address to the Parliament.

XHAFERI: NATO AND EU, STRATEGIC GOALS THAT WE STAND FOR DESPITE THE MAJOR CHALLENGES

Before the official start of the annual Conference of Speakers of Parliaments of the EU Member States in Prague, the President of the Senate Miloš Vistrčil and Marketa Pekarová Adamová, the President of the House of Representatives of the Czech Republic, held a working meeting with the presidents of the parliaments of the EU candidate countries. Presidents shared the experiences of their respective countries regarding the process and the challenges they face on their way. The common conclusion was that, although they are in different stages of the European integration process, each country should be evaluated according to its own merits, the process should contain clear conditions, the negotiations should not last too long and the methodology should not change constantly. The interlocutors also agreed that the process must be accelerated, as the future of the Union and its security depend on the enlargement. President Xhaferi informed about the screening process and expressed the expectation that in 2023 all the desired and necessary changes and progress of the state towards the EU will take place, primarily because of the benefits for the citizens. He emphasized that geopolitical changes on the European continent, as a result of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine, only confirm that the policy of enlargement remains the best tool for stability, solidarity and sustainability. Welcoming the granting of candidate status to Ukraine and Moldova, President Xhaferi emphasized that the clear European perspective of the countries of the Western Balkans, through predictable and accelerated integration processes, are of great interest to the Union from a political, security and economic point of



view, and the unjustified delay of the process of accession could call into question the reputation of the EU as a reliable partner and its leading geopolitical role. At the Conference, President Xhaferi also met with the President of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, Ruslan Stefanchuk and with the Shalva Papuashvili, President of the Parliament of Georgia, at which he expressed full and unconditional support to their European integration aspirations.



MEETING OF PRESIDENT XHAFERI WITH MINISTER XHACKA

President Xhaferi met Olta Xhaka, Minister of European and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania, as part of her official visit to our country. Both interlocutors stated the excellent bilateral relations, with productive political dialogue and cooperation in a significant number of areas of mutual interest, and their shared goals in relation to EU membership, cooperation within NATO and deepening of regional cooperation. Xhaferi referred to the chairmanship of the country with the OSCE and the Adriatic Charter - A5, as well as with the South-East Cooperation Process. Minister Xhaka stated that the process of enlargement is related not only with the stability and security of the Balkans, but also with the security of the EU and the continent. The interlocutors emphasized the joint commitment of the two countries for the comprehensive development of the Western Balkans and welcomed the results of the last Summit of the Berlin Process, regarding the progress achieved in the free movement of citizens from the countries of the region, with the mutual recognition of identity cards, university diplomas and professional qualifications. The numerous agreements signed within the framework of the Open Balkans Initiative are also of great importance, and the realization of the obligations undertaken with these agreements remains a common priority. The implementation of infrastructure projects, and the construction of roads, energy, and railway connection within Corridor 8 in particular, remains a priority.



MACEDONIAN LANGUAGE AS ONE OF THE EU OFFICIAL LANGUAGES IS REALITY

The parliamentary leadership had a meeting with Josep Borrell, EU High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission. President Xhaferi expressed special gratitude for its financial assistance intended for dealing with the consequences of the pandemic, energy, and economic crisis. At the same time, our readiness to continue continuous and full alignment with the EU's foreign, security and defense policy, including in relation to the developments in Ukraine, were underlined. He presented his view on the current political situation and ongoing

parliamentary activities. High Representative Borrell emphasized that the enlargement process is the best thing that each of today's member states has done for prosperity and peace on the European continent. The developments in Ukraine were pointed as a driver for the acceleration of enlargement and a historic moment, which offers an exceptional opportunity that should not be missed. "The signing of the Agreement with Frontex is an undeniable reality and a guarantee for the Macedonian language as one of the official languages of the European Union," said Borrell. Regarding the Assembly in that process, Borrell emphasized that its role is of exceptional importance, since its representatives are elected by the citizens. The messages that were addressed to the interlocutors referred to the need for greater coordination between the government and the opposition and their joint action for the sake of state interests. The importance and role of the Commission for European Affairs was singled out, as well as the changes that should be introduced in the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly to enable the smooth adoption of the necessary European legislation until the accession to the Union. The parliamentary leadership expressed different views on European integration, most of which were in support of the upcoming constitutional amendments, but fears were also expressed about possible further demands from the Republic of Bulgaria in this process. In that direction, they were also informed about the low support of the citizens in the last polls for joining the EU due to the demands of Bulgaria, and guarantees were requested that this process would be conducted according to the principles and standards of the past enlargements of the Union.





MEETING OF PRESIDENT XHAFERI WITH MIROSLAV LAJCAK

At today's meeting with the EU Special Representative in charge of the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue, Miroslav Lajcak, President Xhaferi stated: "For me, it certainly represents a symbolism that has its own meaning and, of course, recognition of the international position of our country." In that context, President Xhaferi followed up on the previous successful international path of our country within the Euro-Atlantic integrations, first of all, through the example of successful resolution of the difficult and open dispute we had with the Republic of Greece and the signing of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the Republic of Bulgaria. Lajcak fully agreed with President Xhaferi that negotiations in Ohrid represent a beautiful symbolism for a country that is hosting this meeting and that is a factor of stability in the region with the results it has shown so far internationally. At the end, he expressed his personal belief that the political actors in our country will be aware of the momentum and readiness of the EU to let's start the negotiations after completing the obligations regarding making the constitutional amendments.

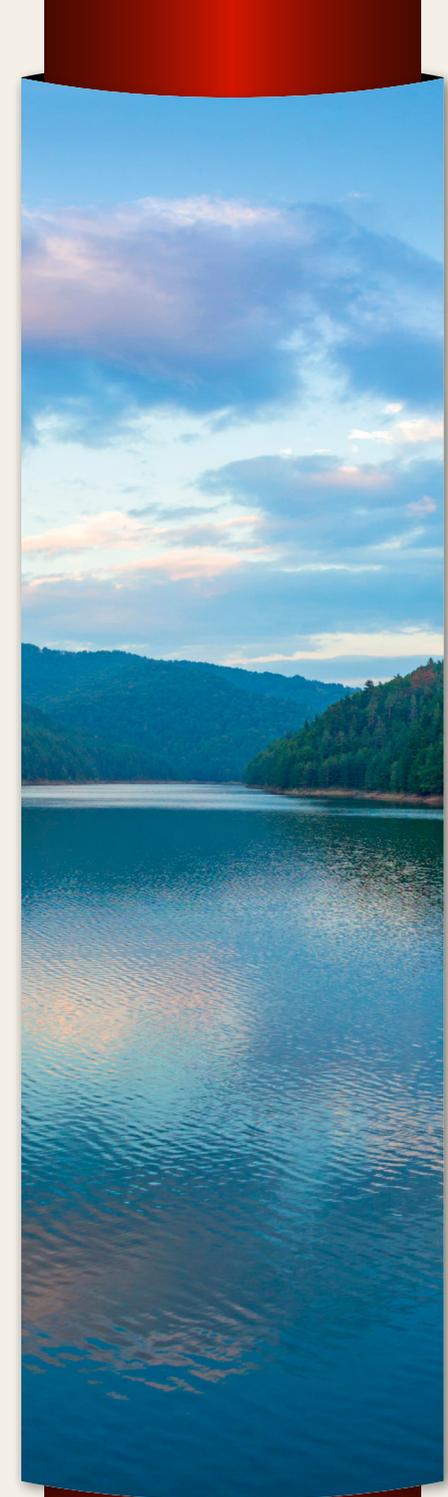
MEETING WITH MEPS IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Members of the JPC Committee EU- North Macedonia led by Ms Sonja Mirakovska, Head of the Delegation and the Members Zaklina Lazarevska, Zaklina Pesevska, Maja Moracanin and Bajram Kadrija, met with their colleagues MEPS in the European Parliament. The Delegation met with David McAllister, AFER Chair, Tonino Picula, Coordinator of the S&D Group in AFET, the JPC Members Thijs Reuten, Irena Joveva, Tineke Strik, MEPS in the Jean Monnet Dialogue Marion Walsmann and Ilhan Kyuchyuk, Matjaz Nemeč, S&D Shadow Rapporteur, and Stelios Kouloglou, Left Group Shadow Rapporteur. At the meetings, the Delegation expressed their gratitude to the European Parliament, which with a large majority gives continuous and strong support to the European perspective of our country, as well as the expectation that it will continue during the further steps, until the realization of full membership. They also informed MEPs on the current developments in the state. MEP Pitsula shared the experiences of Croatia, which had to overcome serious challenges to become a full member of the Union, emphasizing at the same time the need for enlargement to remain high on the agenda, but he also spoke about the ever-increasing need to change the principle of the EU decision-making process. MEP Reuten stated that for him North Macedonia is already a member of the family, it is only necessary to finalize it.

MEPs Walsmann and Kyuchyuk underlined the need to reach a final agreement between all political parties in the Assembly on the text of the new Rules of Procedure, which aims to improve the efficiency of the Assembly. At the same time, both sides expressed their readiness to intensify cooperation with the aim of finalizing the process by the end of the mandate in both parliaments. MEP Strik acknowledged the difficult processes that the country went through and called for joint efforts to facilitate the process of European integration, for which she also promised commitments within her political



group of the Greens. MEP Kouloglou pointed out that it is necessary to follow the example of the Prespa Agreement and thus overcome the obstacles that stand in the way of progress in the European integration process of the country with good will. MEP Nemeč emphasized that in the context of the geostrategic circumstances, it is the right time for the country to make a breakthrough, while referring to the benefits of continuing the process of negotiations for the transformation of society. MEP McAllister welcomed the fact that the country joined all the positions, sanctions and restrictive measures related to the Russian aggression against Ukraine and achieved full compliance with the common foreign and security policy of the Union. He also assured the Delegation that EP support will continue in all stages of the integration process.



GERMAN MFA BAERBOCK IN PARLIAMENT

The Chair Antonijo Milošoski and the members of the Foreign Policy Committee met with the German Minister of Foreign Annalena Berbock. Milošoski expressed gratitude for the continuous support from Germany and the efforts invested in the European integration process of the country. But despite the big concessions, the country was repeatedly betrayed by the given European promises. Minister Berbock emphasized that such meetings with MPs are of great importance, because the important decisions take place in the Parliament. She emphasized the personal and German commitments to start the accession negotiations of our country with the EU. Berbock was decisive that after the requested constitutional amendments, there is agreement from the European side that there will be no more additional negotiations, which the Bulgarian side was strictly told that this is the last request. The accession of the country and the Western Balkans to the EU will mean the strengthening of the Union, as it meant the strengthening of NATO. MP Halil Snopce emphasized that 2023 is a very critical year, a year in which they should be aware of what decisions they will make for the country and show courage and take responsibility in order to become a positive part of history. MP Tasevska said that as a parliamentary majority they do not want to hijack the future of children and that serious politicians make the right decisions at the right time. MP Vasilevska asked the European side to respect the principle of self-determination and the principle of the Copenhagen criteria, for the Western Balkans to become part of the European family, and then to resolve bilateral disputes. He reminded that when Bulgaria became an EU member, it declared that it had no problems with neighboring countries and that now it is not about Euroscepticism at all, but about principles of legitimacy to take decisions.



CEA CHAIR ARBER ADEMI IN A WORKING VISIT TO SWEDEN



The Chair of the Committee on European Affairs, Arber Ademi, as part of the official delegation of the Republic of North Macedonia, led by MFA Bujar Osmani, paid a working visit to the Kingdom of Sweden. During the visit, the Delegation met with the Speaker of the Riksdag Andreas Norlen, with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Sweden, H.E. Tobias Billström and with the Director General of the Swedish Development Agency (SIDA), Carin Yamtin and the Head of SIDA's Europe and South America Department, Lisa Fredriksson. The focus was on the European integration process. In this context, the members of our delegation thanked for the activities and role of Sweden from the position of chairman of the EU Council, noting that Sweden is one of our biggest partners that provides clear support for the country. At the same time, hope was expressed for the completion of the screening by the end of this year and for the successful course of North Macedonia's negotiations for full membership in the EU, as well as for overcoming the obstacles, after several years of waiting for the country to move to this last stage of the process of integration in the EU. The meetings also discussed the current political situation in the Republic of North Macedonia, as well as the current work of the Parliament. It was underlined that the Kingdom of Sweden always emphasizes the need for the Republic of North Macedonia to join the European Union as soon as possible.



THE NATIONAL EUROPEAN INTEGRATION COUNCIL IS AN IMPORTANT SEGMENT IN THE WORK OF THE PARLIAMENT

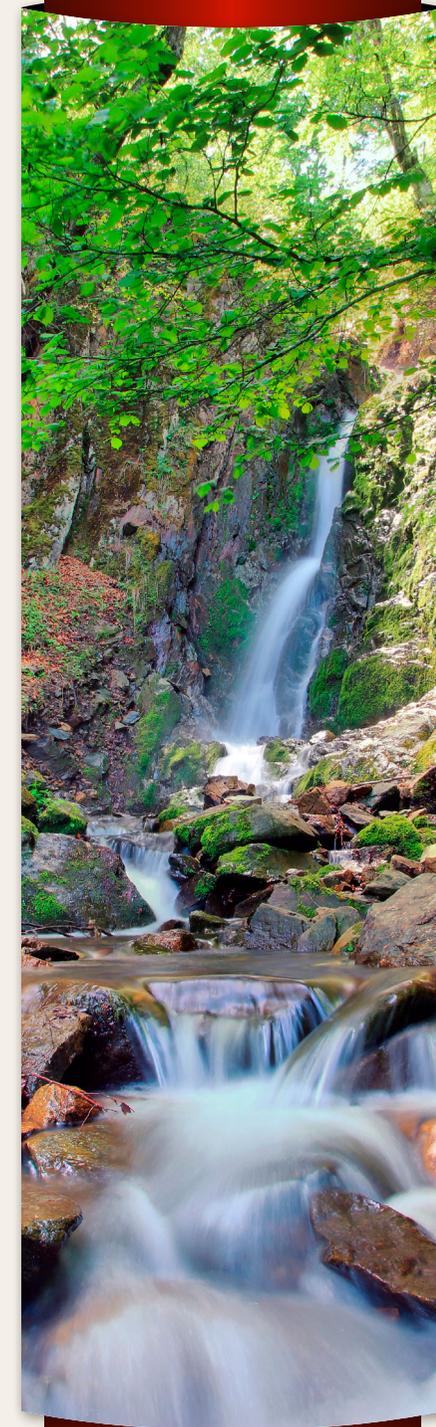


The Chair of the National Council for European Integrations (NCEI), Aleksandar Nikoloski, met today with the Acting Director for the Western Balkans in the DG Neighborhood and Enlargement Negotiations of the European Commission, Mrs. Michela Matuella. Mr. Julian Vassallo, Deputy Head of the Delegation of the EU in Skopje also attended the meeting. At the meeting, Ms Matuella stressed that she is sure that the NCEI will play an important role in the process going forward, especially in building the consensus for the European agenda. Mr. Nikoloski emphasized the need for timely information and consultation about the steps taken by the Government in the process, especially now that we are in screening phase. The two interlocutors confirmed the importance of regional cooperation and integration, the economic potential of the region, which is a benefit in the overall process of accession to the EU, and the need to intensify the cooperation of the countries of the Western Balkans.

CONCLUSIONS FROM THE OVERSIGHT DEBATE ON UNREGISTERED PERSONS

The Committee on Political System and Inter-Community Relations, after an oversight debate dedicated to the amendments in the legal framework on unregistered persons in the Civil Registry, unanimously adopted conclusions by which it suggests to the relevant institutions to examine and make additional checks in appropriate records, since from the information provided, there are around 700 unregistered persons in our state. Also, MPs pointed out to the Ministry of Justice and the Registry Office that for persons not registered in the birth registry, and who are unable to provide the nec-

essary evidence, the Registry to collect them ex officio. The Committee established a working group for the preparation of a bill to amend the existing Law on Civil Registry, consisting of MPs, representatives from the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, international organizations, and other organizations responsible for this area. These conclusions were published on the website of the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia and delivered to all participants of the oversight debate.



MARKING 8 APRIL IN THE ASSEMBLY

The Inter-Party Parliamentary Group for Support of the Roma Rights, jointly with the Committee for Relations between Communities, marked the International Day of the Roma - April 8 in the Assembly. In the welcoming speeches, President of the Assembly, Xhaferi, said that this day is a recognition and confirmation by the state, institutions, fellow citizens and society as a whole that the Roma are an integral part of that whole mosaic. The president of the IPPG, Ljatife Šikovska, emphasized that the International Roma Day is an opportunity to remember the obligations in the realization and protection of human rights and to confirm the obligations in promoting equality and non-discrimination against the Roma in North Macedonia. As a member of parliament, she called for the use of existing resources from the Roma community, to ensure participatory participation in decision-making on Roma integration policies based on facts and arguments. The Chair of the Committee for Relations Among Communities Arbana Pasholi wishing her fellow citizens longevity and intergenerational heritage of their culture, language, identity, emphasizing that joint activities will continue in the future, with special emphasis on improving the position of Roma women, as an important pillar of family management and the education of young generations. MPs, representatives from the Government, diplomatic corps and non-governmental associations attended the event, who followed as well the video addresses by Antonio Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations and Roberta Metsola, President of the European Parliament.



RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES INVESTMENTS FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS



The Secretariat of the Energy Community and the Committee on Economic Affairs held a meeting today to consider the Report on the Implementation of the Legislation of the Energy Community in the country for 2022. The Chair of the Committee Dime Velkovski, indicated that the Republic of North Macedonia, like all countries in Europe, is facing challenges brought by the war in Ukraine and that we should focus on increasing renewable energy sources as soon as possible. The Deputy Director of the Energy Community Secretariat, Dirk Buschle, said that North Macedonia has achieved a lot in this area, as it is one of the countries that adopted the green transition laws early. According to the Report, further amendments to the Energy Law should be adopted or a separate Law on Renewable Sources should be adopted, to transpose and implement Directive (EU) 2018/ 2021 and that permit procedures to be simplified to accelerate use of renewable sources. In that direction, the adoption of the by-law for the operation of the mandatory scheme for energy efficiency is recommended, including a regulatory framework for the establishment of the Energy Efficiency Fund, but also that the national energy and climate plans should be finalized. The report recommends that the Republic of North Macedonia finalize and adopt the Draft Law on Climate Action, and transpose the provisions of the Environmental Responsibility Directive, and finalize the National Energy and Climate Plans should be finalized.



FIRST PLENARY SESSION FOR PROMOTION OF GENDER EQUALITY



The first plenary session dedicated to the advancement of gender equality was held in the Assembly, on International Women's Day - March 8 and on the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the Club of Deputies. The session was opened by the President of the Assembly, Talat Xhaferi, who, congratulating the holiday, indicated that extremely significant legal amendments were adopted in the legislature in the direction of equality, protection, promotion of the status and contribution of women as equal members of the social community. The participants adopted several conclusions for further advancement of women's rights aimed at amending the Electoral Code in the direction of achieving full gender equality on the lists for deputies and councilors, amending the Law on Government by introducing at least 40 percent of the less represented gender in the executive power, amending the Electoral Code and introducing a quota of 30 percent of the less represented gender for the election of mayors, adoption of the Law on Gender Equality and establishment of a secretariat by the end of 2023, adoption of gender-sensitive Rules of Procedure of the Assembly by the end of 2023, legal regulation of the internet space to prevent hate speech, monitoring the implementation of legal solutions related to gender issues in accordance with the Plan for a Gender-Sensitive Assembly 2022-2024.

DRAFT - 2023 ACTION PLAN OF THE LGBTI GROUP ADOPTED

MPs who are members of the Inter-Party Parliamentary Group for the Promotion of the Rights of LGBTI people met today with representatives from the non-governmental sector. At the meeting, the draft action plan of the LGBTI group's activities for 2023 was discussed and adopted, which includes, among other things, the marking of important dates. The subjects of amending the Criminal Code in the section of hate speech against sexual orientation, the regulation of the gender identity of LGBTI people, the legal recognition of gender change, and the amendments to the Law on keeping civil records were also opened. The coordinator of the Group, MP Maja Moracanin, said that the Law on keeping civil records will again be submitted to the Parliament, but this time by a group of MPs. Representatives of non-governmental organizations said that a comprehensive legal framework for legal gender recognition is needed to overcome challenges in areas where personal record-keeping data is required. According to them, a systemic solution to gender alignment would avoid the problems faced by transgender people. Members of the Group believe that in order to adopt this legal solution, the support of all MPs is needed, regardless of political affiliation. For this purpose, they also announced public debates so that the issue could get as much publicity as possible. Recently, representatives of the European Court of Human Rights said that the Council of Europe is ready to offer assistance for the adoption of a legal solution as soon as possible, which will represent the best protection of the rights of LGBTI people.



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