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## PRESIDENT GASHI MEETS HIS SLOVENIAN COLLEAGUE KLAKOČAR ZUPANČIČ

The President of the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia, Afrim Gashi, welcomed the President of the Parliament of Slovenia, Ms. Urška Klakočar Zupančič. Vesna Bendevska, Vice President of the Assembly, MPs Musa Xhaferi, Ljupčo Nikolovski, Kaltrina Beqiri and Marina Dimovska, Secretary General of the Assembly also attended the meeting. Both sides confirmed their mutual commitment for further deepening of the bilateral cooperation. President Gashi praised Slovenia's continued support for the integration process of our country in the EU, emphasizing that this support is crucial for advancing reforms and the country's progress on the path of European integration. The importance of continuing the reform process and the commitment of the country to meet the conditions for opening negotiations were also discussed, underlining that North Macedonia is at an important stage, where commitment to implementing laws and constitutional amendments is necessary for opening the first chapters of negotiations. President Zupančič expressed sincere condolences for the Kočani tragedy meeting and highlighted the assistance and solidarity of the Slovenian state for the treatment of patients. The successful economic cooperation was highlighted, as well as cooperation in the field of education, including student exchange. Finally, the interlocutors expressed their commitment to further strengthening and developing relations between the parliaments in terms of cooperation and continuing efforts to achieve common goals in areas of interest to both sides.



## MEMBERS OF CEA MEET KLAKOČAR ZUPANČIČ

The Chairman of the Committee on European Affairs, Antonijo Milošoski, and members met with the Speaker of the State Duma of Slovenia, Urška Klakočar Zupančič, on the second day of her visit to the country. Milošoski addressed the obstacles that our country faces on the long road to achieving its strategic goal, pointing to the disappointment that the delay in the European integration process causes among citizens, as a factor that also encourages migration. The interlocutors also addressed the Slovenian experience in relation to Croatia, as an example of overcoming bilateral disputes in the interest of EU enlargement. Klakočar Zupančič emphasized that the enlargement process must continue as quickly as possible for the entire Western Balkan region. At the meeting, views were exchanged also regarding experiences in the reform process, especially in the areas of education and public health.



# EP'S STRONG SUPPORT FOR THE EURO-INTEGRATION PROCESS



A delegation from the Joint Parliamentary Committee - Republic of North Macedonia and the European Union, led by the Co-Chair Ivanka Vasilevska, met today in the European Parliament in Strasbourg with MEPs Karlo Ressler, JPC Co-Chair, on the European side; with Marion Walsmann, Sunčana Glavak, Antonio Tanger Correa, JPC members, as well as with Matjaž Nemec, JPC deputy member, Thomas Waitz, EP rapporteur for North Macedonia and with Matej Tonin, shadow rapporteur for our country, within the EPP political group in the European Parliament. Our delegation also included Sonja Mirakovska, JPC Vice Co-Chair, Saranda Imeri Staffai and Arbana Pasholi, JPC members.

The excellent continuity of parliamentary cooperation and the support of the EP for our European integration process were confirmed at the meetings. Regarding the Resolution that each year is adopted by the EP for our country, based on the European Commission's Progress Report, it was concluded that the first draft version, as in previous years, reflects the situation in a balanced way.

The delegation from Sobranie expressed hope that the final version of the document, which should be adopted in the coming months, would follow the trend of previous resolutions, especially in terms of recognizing progress and achieved results and indicating the continuation in areas that require additional reforms.

MEPs informed about current developments in the Union and the issues that are in focus on the European agenda, as well as about external developments that will have a direct impact on their future decisions and steps, especially trans-Atlantic relations, the war in Ukraine, the change in the approach to European defense policy and the global repositioning of countries in terms of trade policies.

The positive momentum, despite the challenges, of enlargement for our country was pointed out, which should be used to enact the necessary reforms and continue the European integration path for membership in the European Union as soon as possible.



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The message they sent to their colleagues in the Parliament was that reforms must continue, the remaining obligations for entry into the next phase of European integration must be completed, there is awareness of all the challenges and concessions that the country has made so far, which will be reflected accordingly, and that the focus in implementing reforms should be placed on essential issues, such as reforms in the rule of law, economy, environment, transport, etc., which are of essential importance for the wider society, the region and the European Union.

At the end, the presence of a Delegation from the Parliament represented by various political parties and the direct contact with fellow MEPs was particularly welcomed, as a very important segment of parliamentary diplomacy, with an appeal for this format of meetings to become a regular practice in the future.

## FIRST SUPERVISORY VISIT TO THE INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

The Committee on oversight of the work of the national security agency and the intelligence agency conducted its first oversight visit to the Intelligence Agency in the new parliamentary composition, following the parliamentary elections held in May 2024. During the visit, the members of the Committee asked questions about the personnel, material and technical capacities of the Agency and were introduced to the strategic priorities and the new organizational structure. In addition, the members of the Commission were briefed on the Agency's continued international cooperation, as well as new opportunities for bilateral and multilateral cooperation, in support of fulfilling the country's foreign policy priorities. Finally, it was concluded that the Committee will conduct oversight visits to the Intelligence Agency more frequently.

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## REFORM AGENDA DEBATED IN THE ASSEMBLY

The benefits of the Reform Agenda 2024 - 2027, in the context of the European integration processes was discussed in the Committee on European Affairs (CEA) and the National Council for European Integration (NCEI). The President of the Parliament, Afrim Gashi, emphasized that this event is an excellent opportunity to confirm our common determination and commitment to the European future, as the only alternative for our citizens. The Assembly, added President Gashi, is and will remain a partner in this process, which is an obligation we have towards our citizens, towards international partners and towards our own vision. NCEI President Venko Filipche, underlined that, as a country, we are in a crucial period, when geostrategic shifts are occurring and new centers of power are differentiating, and we need to remain strongly attached to our partners, the US and the EU. The Vice-President of Parliament and Chair of the CEA, Antonijo Milošoski, said that the MPs in the next one will need to be critical in order to increase the productivity of the executive branch. Vladimir Drobniak, former chief negotiator for Croatia's accession negotiations with the EU and UNOPS expert, also spoke about reforms as a shared responsibility. He mentioned the example of Croatia, where one can see how EU membership contributes to reducing this gap and accelerating socio-economic development.



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## COOPERATION WITH FRANCE ON GENDER EQUALITY

The Chair of the Committee for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, Žaklina Peševska, together with Lidija Petkoska, Member, held a working meeting with Philippe Marchetau, French Deputy Ambassador, and Irene Ketoff, Cooperation Attaché at the Embassy of France. Peševska informed about the increased violence, and the reasons for it, according to the data, are drugs, alcohol, but mostly mental disorders. Peševska emphasized that we are a model country for upholding women's rights, but we need to work on their implementation. The Committee is dedicated to education, raising awareness about reporting violence, but it is a long, arduous process, which is greatly influenced by mentality and stereotypes. The guests from the French Embassy emphasized that feminist diplomacy is something that is part of general French diplomacy. A general conclusion was that the excellent cooperation between the French and Macedonian parliaments could be expanded with joint projects and events, through sharing experiences, legal solutions and joint work to improve women's rights.





## WORKING VISIT TO THE NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCY

The Committee on oversight of the work of the national security agency and the intelligence agency conducted a working visit to the National Security Agency (NSA) premises. At the meeting, the Director of the NSA, Bojan Hristovski, and his associates briefed the members of the Committee on the current challenges facing the Agency, the activities related to international and inter-institutional cooperation, as well as the material, technical and personnel equipment. Security checks, communi-

cation monitoring, the initiated process of polygraph testing and the spatial solution for the Agency were some of the issues of interest to the members of the Committee. At the end of the meeting, the members of the Committee expressed their readiness to support the NSA, in the context of strengthening its capacities, in order to adequately and timely deal with new security challenges, in order to preserve the national security of the country.

## PARLIAMENTARY OVERSIGHT IN PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The importance of parliamentary oversight in the protection and promotion of citizens' freedoms and rights was debated at today's Conference in the Parliament, organized by the Institute for European Policy (EPI). Representatives of other state institutions, non-governmental organizations, domestic and international experts attended the meeting, who emphasized the need for "connecting policy and practice and strengthening parliamentary oversight in the promotion and protection of human rights." President Gashi, pointed out the parliamentary oversight as a necessary element in the promotion and protection of human rights, emphasizing that it is the responsibility of the legislative branch to protect the rights and voice of citizens. He assured the participants that the parliament remains committed to increasing capacities, building sustainable partnerships and acting as a bridge between citizens and the Government, thus ensuring transparency and accountability. Secretary General of the Assembly, Marina Dimovska, stressed that without active, informed and responsible parliamentary oversight, an effective system for the protection of human rights is not possible. The oversight carried out by the Assembly is not only a constitutional obligation – it is a key instrument for the protection and promotion of human rights and freedoms," said Dimovska. Ombudsman Naser Ziberi appealed for the adoption of the proposed amendments to the Law on the Ombudsman and for the election of his Deputies to fill the vacant positions, as a contribution to strengthening the system for the protection of human rights and freedoms. Simonida Kacarska, Director of EPI, Ben Nupnau, Deputy Head of the EU Delegation and Rita Columbia, Resident UN Coordinator spoke at the event They emphasized the need to bridge the gap between policy and practice and to create a dedicated forum for dialogue.



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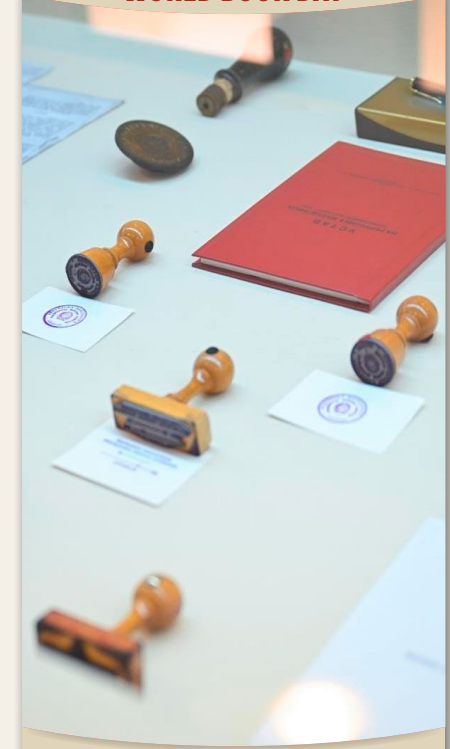


## PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION AT THE EP ENERGY COMMUNITY PLENUM

Bojan Stojanoski, Chair of the Committee on Economic Affairs, Labour and Energy Policy, and Dimitar Kovačevski, Member, participated in a meeting of the Energy Community Parliamentary Plenum dedicated to the availability of electricity and the integration of renewable energy sources, organized by the Energy Community Secretariat at the European Parliament in Brussels. Support for the Energy Community Contracting Parties in their integration into the single energy market was debated at the meeting. National parliaments play a significant role in the integration process of the single energy market by adopting the necessary legislation. Although progress has been made, the availability of electricity for socially vulnerable families still represents a challenge. With regard to renewable energy sources, the increasing use of renewable sources in the Contracting Parties was noted. In addition to energy obtained from wind and sun, more and more investment should be made in geothermal energy sources so that Europe becomes energy independent. In the coming period, significant investments should also be made

in the construction of capacities for storing excess energy. Stojanoski spoke about the new energy law for the application of established internationally harmonized rules for cross-border exchange of electricity and gas, participation and connection to regional and European electricity and gas markets, as well as cooperation with other contracting parties of the Energy Community and EU member states, for the purpose of preventing, preparing for and managing crisis situations in the supply of electricity and gas. In terms of electricity, our country is energetically connected to all neighboring countries except Albania, where the Bitola-Elbasan transmission line construction project has not yet been implemented. In terms of gas interconnection, the country is connected only by an interconnector gas pipeline with the Republic of Bulgaria. In order to diversify the sources of supply of this energy, the state has approached the project for the construction of the liquefied gas terminal in Alexandroupoli, Greece. A company was recently selected to build the gas interconnector between the two countries. Regarding the category of vulnerable consumers and households affected by energy poverty, the new Energy Law includes a provision whereby the Government, upon a proposal from the Ministry of Energy, Mining and Mineral Resources, and following a prior opinion from the Ministry responsible for social protection, will oblige the universal supplier to supply these households at lower prices. The previous Energy Law also provided for programs for vulnerable consumers and households affected by energy poverty. Last month, the Ministry of Energy, Mining and Mineral Resources published a public announcement for financial support for socially vulnerable categories of families. This measure, which will last for one year, grants financial support to these families by reducing their monthly electricity bills.

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## IPPG FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF BERLIN PROCESS COMMITMENTS

An Inter-Party Parliamentary Group for Monitoring the Implementation of the Commitments from the Berlin Process and the Reform Agenda from the Growth Plan was established in Parliament. The initiative for this Group was submitted in October last year and was accepted by all parties. At its constitution today, the Vice President of the Assembly, Antonijo Milošoski, was unanimously elected as its President, upon the proposal of the VMRO-DPMNE Coordinator, Nikola Micevski. Milošoski thanked for the trust and promised as many activities as possible for the Group. He stressed that the formation of this Group is of exceptional importance for the Assembly to ensure parliamentary oversight and support in the implementation of the key reform commitments arising from the Berlin Process and the new reform agenda from the Growth Plan, as strategic priorities of the state. In order to make it more successful, he proposed membership not only of the current 29 MPs, but also of non-governmental organizations. The cross-party parliamentary group for monitoring the implementation of the Berlin Process commitments and the reform agenda of the Growth Plan will deal with: the degree of implementation of the commitments related to the Regional Single Market, public and oversight hearings with representatives of the executive branch, regarding projects that are part of the objectives of the Berlin Process, representation of the Parliament at regional and international events organized within the framework of the Berlin Process and other activities related to the European Commission's Growth Plan.



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## ACTIVITIES OF THE IPPG FOR PROTECTION OF ENVIRONMENT AND FIGHT AGAINST POLLUTION AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Members of the Inter-Party Parliamentary Group for Nature Protection and Combating Pollution and Climate Change participated in two regional events, organized with the support of the Center for Research and Policy Making (CRPM), within the framework of the program component of the Open Regional Fund for Energy, Transport and Climate Protection (ORF-ETC), implemented by GIZ. The first event, Meeting of the Green Parliamentary Groups from the Western Balkans with the Transport Community, took place in Skopje and focused on the Green Agenda and sustainable transport. The participants discussed the progress in the implementation of the Transport Community Action Plan, the TEN-T network and the implementation of smart mobility solutions. The event was attended by the representatives Velika Stojkova - Serafimovska and Jovana Mojsoska. The MPs had the opportunity for direct dialogue with representatives of the Transport Community, GIZ and other relevant stakeholders from the region. The second event, the "Green Urban Transport Solutions" Conference in Ohrid, brought together several regional initiatives, including the VII ProSUMP and XII CIVINET conferences. At this event, the coordinator of the so-called "Green Parliamentary Group", MP Toni Jarevski, participated as a speaker in the panel discussion on the integrated framework for sustainable mobility in the Western Balkans. Through participation in panel sessions, interactive workshops and field visits, experiences were exchanged with local and international experts, representatives from municipalities and academic institutions on topics related to urban mobility, climate neutrality and green transport solutions.

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