

# **BAROMETER**

## **Current Events and Political Parties Development in the Republic of Macedonia**

**Issue No. 21  
December 2009**

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In cooperation with the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung  
Regional Office Macedonia



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In the last six months Republic of Macedonia concentrated its efforts in fulfilling the EU set benchmarks that preceded the European Commission Progress Report, due to be issued at the beginning of November. During this process, the country introduced numerous laws and/or legal amendments, aimed to regulate national reform policies. At the same time, unsurpassable political topic was also the pending “name issue” with Greece, the outcome of which shall obviously have direct effect on the country’s EU and NATO aspirations. The political milieu in this respect changed, after the Greek national elections when the PASOK leader George Papandreu became Prime Minister and Minister of Exteriors.

## **1. DEVELOPMENTS ON THE “NAME ISSUE”**

### **1.1. “Name issue” - far from compromise**

In June, Macedonian Foreign Minister Antonio Milososki stated that Greece's position on the name issue in numerous segments is far from a compromise solution. Following the same line, Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski stated that there was no concrete proposal aimed to settle the name dispute, as the meeting between Macedonian and Greek name negotiators, Zoran Jolevski and Adamantios Vassilakis with UN mediator Matthew Nimetz concentrated only on viewpoints exchange regarding details in the negotiation process. Although more serious progress in this phase of the talks were not expected, Greek media report that Nimetz has been exerting pressure for settling the matter and for this purpose he intends to visit Skopje and Athens on July 6 and 8 respectively.

At the same period, in an interview with the “Forum” weekly magazine, President Ivanov stated that the international community should tell Greece that the idea for United Europe is much larger than the interests of one EU member country. “Macedonia is expecting for all of its allies worldwide, in particular the ones from Europe to start demonstrating higher appreciation of the country's model of multi-ethnicity, which also serves as an example to other Balkan countries”, adding that in regard to Skopje-Athens name row, the solution must not undermine the pride and dignity of its citizens and deprive them of their right of self-determination and self-identification. “It has been usual thus far for Greece to abuse its status as NATO, EU member country in favor of its internal political goals. In spite of this attitude Macedonia can do nothing else but be fully constructive in the talks on Greece's problem with our name. The message we are sending to our friends is that Macedonia wishes to put this problem behind and resume its integration processes, which, even without political obstacles present a serious challenge” -Ivanov says.

### **1.2. Nimetz in July 2009 presents changes of October 2008 proposal**

Matthew Nimetz, UN mediator in Macedonia-Greece name row, at July’s talks with Macedonian top officials offered certain changes to latest proposal

presented in October 2008. "I have presented certain changes to October proposal and asked the government to consider this package in full, together with the changes", he stated declining to give any details, saying that the proposal has not been announced in public. Nimetz said the negotiations should result in a dignified settlement of a complicated matter, one that would protect Macedonia's identity and resolve a difficult issue in the region. Macedonian authorities promised Nimetz they would seriously review the changes.

Asked if there was any possibility for Greece to accept the existence of Macedonian nation, language, Nimetz reiterated that the negotiations process referred only to the name. "We have been talking about the name. I've never heard any official Greek representative to deny the fact that this country and people have unique identity and language. I have been visiting this country since 1994, mediating the negotiations for almost 15 years. I know that this country has own identity, language and no one doubts them...Hence, people should feel comfortable as we have been discussing about the name reference, not the identity", Nimetz said.

Media reports say that Nimetz's proposal of October 2009 was 'Republika Severna Makedonija' (Republic of Northern Macedonia) for international usage, and the country's constitutional name for internal usage and third countries (depending on their will). The proposal offered three ideas for the name's should be inscribed in the passport: Republic of Northern Macedonia; Republic of Macedonia; Republika Makedonija, while the language is to be referred to as 'Macedonian'.

### **1.3. Greek FM Bakoyannis on Gruevski's statement regarding "double-name formula"**

PM Gruevski in an interview with "Forum" magazine stressed that Macedonia's position on the double-name formula "is a result of the attitude of Greece, which during the negotiations has been insisting on changing the country's constitutional name in the 'Republic Northern Macedonia' for both domestic and international usage." "Greece urges erasing the name Republic of Macedonia by changing the Constitution and personal documents, while showing no will to neither recognize nor discuss the Macedonian nation, language. In such situation the double formula - one name for communication with (Greece), while the constitutional name to be valid for all other countries - is our logical, natural position", Gruevski says<sup>1</sup>.

As a reply, Greek FM Dora Bakoyannis commented that "Skopje and PM Gruevski haven't understood the message of the international community, which is clear and unified: for the sake of his country's and his people's Euro-Atlantic course, a mutually acceptable solution to this issue must be achieved; a composite name with a geographical qualifier".

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<sup>1</sup> Macedonia under the Constitutional name Republic of Macedonia has been recognized by 125 countries

In September Greek Foreign Affairs Minister Dora Bakoyannis, which was conveyed before the 64th UN General Assembly stated: »Greece under UN auspices is negotiating with its northern neighbour for a solution to the name row that will be acceptable for both sides, which the neighbouring country will use with pride in its dealings with everyone - a solution that will make everyone a winner«. »For the past 15 years Greece has participated in UN-led negotiations on the issue of the name of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Greece has participated in good faith. Regrettably, no substantive or tangible progress has been made so far, despite the fact that Greece has taken a huge step towards a compromise. We have accepted the use of the term 'Macedonia' along with a geographical qualifier that reflects reality. Of the large geographical region of Macedonia, only a part falls within our neighbor's territory. So how can this country claim exclusive rights to the name?, Bakoyannis stated in her statement. »The persistence of the leadership in Skopje in pursuing exclusivity over the name by denying a geographic qualifier and the anachronistic rhetoric and policies that run contrary to the principle of good neighborly relations, raise serious questions as to its real motives«, she added.

#### **1.4. Ambassador Jolevski presents Macedonia's response on Nimetz's set of ideas**

In August, following the set of ideas presented by UN mediator Matthew Niemitz, Macedonia's representative in name dispute talks, Ambassador Zoran Jolevski presented his position: "Macedonia is committed to take active part in the name talks and a mutually acceptable solution is anticipated, which will preserve Macedonia's identity, dignity and integrity based on Euro-Atlantic values and democratic principles". Several media in Greece reported that Athens had given a negative response to Nimetz's modified set of ideas, remarking the use of a possible compromise name. The compromise, according to local media, should be based on the name "Republic of Northern Macedonia".

From its side, Greek representative in the issue Adamantios Vassilakis denied media reports that Athens had rejected Nimetz's package of ideas. "These reports do not coincide with the truth. Name talks are in a critical stage. Everyone involved in it should act with utmost responsibility. Greece takes constructive part in the process by presenting suggestions, proposals and remarks. We expect the other side to do the same in order a mutually acceptable solution to be found where there will be no winners or losers", stated Vassilakis. Still, it is said that Nimetz after meeting Vassilakis didn't hide that Greece's response was not positive, reiterating that efforts for finding a settlement would resume. According to the Greek newspaper Etnos, the negotiations between Athens and Skopje are in a "dead end", after Greece's refusal to accept the Nimetz's modified set of ideas. Athens expressed dissatisfaction for the name "Republic of North Macedonia" to be used only for bilateral communication, as Greece would accept only if the name is used worldwide.

On the other hand, Greek Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyannis made it clear that Macedonia's European and Euro-Atlantic future presupposes a resolution of the

name issue. "This is what Greece is seeking. We continue to wage a difficult and demanding negotiation battle within the framework of the United Nations. Our positions are well known and so are our red line issues: a compound name with a clear geographical qualifier, which will be valid for everyone," Bakoyannis said in Athens. In Bucharest, within the framework of NATO and also in Brussels, within the framework of the EU Summit, our partners unanimously adopted our positions, she added.

Commenting the August talks, President Ivanov's cabinet stated that there is a lot of room for modifying the latest set of ideas, presented by the UN mediator Matthew Nimetz, but nobody can predict his future moves. "The Republic of Macedonia has always had serious approach to the negotiations, which have become more intensive for the last two months", - the Cabinet stated.

### **1.5. Opposition Takes a Stance on the "Name Issue" Negotiating Process**

On several occasions during the year, Branko Crvenkovski, the leader of the opposition SDSM encouraged the government to engage itself in substantial negotiations over the name in order to reach a settlement on the perennial dispute with Greece. Crvenkovski sent a message that SDSM will not take populist approach and called the Government "to launch real negotiations with Greece, different from the ones led up until now." At the same time, he expressed doubts whether Gruevski's call for unity over national and state interests was "for solving or not solving the name dispute", as the ruling party does not clearly and openly define which are the "red lines" of the Macedonian side. The opposition leader underlined that Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic integrations have been put on standstill over the name dispute.

At the second half of July, PM Gruevski sent an invitation to the presidents of SDSM - Branko Crvenkovski, DUI - Ali Ahmeti, DPA - Menduh Tachi and New Democracy - Imer Selmani to a joint meeting aimed at discussing issues that are of state interest for the country. The meeting was supposed to focus on harmonizing positions and finding political consensus involving reforms and other essential issues in connection to our EU and NATO perspectives.

Later during the year, the leading party took an increasingly hardline approach towards opposition critiques that the government does not sincerely wish to deal and decide on the issue: "SDSM deals with issues that go against the country's interests. It is peculiar that Crvenkovski presents the Greek positions, which claim that we are the ones to be blamed. Greek opposition supports the Government in the struggle to promote their positions, but the situation is vice versa in Macedonia. In a way, our opposition assists the other side by declaring us the guilty ones. We are guilty of not allowing the nation's depersonalization, our erasing, a complete change of the country's name, identity, language. In this context, I am guilty", said Gruevski, reiterating that early elections were not planned.



Again, SDSM leader Branko Crvenkovski commented his party stance on the name dispute with Greece. He repeated as many times before that Macedonia should enter into substantive negotiations in order a mutually acceptable solution to be found. "Negotiations are basically lead around the same suggestion offered by Niemitz in October last year. And here logically is imposed the following question: why did we lose 9 months? Why have we missed one more NATO summit and one more EU report? What is the cost that we as a country and as citizens pay for this Gruevski's late wisdom and spiteness? Is he ready to apologize publicly to all those whom he proclaimed traitors only because in October they suggested negotiations around Nimetz's suggestion, to improve it by our suggestions, and not to block the negotiations with our "double formula" position?" Crvenkovski also said that he will further act in a responsible manner, encouraging the government to solve the problem, but he will also refrain for issuing public comments for any kind of concrete suggestions, aiming not to harm the process or to be accused by Gruevski that he ruins the negotiating position of the country.

Crvenkovski estimated that the country does not stand a government crisis, since the current Government has wide and stable 2/3 majority in the Assembly. "That is sufficiently strong support for bringing any law, including systemic laws, even change of the Constitution itself. For additional support there is no need or logic. The whole power, but also the whole responsibility for solving the difficult problems is in Gruevski's hands. With that responsibility Gruevski has to be faced. If not now, then at the next parliamentary elections, whenever they may be" added Crvenkovski.

#### **1.6. Macedonia files its Memorial at the International Court of Justice**

In mid-July, the Republic of Macedonia filed its Memorial at the International Court of Justice, in the case that it brought against Greece in November 2008 for violating the 1995 Interim Bilateral Agreement by putting a veto to Macedonia's NATO invitation at the 2008 Bucharest summit. The Memorial was submitted to the Registrar of the Court by Ambassador, Nikola Dimitrov, the Co-Agent for the Republic of Macedonia. "We welcome the opportunity to submit our Memorial with the Court, a body for which we have the greatest respect as the principal judicial organ of the United Nations. Our team has worked efficiently in preparing this Memorial, and I take the opportunity to thank all those who have assisted, in Macedonia as well as our outside experts, for their commitment and support", stated Ambassador Dimitrov after filing the Memorial.

In accordance with the Order of the International Court, Greece will now have until 20 January 2010 to file its Counter-Memorial. The Court has left open the procedure that will be followed after that date. In accordance with the rules of the Court, the written pleadings remain confidential until the opening of any oral hearings. Macedonia filed a lawsuit against Greece in the Hague court last year for blocking its NATO entry and thus breaching the 1995 interim bilateral accord.

The ICJ is urged to recommend to Greece to observe its obligations stemming from the interim accord, which is legally binding for both countries.

### **1.7. Comments on the “Name Issue” Negotiating Process (What’s Behind the Curtains)**

According to Sam Vaknin (analyst) but also according to some Greek media, negotiations were supposed to include a more encompassing and general plan for improvement of the relations of both countries. Namely, the plan should include five elements: (1) Macedonia will change its constitutional name to Northern Macedonia ("The Republic of North Macedonia"); (2) Macedonia will be granted a transition period to amend its constitution and to alter its registered name with various international and multilateral institutions; (3) Macedonia will be issued an invitation to join NATO; (4) Both countries will be allowed to use the adjective "Macedonian" (both commercially and non-commercially); (5) The parties will renounce any and all claims to each other's territory. Coupled with them should come economic stimulation measures by Greece for Macedonia, in case an agreement is to be reached. The suggested Plan is conditioned on Macedonia's acceptance of the constitutional name "Republic of North Macedonia" (or a variant thereof) and on a withdrawal of its lawsuit in the International Court of Justice. The package generally would consist of the following elements: Greece financially and politically to support Macedonia's involvement in various, specified transportation projects ("corridors"); Greece to extend oil pipelines into Macedonian territory; Greece to provide Macedonia with capital (in the form of low-interest loans) to match European Union regional and other pre-accession funds and pressure Brussels to speed up the release of such allocations; Greece to guarantee the energy needs of Macedonia and will allow it to withdraw crude oil and liquid gas from Greece's own reserves in case of emergency; Greece to sign with Macedonia an emergency standby electricity supply (grid) facility; Greece to establish a "North Macedonia Investment Fund" with between 100 and 140 million EUR. This sum will be invested as matching funds in joint Greek-Macedonian projects in tourism, agricultural biotechnology, the financial sector, crime fighting, healthcare and higher education.

The Fund will also provide Greek exporters and investors with country risk and political risk insurance as well as export guarantees and subsidies. Greece will gradually liberalize its visa regime with Macedonia, provide 10,000 work permits annually to skilled Macedonian workers, facilitate student and cultural exchanges and provide student visas on a mass scale. Still, it is not clear at this stage who will deliver these proposals to the government of Macedonia. An idea is these ideas to be offered in the form of an "American Initiative", which will then be "graciously accepted" by both parties?

Daniel Server, analyst of the American Peace Institute, during the interview with Voice of America's Macedonian language program said that for him it is not important what will be written on a piece of paper in the UN and that he will call

the citizens of Macedonia as they want to be called - Macedonians. He said that pressure should be made on two parties in the name dispute talks aimed at reaching an agreement. "It is a fact that Greece has strong negotiating position since it is NATO and EU member state and Macedonians should take this into consideration. I really think that it is not so important what will be written on a piece of paper in the UN. The important thing is how Macedonians want to be named and I will name them in that way", - Server said. Regarding the question "whether Northern Macedonia is reasonable solution, taking into consideration the Macedonian language and identity," Server said that every solution, which would be agreed by two parties, is fair solution.

#### **1.8. Interview with US Ambassador to Macedonia Reeker with Radio Free Europe**

US Ambassador to Macedonia Philip Reeker in the interview with Radio Free Europe in October said that after elections in Greece and previously in Macedonia, it is time for the two countries to sit together and to resolve name dispute as soon as possible. »We cannot do this for you. Greece and Macedonia should do this together«, Ambassador Reeker said. »It is clear for me that huge majority of citizens in this country are for peaceful and prosperous future in Europe as part of Euro-Atlantic family, as part of the EU and NATO. We cannot allow individuals, who maybe have their agenda, to violate this. I think that leaders of this country demonstrate this«, Reeker said.

Following the inauguration of Greece's new government, Ambassador Reeker denying that the US embassy in Skopje was directly involved to close the issue, reiterated that the US was supporting the process led by mediator Nimetz and was ready to provide assistance. »It's an issue that needs to be solved by Macedonia and Greece. As I have said many times before as well as other US officials, we are prepared, if we can, to help and to encourage both sides to use the services of UN and Ambassador Nimetz and to find a solution, because it is in everyone's interest«, he added.

#### **1.9. Ivanov: Solution with Greece possible, if talks focus only on the name**

Following Greece's election and establishment of new government in the country, President Gjorge Ivanov stated that he expects the dynamics of name talks to be increased. »A compromise is possible unless the process is restored in the frames of UN resolutions and focuses solely on the name, not on other issues...The problem is that in the long-standing name talks, issues were included that cannot be debated. The identity of Macedonia, the Macedonian language cannot be disputed...Therefore we urge name talks to focus only on what has been determined by UN resolutions i.e. to focus exclusively on Greece's issue with our constitutional name. If talks are restored in these frames,

then a solution is possible«, deems the Macedonian President. Ivanov said that Greece's positions are well-known as those of Macedonia and they should pave the way towards a compromise solution, which "won't be offensive, neither for Macedonia nor for Greece".

»The issue is sensitive, it invades the question of identity, when someone is trying to ruin your dignity, to take away your pride that you belong to a nation and when someone is disputing the basic right of each individual on the planet - the right of self-determination and self-identification. Throughout history people living in this area have identified themselves as Macedonians. These Macedonians have created Macedonia. As well as them, we are also proud to be Macedonians and we have the right that belongs to every person on this planet«, Ivanov states.

#### **1.10. President Ivanov UN Address: Name negotiations to refer only on issues stipulated in UN resolutions**

»Macedonia wishes to take the place it deserves within the Euro-Atlantic community and with an assistance of the UN mechanisms to settle the absurd dispute, imposed by Greece, which in this manner violated its international obligations«, President Gjorge Ivanov said at the 64th UN General Assembly in October. Reiterating that the European Union and NATO membership are Macedonia's strategic goals, Ivanov said that today the country meritoriously expected an initiation of the EU entry talks, considering its impressive progress to that effect.

»The act of our southern neighbor was contrary to the obligations under the 1995 Interim Agreement. This was done in an attempt to influence the outcome of negotiations held under the UN auspices, thus acting completely opposite to the common vision for enlargement of the stability and security zone in South-East Europe«, Ivanov said. »Despite Greece's flagrant violation of the international obligations, for which Macedonia filed an appeal to the International Court of Justice, Skopje has been taking active and constructive part in the UN-sponsored negotiation process«...»I would like to state clearly that we are prepared to discuss the issues foreseen in the UN resolutions only. The Republic of Macedonia is prepared for a solution that is a reasonable and fair compromise, which shall not in touch upon, nor deny our national, cultural and linguistic identity in any way, a solution that shall obtain the legitimacy of the citizens. However, there is no more sovereign right that the right of self-determination and self-identification, a right cherished by many generations before us«, Ivanov added.

### **1.11. Greece Reacts to President Ivanov's UN Address**

Greece officially submitted a reply to the address of President Gjorge Ivanov before the UN General Assembly through its ambassador Anastasios Mitsialis. Greece reacts on Ivanov's mentioning of Macedonia's constitutional name in his speech, instead of the reference in resolutions 817 and 845 of the UN Security Council. "FYROM authorities have demonstrated they do not respect Security Council resolutions, assuming an uncompromising position in bilateral talks under UN auspices, thus preventing a settlement in the name row. Instead of using the interim name, the FYROM authorities are always using the constitutional name and deepening differences between the two countries", reads the Greek reaction.

Athens also sees Macedonia's suit against Greece before the Hague-based International Court of Justice following the latter's veto to Macedonia's NATO accession at the Bucharest Summit as violation of the 1995 Interim Treaty. "Greece remains fully committed to the bilateral talks under UN auspices, which would result in an acceptable settlement that takes into consideration the legitimate interests and the sensitivity of both countries, thus closing the issue that directly effects regional stability. The name dispute should not have winners or losers, but be in the interest of both countries. Such a solution can be reached only if neither side tries to acquire exclusivity in the name use by monopolizing wider geographic term Macedonia", reads the note.

### **1.12. Macedonia to Step up Name Talks Immediately, Ambassadors Fouere and Fredén Urge**

"Macedonia to immediately step up talks with Greece aiming at settling the name issue prior a Council of EU meeting, where a decision should be reached on start of accession talks", EU Ambassador Erwan Fouere and Lars Fredén - the Ambassador of Sweden, the current holder of EU presidency urged in October at a session of the National EU Integration Council. "There's a window of possibilities for the Government to solve the name dispute once and for all. We have waited for so long and there's no reason for an outcome to be further delayed. I call on the Government to take advantage of the moment and to immediately step up negotiations with the Greek government in the frameworks of the process led by UN mediator Matthew Nimetz in order a compromise to be found, which will be in both countries' interest and will push the EU integration process", said EU Ambassador Fouere. He urged the forthcoming six weeks and one day till a meeting of the Council of EU to be used in the best possible way.

Asked whether there was a real possibility for the name issue to be settled until Dec. 7, Fouere reiterated that the issue was on the table for so long and good atmosphere was created. – "Taking into consideration that there were no provocations made by the Government towards the neighbors, such as renaming

the highway, I believe this is the real moment for settling the name row", added Fouere.

United States' Assistant Secretary of State Philip H. Gordon in November stated that he considers that name row can be resolved. "It is true that the agreement is possible and it is important to be resolved, in interest of two countries. Nevertheless they should reach an agreement, Gordon said answering question of Voice of America in Macedonian language programme for recent statement by Senator Ben Cardin that dispute between Macedonia and Greece on name issue is solvable if two parties are ready to make "reasonable concessions."

### **1.13. President Papoulias Statement on the Dispute**

Greek President Karolos Papoulias<sup>2</sup> after a meeting with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stated that "Good-neighborly relations may not be built on unresolved issues and thus Greece cannot give its approval to (FYROM)'s EU accession until closing the name dispute".. "Athens objects to Skopje's attempt to lay exclusive claim to a name and a region that since the Middle Ages has actually referred to a multinational geographic area that is not the homeland of any nation", the Greek President said. "Skopje's wrongdoing lies in the fact that it promotes itself as (entitled) to the entire region of (Macedonia), although, as a state and nation, it is only its part. They call their country 'Macedonia' and their language 'Macedonian' because through these names they are attempting to 'mortgage' the whole of Macedonia. This is the purpose of their rhetoric regarding a large and dismembered Macedonian nation. Greece is not attempting to christen the neighboring state. It is resisting the above-mentioned attempt at usurpation", Papoulias underlined and repeated Greece's position in favor of a single name with a geographic modifier for all uses.

### **1.14. FM Milososki: Nimetz's initiative a fresh momentum to intensity of mutual dialogue**

In November UN mediator Matthew Nimetz initiated a fresh round of talks which were estimated as well-timed. However, when FA Minister Antonio Milososki was asked whether the name row could be settled by December, he said that Macedonia wouldn't like to boost any expectation. "We can give our contribution, however we must be realistic and understand that this is a complex dispute. Good will is needed from both sides in order progress to be made. There's good will for dialogue in Macedonia and I believe that the example set by Slovenia and Croatia is a favorable indicator manifesting that with mutual meetings, direct contacts and good will and pragmatism in approaching and evaluating the overall

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<sup>2</sup> In 1995, Papoulias, then Foreign Minister, signed the UN-brokered Interim Accord, which put an end to several-year Greek obstructions to and embargos on Macedonia and set a frame for Skopje-Athens relations.

interests of the region and EU we could create an atmosphere of mutual trust that is necessary for productive dialogues with Greece”, said Milososki.

Commenting a statement by Greek President Karolos Papoulias in relation to the Macedonian language, Milososki stated that every nation was entitled to its own identity, self-determination... “The Macedonian language is a fact and reality not only in Macedonia, but also around the world. There are numerous Macedonian language university departments, global media with programs in Macedonian. It's a Sisyphean attempt for somebody to deny the existence of something that is real globally”, FM Milososki stressed.

#### **1.15. PM Gruevski: Name Referendum Will be Held**

“A referendum on the name will be held and this is a closed issue for me. There is no possibility to settle the name problem without a referendum, without citizens giving their opinion on the possible proposal”, stated Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski in November. “I am deeply convinced that such a large issue in the history of one people cannot be settled without consulting the citizens. The country's name is hereditary. It was an integral part of the referendum question on September 8, 1991. The name of the country cannot be decided by a handful of politicians, certain intellectuals, NGOs or individuals. Only the people can decide on such a large issue. Politicians can only give their opinion, but not decide by themselves”, he added.

#### **1.16. Papandreou clarifies Greek Stance on Name Issue at a Meeting With Gruevski**

Prime Minister George Papandreou at the first meeting with Macedonian Premier Nikola Gruevski in October in Brussels clarified the Greek positions on the name issue and the possibility for the northern neighbor to start the European Union accession negotiations. According to Greek diplomatic sources, Papandreou said that Greece wished to have a leading role in the Balkans, particularly in the accession course of all countries of southeastern Europe, which he believed should be completed in 2014, a year that marks the 100 anniversary of the beginning of the WWI. Greece desires in this framework to promote the accession of FYROM as well, but insists on the national 'red line', and places as the first and essential precondition the settlement of FYROM's name issue, adding that it was categorically stressed that the solution should be a name with a geographical qualifier for all uses.

### **1.17. Ambassador Jolevski Informs Nimetz on Macedonia's Name Stance**

“Macedonia invests efforts for a mutually acceptable solution to the name issue, which preserves the identity, dignity and integrity of Macedonian citizens, based on the principles of international law and Euro-Atlantic values”, Macedonian negotiator in the name talks, ambassador Zoran Jolevski told UN mediator Matthew Nimetz at their meeting in New York in mid-November. “Macedonia remains actively, constructively and intensively engaged in the name talks, expecting Greece to observe the 1995 Interim Treaty and refrain from preventing the country's integration in European and Euro-Atlantic structures, thus contributing to the positive climate in the row settlement” was said.

Nimetz also met with Greek negotiator Adamantios Vassilakis, who presented the country's stance in the name issue. Vassilakis said after the meeting that Greece remains on its position for a complex name with geographic determinant for general use as the most appropriate solution, whereas failure of the issue's closure would result in Athens blocking Macedonia's start of EU accession talks. Moreover, he denied media speculations that the Greek side was ready for concessions from the so-called 'red lines' in the issue's resolution.

### **1.18. PM Gruevski: New Greek Blockade on Macedonia Would Mean it Doesn't Wish for Name Row Settlement**

A possible, new Greek blockade of Macedonia, this time related to getting the EU entry talks date, will mean that the southern neighbor doesn't wish for name row settlement, Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski told reporters in November. “In December we shall see if Greece really wishes for resolving the matter, as setting of another blockade will mean exactly the opposite...Greece's veto to Macedonia's NATO membership in Bucharest has proven to be wrong way for resolving the dispute, which has remained unsettled for over a year”, adding that “Greece is not interested in Macedonian identity issue and it is not ready to address this matter, and this is a serious problem...up until present day, Greece shows no willingness to discuss the issue of Macedonian identity, and this is one of the serious problems that we are undergoing...They are not interested and they don't want to talk about it”.

### **1.19. “Antiquization” – a New Term That Creates Identity Crisis at Home and Worsens Tensions With Neighbors**

Foreign and some domestic media criticize that since the nationalist VMRO-DMPNE party won the 2006 elections, Alexander the Great's name and image have become more visible. It began with renaming of the airport as “Skopje Alexander the Great Airport”, which infuriated Greece<sup>3</sup> and snowballed into a

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<sup>3</sup> Clearly, Greece insists that Alexander was a Hellene, and that both Macedonia's name and the region's Classical history are the exclusive cultural property of Greece.



wider phenomenon. The two neighbors have been locked in a dispute ever since Macedonia declared independence from Yugoslavia in 1991. Although Macedonia rebuffed diplomatic suggestions to reverse the renaming of the airport, it refrained from further provocations until last year. But since Greece blocked the issuing of an invitation for Macedonia to join NATO in Bucharest in April 2008, the VMRO-DPMNE-led government of Nikola Gruevski has launched a series of projects celebrating Alexander and other Classical heroes.

This process is not without critics in Macedonia. They say the attempt to construct a new identity for Macedonia on the basis of a presumed link to the world of Antiquity, known locally as 'Antikvizacija' (Antiquisation), is having devastating consequences. One complaint is that the campaign is placing new strains on a fragile multi-ethnic society in which the dissatisfaction of the large ethnic Albanian minority is already growing. Another fear is that the emphasis on Classical Antiquity is dividing ethnic Macedonians into two groups, separating those who back 'Antiquisation' from others who think of themselves as Slavs.

In July 2008, Prince Ghazanfar Ali Khan and Princess Rani Atiqa of the Hunza people, from Pakistan's Himalaya region, self-proclaimed descendants of Alexander the Great, visited Skopje and met top officials, including Prime Minister Gruevski and the Macedonian Orthodox Archbishop, who blessed them. The Muslim Hunzas had not heard of Macedonia until 12 years ago, when a Macedonian linguistics professor claimed the Hunza and Indo-European languages shared a common grammar. Athens also has close relations with Pakistan, this time with the Kalashi tribe, also from the Himalaya region. Greek emigrants in the US have asked the US to give special protection to the 'Hellenic descendants of the armies of Alexander the Great' in the Himalayas.

#### **1.20. What are the Real Greek Demands: Name With Geographic Qualifier in Relation to Everyone or Much More?**

Greece's representative made it clear to the UN envoy that there can be no launch of Macedonia's EU accession talks without prior resolution of the long-running issue over the name. "Our position is crystal clear and known to all. We seek a definitive solution to this matter. A composite name with a geographical qualifier in relation to everyone, *erga omnes*",... "We speak clearly, so that there will be no surprises or misunderstandings. Mr. Nimetz expressed his intention of hosting a trilateral meeting in the immediate future" said Vassilakis.

However, Macedonian media comment about the detailed substance of the negotiation process and what it really encompasses, thus making it obvious that it is not only the geographic use of the name that is at stake. TV Kanal 5 reports that Greece returns to the 1992 positions, promoted by former Foreign Minister Andonis Samaras. According to the Greek strategy presented to UN mediator Nimetz, the only possible solution to the row is name Republic of Northern Macedonia, rejecting the possibility of putting Northern at the beginning of the name. Thus, Athens goes against the historic continuity and acquired right of the

country through the 1946, 1963 and 1974 constitutions as part of former Yugoslavia, when it had been recognized by the southern neighbor as People's and Socialist before Republic of Macedonia. Greece would renounce from determinant Northern only if Macedonia agrees to term New, which would also precede Macedonia, whereas the nation would be called New Macedonian.

Greece does not concede from the full use of the new name in international relations, but also for internal use. The current use of the constitutional name would be used only in informal communication within the country and with countries-friends, but not in official correspondence. All administrative documents abroad and at home, memos, letters, agreements and similar documents should include the new name. The new name could also be put on the new identity cards, but there is a possibility that Athens agrees tacitly on the current name. All 127 countries that have recognized Macedonia under its constitutional name should also accept the new name, along with its use in international institutions.

Athens would also insist in further talks that adjective Northern is used for the nation and the language, as well as the ethnic identity. Moreover, the current use of name Macedonia for commercial purposes is also unacceptable for Greece, which requires that all products bound for EU member-states to lose prefix Macedonia and acquire the new one. International code MK should also be altered, as well as Internet domain .mk into .sm or .nm depending on the new name.

The absurdity of the Greek positions is best seen in the requirement that Macedonian maps and instruction books in the future do not use Macedonian toponyms for villages and cities in Greece, thus using Edessa instead of Lerin or Thessaloniki instead of Solun. According to Kanal 5 TV station, Nimetz was shocked by the requirements presented by Vassilakis and should decide whether there is any point in scheduling a joint meeting with the countries' negotiators through consultations with top western diplomats.

### **1.21. Macedonia's Leadership Convenes a Meeting on Name Issue**

In November, Macedonia's top officials met to review the latest developments related to the name issue. At the meeting, Macedonia's negotiator in the name talks Zoran Jolevski briefed the state leadership about his encounter with the UN mediator several days ago in New York, as well as about Greece's position on the matter, presented a day earlier to Matthew Nimetz by Athens' representative Adamantios Vassilakis.

According to Macedonian media reports, Greek side went in extreme at the recent meeting with Nimetz, demanding in addition to a compound name, which it insisted should be 'Republic Northern Macedonia' or 'Republic New Macedonia', for it to be used in both international and internal communication, as well as in the relations with 125 countries that have recognized the Republic of Macedonia

under its constitutional name. The new Greek Government also insisted for the adjective 'Northern' or 'New' to be used for the Macedonian nation, maps and instruction books in the future to not use Macedonian toponyms for villages and cities in Greece, as well as altering of the international code MK and Internet domain mk.

Greek media only quote Vassilakis's statement after his meeting with the UN mediator, namely - a compound name with geographic determinant for overall use as the most appropriate solution to the dispute, which if remained unsettled would not allow Greece to approve a start of Macedonia's EU accession talks.

PM Nikola Gruevski said that in favor of the process he would restrain from commenting Greece's excessive demands. He also reaffirmed Macedonia's commitment to name row settlement.

### **1.22. Carl Bildt Arrives Unannounced in Skopje**

Before the EU Council meeting scheduled for December 7, term President Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt arrived unannounced in Skopje. Government sources pointed out that Carl Bildt is welcomed in Macedonia, particularly after EP adopted the draft-resolution on EU enlargement strategy and confirmed EC recommendation on setting date for Macedonia's accession talks with EU.

On the occasion he stated that the EU is optimistic regarding an opportunity for compromise between Greece and Macedonia on the name row ahead of a meeting of foreign ministers scheduled on Dec. 7, adding that he was communicating with prime ministers Nikola Gruevski and George Papandreou and stressing that in his opinion a compromise on the name was close. "This is a bilateral issue, but I believe that media falsely report that the situation is bad. This should be settled bilaterally with the services of UN mediator, who is to be supported. I've talked with both Gruevski and Papandreou about the importance of the issue; there's willingness from both sides for a progress. Now there's a good chance and I can only call on Athens and Skopje to make utmost efforts to use it", he said.

Bildt's visit comes day before, the meeting of prime ministers of Macedonia and Greece in the Greek part of natural reservation near Prespa Lake. Unofficially, Bildt arrived in Skopje with recommendation for Macedonia's government regarding the upcoming Gruevski-Papandreou meeting.

### **1.23. New Papoulias' Statement About the Name Issue**

Two days prior to the meeting of Greek and Macedonian Prime Ministers, Greek President Karolos Papoulias again accused Macedonia of being responsible for the name row due to "usurpation of term Macedonia and promotion of the

ideology of Macedonism". In an address at the dinner with Bulgarian President Georgi Purvanov, Papoulias said Macedonia has accepted to negotiate in finding a mutually acceptable name that would not be used only internationally or partially, but in general. "Skopje should abandon the ideology of 'Macedonism', because this would cost the country dearly. Monopolizing of term 'Macedonia' and its introduction in the name of the country, nationality and language does not correspond to the reality in the region, representing an abuse. As long as Skopje remains to the current position, the NATO door will be closed, whereas the EU accession procedure frozen", said Papoulias, who signed the bilateral Interim Treaty in the capacity of Greek Foreign Minister back in 1995, which established a legal framework in Skopje-Athens relations after several years of Greek blockades and obstructions.

#### **1.24. Meeting Gruevski-Papandreou in Prespes**

Macedonian and Greek Prime Ministers, Nikola Gruevski and George Papandreou respectively, discussed in Prespes the name issue and expectations from the EU December summit, which would tackle the date for beginning of Macedonia accession negotiations. Gruevski and Papandreou met at the sidelines of the trilateral meeting on climate change, which the Greek PM has initiated, also including Albanian Prime Minister Sali Berisha.

In light of the meeting, there were no excessive expectations either in Skopje or Athens that the issue could be closed. PM Gruevski expected no name settlement to be reached at the meeting with Greek counterpart Papandreou in Prespes, however he believed the meeting will give "positive impulse".

There were no great expectations from the Greek side too. Deputy Foreign Minister Dimitris Droutsas said the Papandreou-Gruevski meeting neither replaces nor harms the process underway at the United Nations for finding a solution. "The two prime ministers will raise the name issue at the Prespes informal meeting, but this is not a negotiation", said Droutsas while repeating that Greece had a firm position, a single name with a geographic qualifier, whereas Macedonia's prospects of joining the EU were conditional on finding a solution. Additionally, on his Balkan tour he stated that "The new Greek government ready to find different ways for a solution to the name issue, everything is on the table. However, Greece would not distance itself from the red line" he stressed.

After the meeting with his Greek counterpart George Papandreou in Pyli - the Prespes region in northwestern Greece, PM Gruevski stated that "There is no progress in ironing Skopje-Athens differences over Macedonia's constitutional name.. Although not always fruitful, such contacts are good and useful. This new momentum we have now is good. We may understand each-other better only via dialogue. I welcome this new wave in our relations with the Greek Government", Gruevski said, expressing hope for new meetings that will lead to better understanding.

In addition to their direct contacts, Gruevski and Papandreou agreed on the name talks to resume under the UN aegis. Gruevski urged Athens to think very carefully about its moves in December at the EU Summit, which should decide on opening of Macedonia's EU accession talks, as blockades and blackmails would not settle the problem but further deteriorate the relations between the two countries. "I've asked Papandreou to think once again about what should happen in December, namely to not block the opening of Macedonia's EU accession talks. I've pointed out that the past experience, in particular the one from Bucharest, show that it isn't the way to force somebody to do something.... Therefore I have appealed for reconsideration before making moves that will have far-fetching consequences to the relations between the two countries. Blocking, pressuring, blackmailing somebody is not an European example", Gruevski said.

Papandreou reiterated Greece's positions on the matter, by telling Greek reporters that the name row could be settled in the next few months or one year. An 18-year-standing dispute cannot be resolved in few days, the Greek PM said. He commended the international community's engagement in settling the name row, saying that the process for resolving the matter would resume under the UN aegis.

#### **1.25. PM Gruevski seeks support from EU leaders regarding date for membership talks**

Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski sent a letter to the heads of state and government of EU member countries seeking support for the European Commission's recommendation for start of accession talks of the Republic of Macedonia with EU at the coming summit of the Union on December 7. The letter underlines that "to make it possible for each candidate country or potential candidate to progress towards EU membership based on individual endeavors, in accordance with the level of fulfillment of the Copenhagen membership criteria, is a move that on one hand directly affects internal reforms and on the other it motivates other Western Balkan countries. In the meantime, it is a move that leads towards full completion of Europe."

"Aware about the significance of the challenge in promoting neighborly relations and regional cooperation, the Republic of Macedonia will resume its active engagement as well to enhance relations with all its neighbors and participation in initiatives on regional cooperation. With respect to the bilateral name dispute with Greece, I would like to assure you that UN-backed name talks will be actively and constructively resumed in order a mutually acceptable solution to be found", reads Gruevski's letter.

Pointing out that the European Parliament resolution represents a strong confirmation of country's reform efforts and emphasizing the fact that a long and difficult accession process is ahead of Macedonia, which paves the way towards

its European future, the Macedonian PM expresses hope that "the Council of EU in December will affirm that Macedonia is ready to kick-start this historic process for the country and the region by setting a date for start of membership talks."

In addition, FM Milososki launched two initiatives at the meetings with Papandreou and Droutsas in December, aimed at enhancing bilateral relations. The first one focuses on raising the level of diplomatic relations, i.e. upgrading of the Greek Liaison Office to Skopje into an Embassy, whereas the second regarding an agreement for elimination of double taxation, which was initiated by Greek investors in Macedonia, for the purpose of facilitating their operations and strengthening of economic cooperation. "We should raise the level of diplomatic ties and assign ambassadors, thus providing another incentive in the strengthening of bilateral relations and a step forward in settling the main issue - the name", added Milososki. The Greek officials promised these proposals would be seriously reviewed. FM Milososki once again invited Papandreou and Droutsas to visit Macedonia, claiming "this is an opportunity for good dialogue and Macedonia is always ready for friendly visits".

#### **1.26. Barroso: There is a Real Opportunity for Name Dispute Settlement**

After the meeting between EC President Jose Manuel Barroso and PM Nikola Gruevski at the beginning of December, Mr. Barroso stated that the EC recommendation for opening Macedonia's EU pre-accession negotiations and an introduction of free visa regime should give momentum to the process for settling the name dispute with Greece. "Macedonia and its citizens have made great efforts to meet the criteria for launching the EU membership talks, hence the country should settle the dispute with Greece and keep working on reforms, fulfilling the membership benchmarks..I am convinced there is a real opportunity, provided there is agreement on both side, to overcome this issue," Barroso told reporters.

Gruevski reaffirmed Macedonia's commitment to the European agenda, saying that the country will continue to work hard on realization of this goal for the benefit of all of its citizens. "We shall continue to make efforts for resolving all open issues, hence to also come to a solution to the name dispute, imposed by Greece. The dialogue has been established as never before, along with the intensive talks under the UN aegis. However, there has been no serious progress in this respect thus far", Gruevski said, adding that "Greece may give us a chance to commence the (EU membership) negotiations and at the same time to continue the intensive talks on the name dispute. Greece may obstruct us many times on our road to EU, namely at any opening, closing of chapters or at the end, but I think that the obstruction will not bring a solution, but set the two countries further apart, as proven by the Greek veto on Macedonia's NATO membership".

### **1.27. Greek Media Predict Postponement of Macedonia's EU Entry Talks**

Postponing of Macedonia's EU entry talks is the most probable strategy Brussels has been preparing for all parties to avoid the embarrassment and leave more room for settling the name row, Greek media said. 'To Vima' newspaper says that the delay will prevent Athens to impose veto, save Skopje from yet another disappointment and Brussels from confrontation. The European Union will most probably commend the efforts of Macedonia's government and the country's progress, but a decision on commencing the negotiations will be delayed for some of the future Council's sessions.

'Kathimerini' daily considers that the name talks are still deadlocked. Time and chances for settling the name dispute in few days ahead of the EU Summit are poor, which has become clear after the meetings of Greek PM George Papandreou with his Macedonian counterpart Nikola Gruevski and Foreign Minister Antonio Milososki. The meetings have resulted in warmer relations and protocol courtesy, but brought no progress to the name row. Both parties stick to their positions, 'Kathimerini' reads.

Greek media also quote the statement of US Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg, who commended Papandreou's initiative for direct contacts with his Macedonian counterpart Gruevski, which should contribute to creating favorable atmosphere for settling the name issue in the near future. "Washington strongly supports Macedonia's NATO, EU membership. Greece, on the other hand, is vital US partner, which plays a significant role in the Western Balkan and Mediterranean regions. I am not underestimating the hardship, but wish to emphasize the benefits for all parties in progress is being made. I hope for the direct contacts to have favorable effect on the process for settling the issue", Steinberg said.

### **1.28. According to Greek Media Bakoyiannis Conceded From Name "Red Line"**

A confidential document on the content of talks at the meeting between former Greek foreign minister Dora Bakoyiannis and Macedonian FM Antonio Milososki in Paris last September, at which the Greek official conceded from the so-called 'red line' regarding the name, has caused heated debate between opposition New Democracy and the PASOK government. Newspapers "Ethnos", "Kathimerini" and "To Vima" have published parts of the confidential document obtained from the Greek embassy to Paris, which cites the statement by Bakoyiannis that Athens does not require a change to the Macedonian Constitution in the process of settling the name issue, whereas the acceptance of a complex name with a geographic determinant does not mean a change of the national identity. She had proposed the use of term "Macedonian" in Cyrillic to determine the language and national identity. Moreover, Bakoyiannis said that Macedonia's history was an issue belonging to the past. According to the papers,

Bakoyiannis' concession from the 'red line' occurred six months after the veto at the NATO Summit in Bucharest.

Bakoyiannis' cabinet reacted to such media information, accusing the PASOK government of abusing the media, trying to de-focus the public from the secret diplomacy it carries out with Skopje regarding the name row.

### **1.29. Greece Paid Journalists \$130 Million for Propaganda Purposes**

During 1989 to 1993 from secret funds of the Greek Foreign Ministry headed by Andonis Samaras, Greek journalists received \$130 million dollars (US) to promote the "greekness of Macedonia"! Although these funds were originally intended for external promotion (read disinformation), they, according to the testimony of former Prime Minister Constantinos Mitsotakis, ended up in pockets of Greek journalists. "All of the funds were in black plastic bags, like those black trash bags you see, filled only with 5,000 bank notes. There were never checks, it was always cash. The money was mainly for propaganda over Macedonia's name, but instead going abroad, this propaganda was directed towards the inside, our country" - says Mitsotakis in front of a commission tried to clarify the case.

This scandal, which was first actualized by Athens based Eleftherotypia was buried in 1994 though it re-emerged once again after Andonis Samaras<sup>4</sup> was elected as leader of New Democracy, which suffered a defeat by PASOK in the fall elections. The Greek Government issued no information and closed the investigation in the name of "higher national interests". Andonis Samaras publicly acknowledged large amounts of money were paid to publishers, journalists, even local officials, adding all money were used for "national useful purposes". It is indicative that all documents were destroyed prior to Mitsotakis' takeover of Greece's FM from Samaras - on April 13, 1993. Samaras himself attested that the documents were destroyed on March 17 that year. The scandal itself surfaced following the collapse of the Mitsotakis government in October 10, 1993. To make things more interesting, the Foreign Minister of the new government of PASOK - after Mitsotakis and Samaras - was none other than the current present President of Greece Karolos Papoulias! Papoulias engaged a United States attorney, former judge, who practically discovered the secret funds. The investigation never revealed the names of journalists and news organizations that were at the receiving end of these payouts. Samaras never provided a concise answer, saying the money were spent on "Advertisement".

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<sup>4</sup> Samaras had been dismissed in 1992 as a Foreign Minister by then-Prime Minister Mitsotakis, who, like Papandreou has now himself assumed the foreign ministry.



### **1.30. According to Greek Media: Republic of Northern Macedonia" Solution to the Name, "Macedonian" to Identity**

Washington suggests the name "The Republic of Northern Macedonia" as a solution to the name dispute between Skopje and Athens and the use of the term "Macedonian" to define the identity and language, Eleftherotypia daily reports on Monday in an article titled "Americans prepare a trap for FYROM's name". It's time to put an end to the name row and to realize the importance of its possible settlement and of Macedonia's accession to Euro-Atlantic structures, the newspaper says citing American diplomats.

Americans exert pressure over a solution to the issue through UN envoy Matthew Nimetz. The American plan envisages the new name "The Republic of Northern Macedonia" to be approved by the UN Security Council and to recommend the name to be used by UN members in bilateral relations with Macedonia. A "silent solution" is envisaged for the identity and language - their definition as Macedonian to be entered in the UN register without previous approval from Greece. In fact, Athens is not able to stop it, reports Eleftherotypia. Learning from past mistakes, the new US administration plans to refute Greece's arguments before NATO and EU summits in 2010, says the newspaper stressing that Washington pressed Greece during the Bucharest NATO summit, but it did not result in compromise and Athens vetoed Macedonia's accession to the Alliance.

### **1.31. Ivanov: No one Should Deny Identity of Macedonian People**

"Republic of Macedonia will not alter the Constitution in order to change its constitutional name, and will not accept any settlement that violates Macedonian national and language identity", said President Gjorge Ivanov on occasion of the International Human Rights Day. President Ivanov stressed that as it is right for self-determination and self-identification, "This is the essence of human rights and the living force of the free world. Therefore, our red line in the talks with Greece does not originate from nationalism, caprice, demonstration of power or irrational requirements, but from the fundamental civilization benefits of man's struggle for freedom". According to him, no one should deny the identity of the Macedonian people, adding that pride and dignity of Macedonia's citizens should not be played with. "The human rights code will never be complete if the right of free expression of the national and cultural identity is not realized. The right to be recognized as you feel and declare yourself. People can suffer a lot with heads held high, but their dignity and pride is toppled when you don't acknowledge the thing they believe in the most - their identity", emphasized Ivanov.

### **1.32. Croatian President Stjepan Mesic Comments on the "Name Issue"**

The Croatia-Slovenia model of separating the bilateral dispute from the Euro-integration process could be applied in the Greece-Macedonia name row, says outgoing Croatian President Stjepan Mesic in an interview with MIA and the

Macedonian Television. "Pertaining to Croatia, we are accelerating our EU accession. We have realized one objective - NATO membership - but we now want to speed up our European Union entry, because we lost a whole year due to Slovenia's blockade. We have overcome this through the signing of the Arbitration Agreement, thus separating the bilateral dispute from Europe's unity. I believe this is good and could be applied in the Macedonia-Greece row", says Mesic.

According to him, Macedonia could call upon the 1974 Constitution, which stipulated that the republic was one of Yugoslavia's constitutive elements. "Republics in this constitution were positioned as states. The Yugoslav federation was comprised of entities-states, including Croatia and Macedonia. There were no talks on Macedonia's position in the Yugoslav federation at that time and therefore I believe those elements should be taken into account when settling this dispute", claims Mesic.

## **2. EUROPEAN INTEGRATION PROCESSES**

### **2.1. EU: Macedonia makes headway, must continue with reforms**

At the beginning of the summer, the European Commission encouraged the Macedonian Government to keep up its efforts in order to fully meet the benchmarks related to the opening of accession negotiations before the next Progress Report. This was the keynote of the conclusion of the 6th meeting of the Stabilization and Association Committee between the EU and the Republic of Macedonia. This conclusion took stock of recent developments regarding political and economic criteria, as well as the country's progress on alignment with the body of Community law (*acquis*).

Regarding the internal political dialogue, for which absence the Government was criticized in the past, the Commission noted improvements achieved in the functioning of the Parliament. Progress was welcomed in the fight against corruption, which encouraged the country to further enhance the capacity of anti-corruption institutions. As regards the reform of the police, the Commission encouraged the authorities to adopt the Law on Internal Affairs. The Commission noted the progress in the field of the public administration, although further efforts are needed, in particular to amend the Law on Civil Service. Also, the Commission recalled the importance of full alignment and implementation of the energy legislation in line with the obligations under the Energy Community Treaty, notably as regards the electricity market. The Parties reviewed the state of play of the IPA assistance as well. It was concluded that efforts need to be stepped up on the process of decentralization of the EU funds management (DIS).

The EU acknowledged the good cooperation with the authorities in the dialogue on visa liberalization. The Commission noted that, on the basis of its assessment on the fulfillment of all benchmarks for visa liberalization, it intends to present a legislative proposal to abolish the visa obligation for the citizens of the countries that meet the criteria. In this regard, the SA Committee noted the perspective of establishing a visa free travel regime by the end of 2009 for Macedonian citizens.

EU enlargement Commissioner, Olli Rehn, reiterated in Brussels that Macedonia has real chances to get positive report and a recommendation for opening of accession talks: "Eight benchmarks have been set for Macedonia. Our decision on recommending a start of the (accession) talks will depend on fulfilling the rest of the obligations"... "I am impressed by the quality and speed of the conducted reforms for annulment of the EU visa requirements. It is a confirmation of the commitment, political will of the Government, Parliament and state institutions to achieving the desired goal", Rehn said, pointing out that the list of criteria that Macedonia should meet is becoming shorter. "Settling of Skopje-Athens dispute over Macedonia's name is not part of the criteria for positive EC report and recommendation for kicking off the EU accession talks...however, there are also real chances for resolving this (the name) issue by the engagement of both countries under the mediation of UN envoy Matthew Nimetz", Rehn told reporters.

## **2.2. Parliament to complete tasks from EU agenda by September**

It was agreed by Macedonian authorities that members of the Parliament should complete the tasks agreed and to adopt three laws requested by Brussels aimed at Macedonia to receive positive EC report in autumn. According to sources from Parliament Speaker's Cabinet, the Law on Parliament and the Law on Financing Political Parties are to be discussed in August. The Law on Civil Servants, which was withdrawn by the government for amending, will be debated and adopted by mid of September. The opposition's request for amending the Parliament's Rules of Procedure will be met by obliging the Committee on Mandatory-Immunity Issues to review changes in line with Venice Commission's recommendations in three to four months' time.

Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski stated that Macedonia - taking into consideration the assessment of EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn, implemented reforms so far and is ready for completion of remaining tasks, thus has real chances to obtain positive European Commission (EC) report in the fall. He stressed that the Government and other institutions will do everything in its power to meet requirements and to fix any shortcomings in order to secure positive report.

Considering judicial reforms - one of Brussels' main concerns - the PM said a breakthrough had been made in the field in recent years, which could be confirmed with the fact that numerous lagging court cases had been settled thus

far. Asked by the press to name, in his opinion, the most successful Government projects so far, Gruevski underlined the visa liberalization, reduction of fees for health, pension insurance and employment fee, introduction of gross salary, boost of agricultural subsidies, free text-books for primary and high school students as of 2009/10 academic year, fight against corruption and crime.

### **2.3. Readmission, sanctions for those abusing visa liberalization**

The European Commission on July 15 recommended the visa barrier for the citizens of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro to be lifted. It is estimated that the visa liberalization will contribute also to the EU integration process of Balkan countries. Following the long-awaited visa liberalization as of 1 January 2010, Macedonians will be able to travel in 25 European countries with over 400 million citizens spanning in an area of 4,3 million square kilometers. The liberalization, however, doesn't open opportunities for indefinite stay or work in the said EU countries. The type C visa, i.e. short-stay and travel visa, will be lifted for the citizens of Macedonia, enabling them to visit friends, relatives or to visit tourist destinations in countries included in the Schengen system for a maximum of 90 days within six months i.e. 180 days within a year.

Under the European Commission (EC) recommendation, which put Macedonia on the so called "white" Schengen list, employments are banned in duration of the stay. Those caught red-handed will be subjected to readmission and to sanctions in the country where the offence was made. Offenders will be most likely expelled or granted temporary or permanent ban for entry into the country. A type D visa, providing study and working permit, is necessary for a longer stay in EU.

Out of the 27 EU members, 25 will be available without visa, including Greece, which is bound to comply to the decision, being a member of the Schengen zone. However, authorities in Athens intend to find a different manner in which entry of Macedonian citizens is to be allowed in Greece, having in mind that due to the name issue Macedonian passports are not recognized by Greek authorities. Switzerland, Island and Norway will be also available without visas, although they are not in EU, but are signatories of the Schengen agreement. Visas will be not necessary for trips to Bulgaria, Romania and Cyprus - countries which haven't yet met the Schengen criteria, but are bound to observe EU decisions. Liechtenstein, a city-state due to join the Schengen zone, will be also a visa-free destination. Visas will be still needed for Great Britain and Ireland, because they are not signatories of the Schengen agreement.

#### **2.4. Fouere: Country's progress to be acknowledged, speculation on progress report not needed**

»Speculation of the content of European Commission's progress report on Macedonia, which will cover several areas where progress has been made, needs to be avoided. Let's wait the assessment to be unveiled, which will be based on the fulfilled criteria in recent years. It's encouraging that a huge breakthrough has been made and I'm convinced that it will be taken into consideration«. This was stated by EU Ambassador Erwan Fouere when asked to comment media information on the report, which will be made public by the European Commission (EC) on Oct. 14 and speculation whether it will include a recommendation for start of EU membership talks. »EC is the body which is responsible to recommend a date, while the final decision is reached by the Council of EU, elaborated Fouere.

European Commission Director-General for Enlargement Michael Leigh stated that Macedonia could expect positive evaluations in the EC Progress Report, due to be issued on October 14. He referred to the European Union agenda in this regard and the reform progress of aspirant-countries in the past year. "I believe that the country has achieved large progress in the past year. One of the traits of the enlargement process is that we are quite clear regarding the standards that a country needs to meet in order to move forward. We have determined eight crucial areas where actions were required. I am certain that this year's report will note the significant achievements in meeting these crucial priorities", stressed Leigh.

#### **2.5. European Commission recommends start of EU accession negotiations for Macedonia**

»The European Commission has recommended the opening of accession negotiations between the EU and Macedonia«, said Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn at the press conference in Brussels while presenting the 2009 Progress Report. "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has made important progress and has substantially addressed the key accession partnership priorities. The Commission considers that the country sufficiently fulfils the political criteria set by the Copenhagen European Council in 1993 and the Stabilisation and Association Process and therefore has decided to recommend the opening of accession negotiations. I believe that the Government in Skopje will see this as a strong incentive and encouragement to finally settle the name issue, which has been here for 18 years", said Rehn.

According to him, maintenance of good neighborly relations, including talks for a mutually acceptable name solution under UN auspices remains of vital significance. "This is more essential and urgent than ever for the well-being and the country's European future", added Rehn. The Enlargement Commissioner

reiterated the stance that the Macedonia recommendation is a significant incentive for settlement of the name issue and its removal from the agenda. The EU Council should pass the final decision in December if and when would Macedonia start negotiations.

The EC report, developed on the basis of the benchmark achievements and without additional conditions, states that Macedonia has made significant progress in meeting the crucial priorities and fulfilling the Stabilization and Association Agreement obligations. The document notes that the presidential and local elections of 2009 met most international standards. Political dialogue has improved: the governing coalition is stable, the political climate is more cooperative and the parliament is more effective. The key Accession Partnership priorities regarding the reform of the police, the judiciary, public administration and corruption have been substantially addressed. The implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement remains an essential element of democracy and rule of law in the country. There has been progress on implementing the law on languages, on decentralisation and equitable representation. However, further efforts in a constructive spirit are needed to fulfil the objectives of the Agreement. The legal and institutional framework for human rights and the protection of minorities is broadly in place but further efforts are needed to improve implementation in a number of fields.

Regarding regional issues and international obligations, the document reads that the Republic of Macedonia has generally good relations with countries in the region. »Relations with Greece continued to be affected by the unresolved name issue. The country is engaged in talks under the auspices of the UN on resolving it. Maintaining good neighbourly relations, including a negotiated and mutually acceptable solution to the name issue, remains essential", it adds.

Pertaining to the economic criteria, the EC assesses that Macedonia continues to move closer towards becoming a functioning market economy. "It should be able to cope with competitive pressures and market forces within the Union in the medium term, provided that it vigorously implements its reform programme in order to reduce significant structural weaknesses. Growth decelerated and became negative in 2009 following the deterioration in the international environment. The financial sector remained reasonably stable while inflation declined markedly. Some progress has been achieved in addressing structural unemployment and in reducing impediments to employment. However, the still very high unemployment, in particular among young and poorly educated, remains a major cause of concern. Further progress has been made in improving business environment. Still, improvements in the administration and the rule of law are necessary to allow for smooth functioning of the market economy. Financial independence of supervisory and regulatory agencies has been strengthened. In the context of the election period and the global economic crisis, the overall economic policy mix has deteriorated. This contributed to widening of

the external imbalances and an increase of the external vulnerability of the country", says the report.

The document reads that the Republic of Macedonia has made good progress in improving its ability to assume the obligations of membership, in particular as concerns transport, customs and taxation and justice, freedom and security. Less progress has been achieved in certain other areas such as energy, the environment and employment and social policy. Sustained efforts are needed to strengthen administrative capacity for the implementation and enforcement of legislation. In line with the relevant key priority of the Accession Partnership, commitments undertaken in the Stabilisation and Association Agreement have been implemented.

Slovenia proposed at a November meeting of the EU Council's task force for visas that the Schengen visa regime for Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia be abolished as of 19 December this year instead of 1 January 2010 as proposed by the European Commission. "In this way the citizens of these countries will have the opportunity to travel without visas in Schengen countries before Christmas and New Year", Slovenian Foreign Ministry said in a press release.

## **2.6. European Parliament recommends visa annulment as of December 19 and Start of Accession Talks with Macedonia**

The European Parliament adopted in mid-November a resolution recommending the annulment of visas for Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro as of December 19, instead of the European Commission proposed date of January 1, 2010 (the EP resolution is not binding, but has political weight in passing EU decisions). Euro-Commissioner Jacques Barrot hailed the decision as "historic". EP rapporteur for visa liberalization, Slovenian deputy Tanja Fajon voiced her satisfaction due to the visa abolishment of the three countries, "which citizens were more isolated and had more limited rights and freedoms than the period of former Yugoslavia".

Endorsed with a majority of votes by the European Parliament in November, through a resolution on EU enlargement with Western Balkan countries, Turkey and Iceland, it was recommended for the Council of EU at its summit on December 7 to confirm European Commission's recommendation for start of accession talks with Macedonia. The document prepared by the chairman of EP's Foreign Affairs Committee, Italian MEP Gabriele Albertini, doesn't condition the launch of membership talks with a prior name row settlement. Instead it encourages Macedonia and Greece to boost their efforts to resolve the issue, because "a mutually acceptable solution could be found".

Use of name Macedonia caused a heated discussion at the European Parliament plenary session. German MEP Bernd Posselt opposed Greek deputy Nikolaos Salavrakos, who asked MEPs not to use name Macedonia but the interim

reference. "Macedonia is Macedonia and will remain Macedonia. These discussions will certainly not help the neighboring country", said Posselt, reminding on the similar stance of Greens leader Daniel Cohn-Bendit. Deutsche Welle-Macedonian Program reported that Posselt earlier asked for mitigation of the wording used in the resolution, which includes too much accusations towards Macedonia when referring to bilateral good neighborly relations, since "it is not the only country responsible".

Chairman of the Joint Parliamentary Committee EU-Macedonia, German MEP Jorgo Chatzimarkakis claimed that the country's only problem was the name issue. "The important thing is just to jump over a shadow. I think the two parties are ready to go one step further. A five-minute meeting between the countries' PMs on Friday will not solve the whole issue. However, the objective is important, whereas more time is required to find a permanent solution. If not, a hastened settlement could be reached, which would be catastrophic in the long-term", added Chatzimarkakis. In a statement for Radio Deutsche Welle, Chatzimarkakis said a solution to the name has been found. "The two countries have already agreed on the name. However, its use is causing problems. Nevertheless, the current spirit provides the opportunity for a solution", he added.

The resolution adopted by EP welcomes the recent establishment of diplomatic relations between Macedonia and Kosovo and the signing of an agreement on physical border demarcation, which are seen as positive contribution to regional stability. Macedonia is commended as well for the progress made in recent months and which was acknowledged by the European Commission by recommending launch of accession talks with EU. Furthermore, the document urges Macedonian authorities to resume reform processes, especially in public administration and judiciary, fight against corruption, women's rights and inter-ethnic relations, including guarantees for the rights of members of all ethnic communities and their increased participation in public administration.

## **2.7. Macedonia Visa Barrier Topples**

EU Council of Home and Justice Affairs Ministers passed in November the decision on elimination of the Schengen visa barrier for Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro as of December 19. "We strongly support this decision, which represents an important stage in the process of the countries' approximation to the EU", said French Minister for Immigration, Integration, National identity and Solidary Development Eric Besson at a press conference in Brussels. The decision supplements EU Regulation 539/2001, transferring the three countries from the "black" to the "white" Schengen list.

The decision text reads that countries' citizens are exempted from the obligation to get visas for short stay, up to 90 days within six months and 180 days within a year, but without the possibility to work in EU member-states. Only individuals possessing biometric passports can travel without visas as of December 19,



whereas those having old passports should possess a valid Schengen visa. In case entry is rejected, the border officer is obliged to provide a written explanation regarding the decision, which can be used for submitting an appeal to competent bodies in the country.

According to Mol data, over 480,000 biometric passports have been issued thus far, which is over 75 percent of the traveling population. The EC recommended the January 1 annulment of the visa barrier for citizens of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro on July 15, after Commission experts concluded that the three countries had met visa liberalization roadmap conditions<sup>5</sup>.

## **2.8. President Ivanov, PM Gruevski: Great day for Macedonia**

President Gjorge Ivanov and Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski stated that the decision of the EU Council of Home and Justice Affairs Ministers on elimination of the Schengen visa barrier for the citizens of Macedonia as of December 19 is a great day for the Republic of Macedonia. "The visa liberalization decision is a long-awaited welcome for our citizens to the community of equal, free citizens of Europe. It is a giant step towards the EU, boosting the feeling of belonging to the great European family", the President said. He gave credit to citizens for their patience during the implementation of necessary, sometimes painful reforms, as well as to the Government and all relevant institutions, which have proven to be capable to meet the high standards.

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<sup>5</sup> According to the analyst Sam Vaknin, the visa liberalization shall be welcomed by Macedonian citizens, who will enjoy visa-free travel to most destinations in Europe starting in early 2010. It is believed that this liberalization of the visa regime is welcomed, since it will provide its long-suffering citizens with access to higher education and jobs in a common market with 300 million people and a GDP to equal the United States. However, he thinks that the change in the visa regime also presents multiple threats, as it could encourage an exodus of ethnic Macedonians from the country and alter to their disfavor the demographic balance with their Albanian nemeses. Due to the Greek blockage for entry in NATO and EU (Greece's insistence that Macedonia change its name), Macedonia was not given a date to commence its accession talks with the European Union. Economic and Euro-Atlantic integration prospects look dim and youngsters are elders alike are frantically looking for a way out. Based on experience from other countries in Central and Eastern Europe - such as Poland and Bulgaria - and on experience from other regions (for instance: Israel and Vietnam), we conclude: Macedonia is likely to lose 3-5% of its population over the next 5 years (assuming that Europe undergoes a mild economic recovery starting in 2012). Most of these are expected to take advantage of the visa liberalization regime and leave Macedonia for good (emigrate). Another 3-5% are likely to try to find temporary jobs as Gastarbeiter. Consequently, Macedonia will plunge into negative population growth. At least 40% of these emigrants are likely to be students, white-collar workers, academics, and skilled laborers. This massive brain drain will create labor shortages in crucial sectors (healthcare, education, academe, research and development, banking and finance, hi-tech industries and manufacturing). Remittances are likely to recover as emigrants and Gastarbeiter send money back home and, thus, replenish the country's foreign exchange reserves by an extra 200-300 million euros a year. By 2013, remittances will exceed the record level of 2007 and foster a new wave of consumption, construction, and GDP growth. Levels of unemployment inside Macedonia will drop and unemployment of the well-educated and skilled will be all but eliminated.

## **2.9. To Vima: EU Deeply Divided on EU Accession Talks With Macedonia**

The EU Council is set to come to agreement in principle regarding the issue on talks between EU and Macedonia and the essence of the agreement will be known today, Greek media reported during the EU Council meeting. »To Vima« daily reports that Greece is under strong pressure from Brussels to accept setting of date for start of EU accession talks with Macedonia. Daily reads that many EU member states pointed out the argument that Macedonia's accession in the EU is factor of stability in the Balkans.

At the same time, some EU states, led by France request EU to express solidarity with Greece i.e. with its position and negotiations with Macedonia to start when comprising solution to name issue will be found, daily reads. Swedish Presidency proposed statement including final conclusions of the EU Council which reads that EU will debate on March 2010 whether conditions are met for opening membership talks with Macedonia, with which Greek diplomacy opposes.

»Kathimerini« daily reports that after long debates agreement in principle is reached and it is satisfying for the Greek party since it does not include March as start of membership talks with Macedonia. »Eleftherotypia« daily reads that today in Brussels the battle starts not only for Macedonia but also for accession of Turkey in the EU, which will end on Friday with the EU Council's conclusions of the EU top officials. "Two matters can be considered as certain: firstly that Brussels 2009 will not be Bucharest 2008 and secondly that European process of Turkey will not be stopped for not meeting the criteria towards EU and Cyprus. Turkey will not be punished, with an exception of possible sanctions only by Nicosia, which are still matter of agreement," Eleftherotypia daily reports.

## **2.10. EU Council Debates on Draft-Statement Regarding Macedonia**

The European Union foreign ministers had difficulties in coordinating their opinions about the draft-statement, proposed by the Swedish Presidency. The draft called for deferring a decision on opening membership talks with Macedonia until at least March 2010. Greece however opposed setting of any time frame for opening of Macedonia's EU entry talks prior to resolving of the name dispute. After a two-day debate, the EU Council of Ministers decided to postpone the decision on determining a date on beginning of Macedonia's Union accession negotiations due to Greece's condition for prior closure of the name row. Although majority of EU member-states support the start of negotiations, the Council decided to review again the issue in the course of the Spanish Presidency in the first half of 2010.

The statement referred to the name issue and called on Macedonia to be a "good neighbor". "Maintaining good neighborly relations, including a negotiated and mutually acceptable solution on the name issue, under the auspices of the UN,

remains essential”, it says. Finnish Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen acknowledged that Greece, which is in dispute with Macedonia over the country's name, could be a stumbling block. “It depends quite a lot on Greece ... (but) from the Commission side they are ready to start negotiations”, he commented.

## **2.11. PM Gruevski: Events at the EU Council Expected at Great Extent**

As a reaction of the EU Council decision Macedonian PM Nikola Gruevski assessed that “The events at the EU Council in Brussels were expected at great extent because Greece announced several times to block Macedonia if it does not give up our identity and our name and does not accept their conditions”. “We are very surprised but this time it was made on more sophisticated manner than in Bucharest Summit, although the possibility to debate the name issue in the next six months leaves hope that something will move in this direction”, PM Gruevski added. According him it is obvious that Greece did not want an agreement to be reached. He announced that Macedonia will continue with efforts to approach towards the EU and to find solution to name dispute. Commenting the positions that Macedonia missed historical chance, Gruevski said that for him this chance was giving up the name, language and identity. – All those who criticized that we have missed the historical chance, I am answering that this chance is erasing itself from the map of nations and erasing own identity, Gruevski said.

“Today’s outcome in Brussels can be defined as new Greek hypocrisy, because as country which allegedly urges all Western Balkans to join EU as soon as possible, at the first opportunity instead of giving chance to our country to start EU accession talks, it blocks it”, stated FM Antonio Milososki presenting the official position of the Macedonian government. Thanking the Swedish EU Presidency and numerous EU member states that supported considering the issue in March 2010, with a view to setting a date for the opening of accession negotiations he added that blocking will not only harm the EU image but will additionally violate the reputation of the EU integration process.

Later, attending the European People's Party Statutory Congress in Bonn, PM Gruevski reiterated that Skopje-Athens negotiations on settling the name dispute would resume. »Thus far Greece has wished for no solution, setting conditions that any party on the other side, any government or politicians, would not have accepted. I have told directly to Papandreou at our last meeting that in the next 100 years he will find no government to accept such demands and conditions. It is obvious that Greece has not wished for an agreement to be made in this period« Gruevski said.

Commenting the EU Council's statement to defer a decision on opening membership talks with Macedonia for the next six months, Gruevski said it was a kind of compromise Greece agreed on yesterday under a pressure of many countries. However, Gruevski said, this compromise is not binding, it means

nothing and lacks the word 'date', which was included in the first draft of the Council's statement....in any case for me this is a kind of more sophisticated Greek blockade in comparison to its move in Bucharest. Whether we have been blocked in one or another manner, this is a classical obstruction - this is a terminology also applied in the 1995 (Interim Accord) under which Greece is bind to not hinder Macedonia's membership in international organization if it accepts to do it under the temporary reference«, Gruevski said.

FM Milososki said that blockades from official Athens regarding deserved opening of membership talks will not contribute in improvement of atmosphere in bilateral talks in name dispute, but at the same time Macedonia will continue here which considered constructive contribution aimed at moving forward. »However, I'm pointing out that blockades will not bring advantage; Athens blockades will not change our minds to continue to represent and to defend our constitutional norms and our national, lingual and Macedonian identity. It is European value and it would be contradictory if a member state norms and our national, lingual and Macedonian identity. It is European value and it would be contradictory if a member state expects with its abuse of membership to disable a small peaceful nation to clearly express and to promote its national and state identity«, he said.

## **2.12. Council of EU's Decision Doesn't Resemble the Bucharest Outcome - Fouere**

Asked to comment the Brussels decision, EU Ambassador Erwan Fouere stated: »A pressure is being made with the conclusions reached at yesterday's meeting of the Council of EU over both sides - Macedonia and Greece - to find a joint name settlement in the coming several months. It will meet the ultimate goal - start of membership talks between Macedonia and EU in the course of 2010. This means that both sides should intensify name talks in order a solution to be found«. He said he disagreed with media reports that yesterday's decision of the Council of EU resembled the Bucharest NATO summit, when Greece vetoed Macedonia's membership to the Alliance. »I completely disagree with the media that the Brussels decision resembled the Bucharest scenario, especially if we take a look at the meeting's report. I think it is crucial not to exaggerate with our conclusions of what took place in Brussels. If the report of the Council of EU meetings is read carefully - and I urge all political factors to carefully read them - it is obvious that it includes a certain timeframe. It is certainly a progress because encourages both sides to solve the issue, not to delay it«, said Fouere, expressing hopes that the name issue would be closed in the course of Spain's EU presidency, as underlined in the conclusions.

There's no room for Euroscepticism in Macedonia, but following Dec. 7 and the decision of the Council of Ministers there is disappointment and a feeling of injustice, stated Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski after meeting EU Ambassador Erwan Fouere, Swedish Ambassador Lars Freden and the leaders of parliamentary political parties. According to him, the essence of the Brussels

decision was the same as the one reached at the Bucharest NATO summit, the difference was in its form. "We are aware that our main problem is Greece", said Gruevski adding that Macedonia would seek ways to settle the name issue. DUI president Ali Ahmeti said the meeting was constructive- "All party leaders agreed to join our efforts in finding a solution to the name dispute", he stated.

### **2.13. MEP Pack: EU Cannot Put Pressure on Greece Over Name Row**

The European Union has no way to put pressure on Greece over the name row, so that Macedonia starts Union accession talks, says German MEP Doris Pack. In a statement for Deutsche Welle-Macedonian Program, Pack says the Council of Ministers' decision to postpone the date for start of Macedonia's accession negotiations is the wrong signal that Brussels sends to the country, which has fulfilled the Ohrid Framework Agreement and has worked hard on the European path.

"Unfortunately, EU does not have a tool to put pressure on Greece in behaving differently. Nationalist stances coming from Greece and Macedonia do not help the problem's settlement either. According to me, the two countries came close to a solution recently, when Macedonia was ready to accept a supplement to the name, but the Greeks said term Macedonia could not be used. This was, to me, incredible. As if these people have fallen out of the sky and they have no name or identity. They are Macedonians living in Macedonia and not in Greece, where other Macedonians live. Therefore, this situation is unacceptable for me, but unfortunately the European Parliament cannot do anything", stresses Pack. She realizes that Macedonian citizens are fed up with the issue and want Brussels to send them a signal it respects their achievements. "I hope that a solution to the problem will be reached, but there is no way in which we can help. People do not understand there is no way for the EU to put pressure on Greece to make concessions", underlined MEP Pack.

### **2.14. PM Gruevski: Macedonia to Keep on Fighting for EU Integration**

"We won't be heart-broken over what has happened, we'll keep on fighting for Macedonia's EU integration, stated Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski in Bonn, once again commenting latest developments regarding the Macedonia-Greece ties surrounding Macedonia's integration to the European Union", MIA reports from Bonn. "We have been and will be facing obstacles. Quite simply the fate of our country is such that we face more obstacles than other countries. Evidently, the Macedonian issue still overwhelms the Balkans i.e. certain countries on the Balkans. Sometimes it seems to me that we are living in the 19th century, not in the 21st century. Certain demands, especially from Greece, resemble those as far as from the 19th century or the early 20th century and not from the onset of the 21st century. We will find the strength to deal with it, we'll find the strength to

overcome the issues. There are countries that support us and the EU cannot forever tolerate this issue", noted Gruevski. He said that through its actions Greece was in a way spending its credit. Gruevski said that "this credit has its beginning and its end and one day it will expire".

### **2.15. Spanish FM Optimistic That Name Issue Will be Solved During Country's EU Presidency**

Spain's Foreign Affairs Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos stated in mid-December that he was optimistic that the Greek-Macedonia name row would be resolved during Spain's six-month EU presidency, which would allow Macedonia to be given a date for negotiations. The FM said the name talks between Macedonia and Greece were progressing under UN auspices and they should not be interfered. "Spain wants the bilateral dispute to be settled with the EU member country which objects a date for negotiations to be given to Macedonia. I believe things are headed in the right direction - the new Greek government and Macedonian authorities work in an utterly constructive manner. Spain's presidency assumes responsibility to say that the name issue will be solved during our presidency. Spain has never blocked anyone and it is trying to find a consensus on issues. However, the name issue should be solved within the UN-brokered talks. I believe we should not meddle in something that could be solved once and for all", said Moratinos. Spain, which will take over the EU presidency as of January 1, will work closely with Herman Van Rompuy, the European Council President, stated Spanish FM Moratinos presenting country's priorities with EU's presidency.

## **3. NATO INTEGRATION PROCESS**

### **3.1. Macedonia Remains Active Within NATO Forces Despite the Non-obtained Membership**

Inevitably, the NATO integration process since the meeting in Bucharest last year, is still in a stand-by position, due to the unresolved name issue with Greece. However, Macedonia continues to play in many aspects active part in the NATO Alliance, including NATO-led missions like the one in Afghanistan and Bosnia.

A send-off ceremony of the contingent of the ARM's Second Mechanised Infantry Brigade to ISAF peacekeeping mission in Afghanistan was held on July 10<sup>th</sup> at "Mihajlo Apostolski" military barracks in Ohrid. In the course of the seventh rotation of ISAF mission, 149 members of Second Mechanised Infantry Brigade together with national representative and three HQ officers will be deployed in ISAF HQ in Kabul. On the occasion, President Gjorge Ivanov said that Macedonia is fully prepared to join equally and formally in frameworks of North

Atlantic Alliance. "Our institutions made all preparations and reforms, what's more, Macedonia is the most successful example of modern, multicultural, European and democratic society", he said, adding that full-fledged membership in NATO and EU is the biggest challenge, for which Macedonia will include all social resources and potentials to fulfill it.

Currently, the Kabul-based ISAF main command is guarded by 148 ARM troops of the second mechanized infantry company<sup>6</sup>. A total of 164 ARM soldiers are deployed in this mission. Still, Macedonia plans to send about 80 additional soldiers to Afghanistan in 2010 to train the Afghan National Army, since the NATO-led ISAF mission made a new strategy<sup>7</sup>. Assessment says that the situation on the ground has not been improved, on the contrary in some intervals Taliban succeed to expand a territory under their control, which calls for a new Alliance's strategy for Afghanistan and additional troops ranging from 40,000 to 80,000. Macedonia partakes with 4% of army's land forces in ISAF.

By sending additional troops to Afghanistan and becoming one of the countries to commit the largest number of soldiers to ISAF mission, Macedonia demonstrates its NATO orientation, Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski told reporters in November. "NATO is our orientation and we have been proving it by actions. We have not only wrapped up all necessary reforms, as recognized in Bucharest, but also take active part in NATO-led missions - an organization with which we share the same values. We believe that the problems will be resolved leading to the country's full-fledged NATO membership", Gruevski stated.

On the occasion of the third Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) Security Forum in June Macedonian Defense Minister Zoran Konjanovski held informal meeting with Alexander Vershbow, the US Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs. Vershbow once again gave assurance that administration of the US President Barack Obama firmly supports the Republic of Macedonia and highly appreciates bilateral cooperation, mostly with the Ministry of Defense and Army of the Republic of Macedonia. It was confirmed that US remains firm partner and supporter to the Republic of Macedonia.

### **3.2. Foreign Officials Work on Finding Solution to Name Dispute**

NATO's new secretary general, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, said that he would work to find a solution to the dispute over the name between Athens and Skopje which hinders Macedonia's admission into the Alliance, *The New York Times* reads in August. Rasmussen, as daily reads, pointed out this at Sunday's first address as new NATO chief in Brussels.

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<sup>6</sup> In August, four Macedonian soldiers sustained light facial injuries after a suicide car bomb exploded outside the main gate of the NATO-led military mission in Kabul.

<sup>7</sup> Macedonia in 2010 will boost its troops in the ISAF mission in Afghanistan by 50%, thus raising the number to 248 soldiers.

George Robertson, former NATO Secretary General stated that Macedonia has the right to become NATO member since it meets all conditions. "It is a large shame and scandal that the country did not receive an invitation to join NATO...Greece has its own reasons for blocking the process but of course as NATO member state can block any decisions within NATO. That's why I believe that now both Macedonia and Greece will show flexibility regarding the name issue and Macedonia will become NATO member", Robertson said. "The price of NATO membership is enormous for a country as Macedonia and that's why the name whether it is New Macedonia, Upper Macedonia, Northern Macedonia and large historical processes should not be topic that will prevent Macedonia to become NATO member", Robertson said.

## **4. ECONOMY**

### **4.1. Economic Trends**

Economically, the trends initiated at the beginning of the year continue. BDP was negative for the first two trimesters, which usually is considered as entry in a recession phase. Inflation for the first nine months of 2009 was -0.3%. Industrial production has a falling trend and from the beginning of the year including July has reached 19.8%, which is the largest fall since the crisis begun. Unemployment rate for the second trimester is 31.9%. All in all, macroeconomic stability is under limited pressure, accompanied with lower growth rates and controlled inflation.

Contrary to these trends, it is a positive sign that Macedonia is again chosen as a country which is among the top reformers in the world. According to the World Bank, it is on the third place among the top reformers and is ranked on the 32<sup>nd</sup> place for doing business, which is a jump for 37 positions from the last year's 69<sup>th</sup> position. What's more, in September 2009 agency Standard & Pours raised the credit rating of Macedonia from BB- to BB stable. It is a positive sign that the country successfully issued the second Euro-bond valued 175 million EUR.

In the world of finances, banking deposits are further growing, but with significantly lower rates than before. There is a similar trend for the credits as well, as in the last three months enterprise crediting had a much lower rate. Interest rates remain unchanged, however they are considered high. Generally speaking, the financial sector partly was protected by the conservative approach of the National Bank of the Republic of Macedonia (NBRM) and by the low exposure to foreign markets.

A step forward has been made by the Government by signing an agreement with the European Investment Bank for a 100 million EUR credit for support of domestic enterprises. This is part of the Government's anti-crisis measures. It is



expected that these credits shall be available the earliest for the last trimester of this year.

The price index of industrial products in July 2009 is decreased by 11.5 % in comparison with July 2008. According to data of the State Statistical Office, producer price index of industrial products in July 2009, in comparison to July 2008 is 88.5. This decrease is a result of the decreased production in the group energy by 19.2%, intermediate goods industries group, except energy by 14.4%, capital goods industries by 0.5% and durable consumer goods by 0.8%. The value of the consumer basket for food and beverages for a four-member household in August 2009, calculated on the basis of retail prices, is 11.825 denars (about 195 EUR) and in comparison with the previous month drops by 0.5%.

Macedonian Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per inhabitant in 2008 expressed in purchasing power standards amounted to 32.5 percent of the European Union average, registering a 1.3 percent growth compared to 2007, show Eurostat data. According to the report, EU candidate-states Croatia and Turkey register a GDP at 63 and 45.5 percent respectively from the European average. Pertaining to the EU member-states, Luxembourg has the largest GDP, amounting to 252.8 percent, whereas Bulgaria the lowest - 40.1 percent of the European average.

#### **4.2. PM Gruevski: There are Signs of Economic Recuperation**

“The Government has been doing its best to turn the promises, incorporated in its program into reality and I believe that most of them will be realized...thus far the Government has been keeping its promises and great part of them are being realized. However, some projects have been postponed due to the economic crisis. Some are under preparation, such as the gasification project and construction of the hydroelectric power plants Cebren, Galista and Boskov Most” PM Nikola Gruevski said in July at a parliament session on MPs' questions.

He also praised that the state has collected higher revenues, which are a sign for a beginning of economic recuperation following the global downturn. “The collection of budget revenues in July was the best in comparison to previous months, while the State Statistical Office announced that the unemployment rate in Macedonia registered a downward trend in the first quarter of this year”, he added, pointing out that both indicators were rather positive in a period of global economic crisis.

Pertaining to the 0.9-percent GDP drop, PM Nikola Gruevski said that Republic of Macedonia has the lowest drop compared to GDP contractions in other countries in Europe and the world. “All countries have consequences and none has managed to eliminate them. We are trying to mitigate our drop in a number of ways. Macedonia and 3-4 other countries share a drop close to zero, whereas

the rest, such as Germany, Switzerland, Slovenia, Croatia, Japan, Czech Republic have suffered serious blows from the global economic crisis", he said.

However, there are other economic analysts who do not agree with the estimations given to the public by the Government. Critical voices are coming especially from the opposition.

#### **4.3. Macedonia Ranked Third in the World According to Business Reforms**

Republic of Macedonia according to the latest World Bank report "Doing Business" for 2009 is ranked third in the world for being amongst the best reformers to have improved the business climate. It is ranked 32nd out of 183 countries, jumping 37 places up than last year. Rwanda and Kyrgyzstan take up the first and second place respectively. Macedonia in the report is the highest ranking country in the SEE region. Bulgaria is 44th, Romania 55th, Slovenia 53rd, Albania 82nd, Serbia 88th, Croatia 103rd and Greece 109th. Macedonia is ranked better than certain developed countries, such as Portugal, Spain, Italy, etc. France, the Netherlands, Austria, Germany and others are immediately ahead of Macedonia.

The Doing Business report contains 10 indicators ranking the countries in line with the progress they have made - starting up of businesses, obtaining licenses and permits, enabling employment conditions, property registration, access to credits, investor protection, tax payment, trade conditions, contract execution and closing businesses.

## **5. HEADLINES**

### **5.1. Macedonia Establishes Diplomatic Ties With Andorra Under its Constitutional Name**

In August, the Republic of Macedonia and the Principality of Andorra established diplomatic ties by signing a joint communiqué. Andorra is 125 country to establish diplomatic ties with Macedonia under its constitutional name. "Macedonia's constitutional name is used in the document, signed by Andorran, Macedonian Foreign Ministers Xavier Espot and Antonio Milososki. In a phone conversation the two ministers expressed satisfaction with the communiqué's official signing and shared opinions on current developments in both countries and on global political and economic scene", the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a press release.

## **5.2. President's Meeting Reaffirm Regional Trends**

In June in Vlora, Albania met the Presidents of Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro, in which was brought a joint conclusion that the ultimate goals of all four counties are EU and NATO integration. "It is demonstrated that finally, after many years the region is establishing the same criteria, values and principles. It is what connects us and make us compatible as a region. With this meeting we send a positive message in the region and beyond" stated the Macedonian President George Ivanov. He noted that the presidents were responsible to encourage communication amongst the people and construction of infrastructure for more open approach to markets and exchange of goods and services. "When it comes to Macedonia, the country is prepared to establish diplomatic relations with Pristina", he stressed.

Kosovo President Fatmir Sejdiu on his part also stressed that Kosovo was ready to establish ties with Macedonia. "There are important points that connect the four countries and their citizens", said Sejdiu, adding that these countries shared joint interest to join the Euro-Atlantic integration. The host, Albanian President Bamir Topi stated that meetings provided a fresh impulse to strengthen cooperation between countries in the region, both in meeting their strategic goals towards EU and NATO and in improving traffic infrastructure energy, economy and tourism cooperation and fight against crime. "As a result, Albania is prepared to allow its ports to be used by the landlocked countries in the region. Such a cooperation between Balkan countries gives a new picture of the region, which is appreciated by EU", he concluded.

## **5.3. There is no Need of New Ohrid Agreement - Vice-Premier States**

"There is no need of a new Framework Agreement (FA), on the contrary, everybody should support the implementation of this internationally guaranteed document that put an end to an internal conflict and opened Macedonia's road to the European Union and NATO membership", Vice Premier in charge of FA practical realization Abdulakim Ademi says in an interview with MIA regarding the eighth anniversary of its signing.

The claims of the Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA) (one of the FA signatories) that the document is obsolete and therefore Macedonia needs new defining of the relations between Macedonians and Albanians for Ademi are ungrounded, presenting an attempt for gaining political points. Actually a setback in the document's implementation had been registered when DPA was part of the governmental coalition, Ademi said, adding that the agreement doesn't belong to any political party. "The FA is Macedonia's future and hence all factors should contribute to its implementation, which means all political parties, as it opens the road for Macedonia's EU membership"... "Most of the laws, deriving from the FA, have been adopted but more should be done for their practical application, like the Law on Languages and power decentralization process as the FA pillars...the

agreement's spirit should prevail as that is most important for all of us", Ademi says.

"The state and citizens should work in line with the Ohrid Agreement as it presents a solid frame for improving the life in and the development of Macedonia, hence the United States fully support the document's implementation", US Ambassador Philip Reeker stated on the occasion. "Some provisions of the agreement require further efforts, such as the Law on Languages", Reeker said, pointing out the need of defining mechanisms for its implementation via debates of political parties and various ethnic groups. "The power decentralization is also a significant process in this regard", he added.

#### **5.4. Parliament Votes new Government Members**

At the beginning of July, after five hours of debate in the Assembly were voted the new Government members. Zoran Stavreski is the new Finance Minister and Deputy PM without portfolio succeeding Trajko Slaveski, who is dismissed; Vasko Naumovski is the new Deputy PM for European Affairs succeeding Ivica Bocevski following his resignation; Vladimir Pesevski is the new Deputy PM for Economic Affairs succeeding Zoran Stavreski; Ljupco Dimovski<sup>8</sup> is the new Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Water Supply succeeding Aco Spasenoski (resigned)<sup>9</sup> and Nikola Todorov is the new Minister of Education and Science succeeding Pero Stojanovski (resigned). Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski presented the candidates for replacement of the outgoing ministers, referring to their professionalism and responsibility and thanked the replaced ministers. This reshuffle was not done to the satisfaction of all the rotated ministers, especially regarding the dismissed minister of finance Trajko Slaveski.

#### **5.5. Macedonia and Canada and Macedonia and Australia Signed Agreement on Social Insurance**

About 200,000 Macedonians living in Canada will be able to exercise their rights, deriving from the pension, disability insurance, under an agreement signed in August in Ottawa by Macedonian PM Nikola Gruevski and Canadian PM Stephen Harper. "The agreement is rather significant for the Macedonians living in Canada, as each of them after their retirement will now be able to return to Macedonia and receive the pension there", Gruevski told reporters after the signing ceremony. The agreement will most probably enter into force in the first half of 2010, i.e. after completion of the ratification procedure at the Parliaments of both countries.

Canada also praised Macedonia's participation in NATO-led missions. Gruevski on his part asked for further Canada's support of Macedonia's NATO

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<sup>8</sup> Current Deputy Minister of Transport and Communications

<sup>9</sup> Deputy-Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management Hristijan Delev also left the post.

membership. "Canada has been supporting us thus far and after this meeting I am certain that the country will keep doing it in regard to our NATO membership and other issues where such support will be necessary. We have also reiterated our support of Canada's candidacy for non-permanent member of the UN Security Council", Gruevski said.

Macedonian governmental delegation, led by Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski, paid a two-day visit to Australia on October 25-27. During the visit, Gruevski and his Australian counterpart Kevin Rudd signed a social insurance agreement, which will enable to Macedonians, living and working in Australia, to exercise their rights, deriving from the pension and disability insurance. Australia's 2006 census says about 85,000 ethnic Macedonians live in the country. Macedonia and Australia established diplomatic ties in 1995. After a decade Macedonia opened its Embassy in Canberra.

## **5.6. Ministry of Agriculture Gives State Land Under Lease Agreement**

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management issued in August an announcement offering 765 hectares of state agricultural land in the region of Kavadarci, Negotino and Demir Hisar under lease agreement. These lands are intended for plantations for periods varying between 15 and 50 years. Local physical and legal entities have the right apply, as well as foreign legal entities. Physical persons should be registered farmers and/or businessmen whose primary occupation is agriculture. Foreign legal persons have the right to apply unless they have registered branches in Macedonia, whose activities are mainly focused on agriculture.

## **5.7. Parliament backs changes to Law on Civil Servants**

Parliament endorsed in August the bill amending the Law on Civil Servants - one of the three laws required by Brussels in order Macedonia in the fall to obtain a positive European Commission report and a recommendation for launch of membership talks with EU. The law aims to establish a modern, professional and effective state administration that would work in line with citizens' rights and freedoms, unhampered by political influences. Amendments are proposed on the basis of a conducted analysis over the current situation and are focused on five areas - the scope of the state administration, revision of the jurisdiction and role of the Civil Servants Agency, employment of civil servants, mobility and promotion of civil servants as well as introduction of career system. The Law on Civil Servants in the last one included in the so called EU agenda, which the European Commission insists to be adopted. The Parliament has already adopted the laws on the financing of political parties and on Parliament.

### **5.8. Macedonia Celebrates 18th Independence Anniversary**

The Republic of Macedonia celebrate tomorrow on September 7<sup>th</sup> its 18th anniversary since the successful referendum, at which Macedonian citizens voted for independent and sovereign state. A convincing majority exceeding 95% of citizens who came out at the referendum on September 8, 1991 responded positively at the referendum question - *Are you in favor of independent Macedonia with the right of its accession in a future alliance of sovereign Yugoslav states?* The results from the referendum were preceded by the adopted Declaration for Independence at the first multi party Macedonian Parliament on January 25, 1991. The will of the people for independent state was confirmed with the declaration for acceptance of the results from the referendum on September 18, 1991 at the Macedonian Parliament. The next important step in strengthening of the state was the adoption of the Constitution on November 17, 1991, which was supplemented after the 2001 conflict and signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement.

The international-legal status of the state was definitely confirmed by an acclamation of the United Nations General Assembly on April 8, 1993, when Macedonia was admitted as the 181st full-fledged UN member. However, due to Greece's opposition and pressure regarding the constitutional name, the UN accession was carried out under interim reference Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM). Talks for overcoming of the name dispute are still ongoing under UN auspices. Macedonia today has already established diplomatic relations with 160 states worldwide and is recognized under its constitutional name by 125 countries, three of which members of the UN Security Council - China, Russian Federation and the USA.

### **5.9. Macedonian Expatriates Gain Right to Vote in Presidential and Parliamentary Elections**

Macedonian expatriates with temporary job or stay abroad as of September gain the right to vote for president of the Republic of Macedonia and for three Parliament deputies pursuant to Article 99 of the Electoral Code. It achieves the democratic right of Macedonian expatriates to elect head of the state and their representatives in the Parliament, directly presenting their positions and suggestions in an attempt to strengthen the long-standing link with their home country and to contribute to its development, the Ministry of Justice says in a press release.

### **5.10. Interview of OSCE Mission Head Herrero with Radio Free Europe**

»Progress has been achieved in many areas, but a lot remains to be done«, said Head of the OSCE Spillover Mission to Macedonia, Jose Luis Herrero in an interview with Radio Free Europe in September. "There is still necessity for

improvement of interethnic relations. As we can see today, peaceful coexistence is not sufficient, there is a need for more. We should come to a situation where richness of diversities becomes productive. It is not enough that people live peacefully with one another, but to live happy and move forward on the base of diversities, in order to create a wealthier country. This requires more work. As I said, we are still in a phase - hopefully at its end - where all communities are guaranteed their rights. Now we have to enter a stage of reconciliation of the two larger communities, so that coexistence is not only written in the Constitution, but results from the society's aspirations", stressed Herrero.

"We will focus on decentralization and administrative rationalization in municipalities. We are launching a large project, which will hopefully provide an additional contribution to the administration's professionalism. Moreover, we resume with our work in the field of rule of law, which is a key activity. I would like, together with our partners, to focus more on the essence of the rule of law, i.e. judiciary independence, which requires efforts. Finally, focus would also be put on the harmonization of multiethnic relations", underlined OSCE Mission Head Herrero.

Working group formed by government's decision which will work based on OSCE/ODIHR report on elections from last and this year on implementation of highest international standards started to work. "Every attempt for endangering the right to vote and free elections deserves most severe criticism and firm reaction of the institutions of the legal state. I am certain that all included representatives in this working group in the following months will prepare adequate recommendations and action plan aimed at next elections in Macedonia to be conducted in accordance with the highest standards of the international community", Deputy PM Vasko Naumovski said after the meeting.

Head of OSCE Mission to Macedonia Jose-Luis Herrero welcomed the initiative commenting that "OSCE is satisfied how this government accepted all notes and recommendations in OSCE/ODIHR report and I consider that they will be basis for additional system upgrading. I hope that none of the issues implied in the previous elections will be omitted, including here the most delicate one - voter's intimidation. Also it will be necessary to change the legislation referring to elections and the need of additional upgrade of administration capacities and upgrade and update of voter registration list", Herrero said.

## **6. POLICIES/EVENTS**

### **6.1. Yards Will be Sold for 1 EUR per Square Meter, Government Decides**

Macedonian citizens as of September are able to purchase yards of individual houses and apartment buildings for only one euro per square meter (so far, yards were sold for thirteen euros per square meter). PM Gruevski informed that lands under the jurisdiction or surrounding existing facilities for sports and recreation

(sport playgrounds, fields, sports halls...), infrastructural facilities (roads, power and thermal stations, water supply) and public institutions would be also sold for one euro per square meter. "The benefits of Government's latest measure are obvious - hundreds of thousands Macedonian citizens will once and for all obtain the ownership of yard properties for themselves and their offspring. It is a fair social process in which they will finally feel the benefits of the transition towards private ownership and establishment of market economy", noted the PM.

## **6.2. Macedonian Government Holds Open Session**

Macedonian Government in October held open session whereat ministers presented to prime minister undertaken activities in relation to meeting the criteria for EU integration process of the country. Deputy PM for European Affairs Vasko Naumovski said that in the upcoming EC Progress Report the entire progress that Macedonia and all ministries and institutions have made will be valorised. However taking into consideration that meeting the Copenhagen criteria is a process which will last until full-fledged EU membership, certainly there is much work to be done in this direction even after receiving the report.

Justice Minister Mihajlo Manevski said that court cases were reduced by 250.000 and in the sphere of police there are accomplished results in corruption cases discovery by 62%. Minister Jankuloska said that besides increase in corruption cases discovery, the number of resolving the cases also increases. Foreign Minister Antonio Milososki informed about process of visa liberalisation and anti-crisis measures were discussed. Education Minister Nikola Todorov referred to projects in his ministry and announced that seventh graders will receive free-of-charge textbooks for at least one month. He also announced that textbooks for vocational education will be available from next year. Minister of Transport Mile Janakieski said that public bidding for sale of construction land intended for buildings, malls, storey garages for parking will be announced in December and January. Health Minister Bujar Osmani informed about electronic medical card project, which is to replace the medical-care booklet, which is to start to be used in 2010 – 2011.

## **6.3. MANU to Set up New Editorial Board for Correction of Macedonian Encyclopedia**

After the severe reactions of the ethnic Albanian political factors in the country as well as by some civic organizations, the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts (MANU) decided in October to set up a new editorial board for the 'Macedonian Encyclopedia', which is to also include respectable representatives on non-majority communities. The new board should correct the parts of the book that are unacceptable from both scientific and social aspects. Competent authors, experts for particular topics and distinguished scientists, representing



the non-majority ethnic communities in Macedonia, should be included in this process, MANU said in a press release. At its session today, MANU Presidency concluded that some of the Encyclopedia's texts have not been reviewed, while none of MANU bodies (sectors, Presidency, Assembly) have reviewed the entire book. MANU Presidency doesn't concur with the contents and intonation of some texts of 'Macedonian Encyclopedia' and distances itself from them. »This in particular refers to some parts that treat the history and social relations in Macedonia, Albanian ethnic community, (Macedonia's) relations with the international community and certain countries« MANU said.

#### **6.4. PM Gruevski: Subsidies in Agriculture Resume**

»Government will resume to increase its subsidies in agriculture in the next three years, while with additional finances from Europe's IPA funds Macedonia will be a country will the highest agricultural support per capita in Southeastern Europe« stated PM Nikola Gruevski in September. »Subsidies will gradually increase from last year's Euro 45 million and this year's Euro 70 million - in 2010 they will amount to Euro 100 million, in 2011 Euro 115 million and Euro 130 million in 2012. There are many reductions, but in agriculture there won't be any. What we've promised must be fulfilled because agriculture is an essential branch in Macedonia - a sensitive field especially in times of global economic crisis«, said Gruevski. He added EU funds have praised the work of the Agency for Investment in Agriculture and the purpose of IPA finances. The PM noted the Government was making utmost efforts to aid wine growers, who are in delicate situation due to the global crisis.

#### **6.5. Macedonia Opened Embassy in Pristina**

Macedonia opened an embassy in Pristina at the end of October. "The embassy's opening will be accompanied by the FMs signing several agreements", reads "Koha Ditore".

The United States welcomed the establishment of diplomatic ties between Macedonia and Kosovo and their border demarcation agreement. "The United States warmly welcomes the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Macedonia and the Republic of Kosovo, as well as the successful completion of the demarcation of their shared border," the State of Department said in a press release. "We commend the leadership of both countries for their resolve in taking a significant step toward Euro-Atlantic integration by establishing good neighborly relations and enhancing regional stability. We also commend the International Civilian Office for its key mediation role in the completion of border demarcation, an important element of the Ahtisaari Plan," the press release reads.

Serbian Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremic said that the country has sent the strongest demarche to Macedonian representatives due to the border

demarcation agreement between the Skopje and Kosovo authorities. "The so-called border agreement comes as a result of an arbitrary decision by Pristina institutions and the Macedonian Government, being entirely unacceptable for us", stressed Jeremic in an interview with Belgrade daily "Vecernje Novosti". He implied Skopje has been notified that Belgrade reviews further steps in this regard.

## **6.6. The TV Debate that Attracted a lot of Interest**

How is it possible for you to be citizens of Macedonia and not to identify yourselves with that country and to spread nationalism and visions of Greater Albania instead? PDSH (DPA) leader Menduh Thaci and academician Ali Aliu were asked this question two days ago by Albanian intellectuals in a debate show on the Albanian TV Klan in October, in which the contentious Macedonian Encyclopedia was discussed. The Albanian intellectuals harshly criticized Thaci, saying his political party PDSH (DPA) and ruling BDI (DUI) promote hard-line nationalism in Macedonia.

At the onset of the debate show, the anchor of the Albanian TV asked his guests from Macedonia, Thaci and Aliu, whether the Encyclopedia was a provocation to ethnic Albanians or a historical truth. Aliu responded first, stressing that he did not believe that there is another history for Albanians and that it was true that the Encyclopedia-related debate escalated because of the composition of the editorial board. He said that "a man who is famous for his anti-Albanian views stood at the head of the editorial board. His team was made up of like-minded people and they created a suitable atmosphere to air their views outside MANU (Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts)".

DPA leader Menduh Thaci was asked whether is this political provocation or a constant position of Macedonian historians? He replied positively, and he asserted with great certainty that it is national and ethnic provocation to ethnic Albanians. "In my view, this is a direct political order and I believe the politics of the Macedonian Government toward ethnic Albanians stands behind this Encyclopedia" he added.

Maks Velo, Albanian writer and critic said: "I view this problem from afar, from here. My opinion has always been that Macedonia is the only country in the Balkans in which some its own citizens do not accept it. This means that these Albanians that sit opposite me (nodding toward Thaci and Aliu) claim that they are not citizens of Macedonia. They have always denied their country – Macedonia. They waged war against it. I cannot accept any of this. Neither can I understand it. These people (nodding again toward Thaci and Aliu) are part of Macedonia and cannot rise against their own country. Am I not right? You started war in the midst of Europe....The problem is also that both Albanian parties fight against each other. We saw that during the election you accused one another, while claiming that Macedonians are to blame for everything. These things are somehow beyond my ken. The extreme Islamism of the Albanian parties in

Macedonia is a much more serious problem...In my view, ..if you, Albanians in Macedonia, cannot lift yourselves to a higher cultural level, advance in the social life, stop discriminating against women, and build a civic society, then you will never be able to oppose Macedonians.”

Fatos Lubonja, Albanian writer and critic added: “I think that here, whether we like it or not, two visions of Albanians in the Balkans emerge. One is of a Greater Albania and these people who sit opposite us (nodding to Thaci and Aliu) have that vision....These people here have a vision that Albania should feed them as Serbia feeds the Serbs in Kosovo. It is their right to call for it. However, their nationalistic parties should declare their views clearly. Albania has other, more important problems. This is my opinion. Regardless of the fact that they are politicians, we are intellectuals after all. These people speak two languages. One is nationalistic, calling for Greater Albania. However, they should know things will not be the way they want, but the way Europe wants. Kosovo will always be a country with six stars and Macedonia will never be partitioned...”

Further Melo commented: “Unless we do not become Albanians with European goals, we will never be able to resist Macedonians properly. We should be on a higher level than they are. As long as we keep our women locked at home and with scarves on their heads we will never be able to par with Macedonians”.

Lubonja followed: “Divisions lead only to wars and misery. Therefore it is good, Mr. Thaci, for you, too, to identify yourself as Macedonian. To live in Yugoslavia and then Macedonia and to say you are unable to identify with the country in which you live is, in my view, big cultural deficiency. The vision of the Balkans has to be a European one, since these nationalistic theses with every new border line being drawn are making us poorer. I believe you should change your vision altogether, because we are not going to join Europe only as Albanians. We are going to Europe together with Serbia, Macedonia and Greece”<sup>10</sup>.

## **6.7. Ethnic Macedonians Take Part at Albanian Parliamentary Elections**

Party of Macedonians in Albania, Macedonian Alliance for European Integration (MAEI) held a rally in Pustec, thus encircling the election campaign for June’s parliamentary elections. Following the party's registration four years ago, participation in the local elections and the mayoral seat in Pustec, the party takes part for the first time at a parliamentary election with 76 candidates in 12 election districts. Party leader and Pustec mayor Edmond Temelko hopes for at least one MP seat. Although we are part of coalition 'Alliance for Changes', led by PM Berisha's democrats, our party has a separate list, for which Macedonians in Albania can vote for the first time", stated Temelko.

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<sup>10</sup> The debate show on TV Klan, in which apart from Thaci and Aliu distinguished Albanian intellectuals took part as well, can be found on some of the Macedonian web portals as well as on You Tube

## **6.8. Amendments to Coat of Arms Passed in the Assembly**

MPs with 58 votes in favor and eight against accepted in mid-October a motion amending the coat of arms of Macedonia. The motion envisaged removal of the red five-pointed star from the current state coat of arms. Elaborating the need of endorsing the motion, Justice Minister Mihajlo Manevski said it defined the appearance of Macedonia's coat of arm and thus the country would obtain its third state symbol. "Previously, a law on the coat of arms wasn't adopted and the one determined by the constitution of Socialist Republic of Macedonia from 1974 was in use. With this motion, the appearance of the state coat of arms is being determined as a symbol of Macedonia's statehood, which together with the flag and anthem of Macedonia are hallmarks throughout the world as state symbols of a country", said Manevski. Ruling deputies say the red five-pointed star has the relevance of past ideology and its removal will estrange the former system.

However, the opposition said the motion is submitted at a time when sensitive issues should be avoided and the removal of the red star has no historical justification. They consider the red five-pointed star to be a symbol of anti-fascism, not communism.

Parallel with the motion, opposition VMRO-NP party started a civil initiative for collection of 10.000 signatures their proposal law on coat of arms to be put before the MPs. They propose the coat of arms of the Republic of Macedonia to be golden-yellow lion at red background.

## **6.9. Relations With Bulgaria Tackled in Daily Newspaper "Utrinski Vesnik"**

Bulgaria's new Prime Minister Boiko Borissov was expected to return the faith of the European Union in the country through continued reforms and a continued fight against corruption and crime, but he was not expected to change the country's policy towards its neighbors, especially towards Macedonia, Macedonian daily Utrinski Vesnik said.

In an analytical piece published on July 30, the daily said that "despite relations between the two countries at every meeting by Sofia and Skopje representatives being described as good, the fact that Bulgaria does not recognize the Macedonian nation or language, that it does not recognize the Macedonian minority within the country and does not allow the registration of a Macedonian political party - OMO Ilinden - are questions that, over the past decades, time and again, have inflamed the relations between the countries."

Even though Bulgaria was the first country to recognize Macedonia's independence, it has always refused to recognize the existence of a separate Macedonian nation and a separate Macedonian language, arguing that they are subsets of the Bulgarian nation and the Bulgarian language. "If we add to this the continuous anti-Macedonian campaigns by historians and the media in Bulgaria,

supported by the government, and which is transferred to Macedonian territory through the local, unofficial association of Bulgarians, Radko, which has even led to incidents, it is clear that Borissov, whose government is supported by the smaller nationalist parties, does not calm the relations between the two countries," said "Utrinski Vesnik". As an illustration of Borissov's attitude towards Macedonia, the daily referred to an interview with Macedonian daily Dnevnik in 2008, when Borissov answered the question what his thoughts were about OMO - Ilinden by saying that he was not interested.

According to Utrinski Vesnik, Borissov's choice of the historian Bozhidar Dimitrov as minister responsible for Bulgarians abroad showed he did not have the intention to ease the tension between the two countries. Dimitrov was, according to Utrinski Vesnik, "one of the most vocal denouncers of the Macedonian nation." Quoting unnamed Macedonian sources, said to be familiar with the relations between the two countries and the situation in Bulgaria, Utrinski Vesnik said that "the arrival of Borissov would not change anything in the international policies of our neighbors."

#### **6.10. Ivanov Quits Jeremic's Reception in Protest**

Macedonian President Gjorge Ivanov cancelled his appearance at memorial supper on the occasion of the death of Serbian Patriarch Pavle, staged by Serbian Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremic, in protest of his statement that Serbia backs Greece's position in the name dispute with Macedonia. Ivanov, who already arrived in Serbia to personally extend his condolences and attend the funeral of Patriarch Pavle, cancelled his appearance at Jeremic's reception shortly after he heard his statement.

"President Ivanov expresses a deep disappointment. This unfortunate statement will not affect the relations between the two countries. Ivanov expresses regret that such a statement was made at the time of his visit to Serbia, at the time when the president was to extend condolences as neighbor to neighbor," President Ivanov's Cabinet said.

Following the event, was issued a joint communiqué of the Presidents of both countries, Boris Tadic and Gjorge Ivanov, released after their meeting in Belgrade: "Serbia has recognized Macedonia under its constitutional name and this position is not going to change" -it reads. The two presidents shared opinions on further development of the bilateral relations and development in the region. They reaffirmed each other support of the EU integration of their countries and in this respect commended Greece's initiative for all Western Balkan countries to join the Union by 2014, the communiqué reads.

Tadic welcomed the presence of Macedonia's state, church officials at the funeral of Patriarch Pavle. Moreover, the President have encouraged a resumption of the church dialogue for settling the open issues, which is rather significant for further strengthening of the traditionally close ties between the two nations. Tadic and

Ivanov have different positions on Kosovo status, but share same interests in the region's stabilization.

### **6.11. SDSM Criticizes the Government**

By the end of the year, media speculated about possible early elections to be held in Macedonia in the first half of the year. Denying such rumors, PM Gruevski said that early elections are not planned, while SDSM's fear is understandable taking into account the citizens' support for this opposition party. He also commented on the interview of SDSM leader Branko Crvenkovski: "SDSM deals with issues that go against the country's interests. It is peculiar that Crvenkovski presents the Greek positions, which claim that we are the ones to be blamed. Greek opposition supports the Government in the struggle to promote their positions, but the situation is vice versa in Macedonia. In a way, our opposition assists the other side by declaring us the guilty ones. We are guilty of not allowing the nation's depersonalization, our erasing, a complete change of the country's name, identity, language. In this context, I am guilty", stressed Gruevski.

On the other hand, SDSM stated that early elections will be inevitable if PM Nikola Gruevski sleeps over the next six months, period granted by EU Council to bring his country closer to the EU and NATO. Branko Crvenkovski's party said it regrets that Gruevski sees the snap polls as an issue if somebody is afraid of elections. SDSM urged Gruevski to stop seeking guilt in everyone but himself and to finally comprehend that the post of prime minister brings privilege and family business but also requires responsibility towards the nation and the state.

## **7. PARTY DEVELOPMENTS**

### **7.1. SDSM Party Changes and Congress**

After the unsuccessful elections in 2008, SDSM has undergone deep changes, starting from radical party cadres change that took place on the 10th party Congress after which by decision of the Central Committee of the party there were elections for new party leadership in all local party organizations. The idea was to conduct the same extent of party changes on the local level like those that took place on the top, assuming that the main motor for change should be located in the party base. This process started from mid-June and finished by September. SDSM claims to have newly elected local leaderships out of which 80% of the people are having a function in the party for the first time, 95% are having high education and many of them are holding MA or PhD titles.

In September the party held its 11th Congress, for which was prepared and presented the new party program named »Solutions for Macedonia«. SDSM also improved its Statute, symbol, anthem and announced to create a shadow

government (the names of its members are to be announced in 2010). The party's goal is to animate the passive party members as well as to attract the votes of the undecided. »This is a party program which reopens euroatlantic perspectives and returns the international ugled of the country..it is a program that is turned towards the future of the living and not towards the monuments and museums of the long deceased« said SDSM leader Branko Crvenkovski.

However, at the Congress were absent most of the former representatives of the Left who are not currently members of the newly elected party bodies.

The program was prepared by 150 experts from various fields and represents a comeback effort towards the original principles of the Left, like freedom, equality, solidarity, dialogue and tolerance, corporative management, socially responsible market economy. It claims to have solution for the most important problems that the country faces: 1. securing sustainable economic development and dealing with difficult social problems; 2. democracy development and protection of human rights and freedoms; 3. continuous hamonization of interethnic relations in the country; 4. rule of law and efficient politically neutral functioning of the state institutions; 5. success in the eurointegration process. »We, in SDSM believe that only strong, developed and democratic Macedonia, fully integrated in NATO and EU, shall be capable – in the auspices of the family of civilized peoples – to nurture and develop its national and cultural identity. SDSM is firmly positioned to keep the Macedonian national identity.«-it says in the Program.

Accent is put on measures of which is expected poverty diminishing and improvement of the standard of living for every individual. SDSM promises a long-term economic growth of 6%, investors' trust return, equal treatment of domestic and foreign investors, realistic budget and strengthening of budgetary discipline, private sector employment stimulus, etc. In the monetary policy domain the party strives for low and stable inflation and stable foreign currency exchange rate.

In the foreign policy domain are mentioned five strategic goals: full EU membership, NATO membership as a guarantee for the country's security, building good neighbourly relations on equal basis, promoting Macedonia as initiator for cooperation among countries of the region and professional and well-spread diplomatic net. »Significantly large majority of the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia are for EU and NATO membership and that is an obligation which every government must respect and realize it. For that is necessary capability, real patriotism and statehood capacity...SDSM strives for external policy based on building friendships and firm relations on regional, european and world level. We want to lead foreign policy based on dialogue, negotiations and building friendly relationships...we do not wish for isolationist politics turned twards the past. Republic of Macedonia does not deserve to be left in the waiting room, we would like to open the doors to friendly states and sit on the same table with

them. That way we shall be stronger, our voice shall be heard and our state interests shall be realized« - is said in the program.

SDSM believes that disputes with Bulgaria and Greece as a remnant of the historic events and of destructive nationalism cannot block cooperation between the states. For the dispute with Greece it is said that the debate for the injustice towards Macedonia can be lead between intellectuals and citizens, while external politics should strive to find solutions. »SDSM believes that external politics has no role in getting into the dispute about the objective injustice and irrationality upon which are based the disputes which especially the one with Greece represent an obstacle not only for normalizing of the relations between the two countries, but also for the Euroatlantic integration of Macedonia. The debate about the injustice that has been done to Macedonia can be lead amongst intellectuals, publicists and citizens, while external politics should be based on finding exit solutions«.

## **7.2. The Creation of »Demos« NGO Institute**

Various politicians have presented different stances on the opening of »Demos« NGO institute in November 2009. Some consider that »Demos« aims at raising the political awareness and boosting dialogue whereas according to others, it will work against the opposition. Former SDSM members Nikola Popovski and Gjorgi Spasov, former PM Ljubco Georgievski and LDP, NSDP and New Democracy leaders Manasievski, Petkovski and Selmani, respectively, attended the opening ceremony of the Institute. SDSM member Radmila Sekerinska was present, whereas SDSM leader Branko Crvenkovski was not invited. According to SDSM the opening of the Institute is the idea of PM Gruevski, while Nano Ruzin (LDP) said that »Demos« only goal is to defeat VMRO-DPMNE. On the other hand, Radmila Sekerinska (SDSM) stated that »Demos« according to all documents and informations was not formed to rule, but to help to the Macedonian political alternative. As long as that is the case, she confirmed that will stay as member of the Demos Council.

## **8. PUBLIC OPINION POLLS**

### **8.1. Unemployment - Biggest Problem for Macedonians, Eurobarometer Poll Shows**

Most Macedonians are generally satisfied with their lives, however unemployment and the current economic situation cause them worries. Nevertheless, the people in Macedonia are optimistic for the future, show results from a Eurobarometer poll conducted in the first half of 2009. 61% out of 1.009



Macedonian citizens engaged in the poll respond they are generally satisfied with their lives<sup>11</sup>.

Only 19% of the respondents say they are satisfied with job opportunities. For a high 64% of the polled, unemployment is the biggest problem, while the current economic crisis is the cause of worry for 49%. Purchasing power has plunged for 40% of Macedonians, for 19% it has improved and remained the same for 41%. More than half of the population in Macedonia (52%) fear from increasing poverty. 64% of the respondents deem EU membership would be favorable for Macedonia and 74% believe it will boost the national economy. For comparison, the support for EU membership in Turkey is 39% and in Croatia 29%.

## **8.2. International Republican Institute poll - VMRO-DPMNE Enjoys Highest Rating Amongst Parties**

According to the IRI - International Republican Institute poll conducted amongst 1.106 respondents from June 25-29, 31% of the citizens in Macedonia would vote for VMRO-DPMNE party if elections were held today. The poll shows that 12% would vote for SDSM and DUI each, 3% for New Democracy, while 16% of the respondents have not decided yet. The poll was conducted prior to the announcement of European Commission's recommendation for visa liberalization, amid speculation for alleged government reshuffle and the influence of the global economic crisis over the national economy. Many of the polled (93%) are in favor of a NATO membership for the country. Most of them believe Macedonia will join EU in 6,2 years.

An October 16-21 poll conducted by the International Republican Institute (IRI) shows that 32% of respondents said they would vote for VMRO-DPMNE if parliamentary elections were held tomorrow, which represents a two-percent increase from the last IRI poll in June. 11% of respondents would give their vote to SDSM, followed by DUI (10%), DPA and New Democracy (3%), United for Macedonia (0.7%), whereas 12 percent were undecided.

Pertaining to politicians, Nikola Gruevski is trusted by 25% of respondents, followed by Branko Crvenkovski (7%), Ali Ahmeti (6%), Imer Selmani (5%) etc. When asked "Do you favor Macedonia's EU and NATO accession", 96% and 94% respectively answered affirmatively. Regarding the timeframe of accession, people think that Macedonia will enter the EU in 5,5 years and NATO in 3,8 years.

Still, polls that have been conducted by the end of 2009 by this and by other agencies as well note a decline in the VMRO-DPMNE support, which is said to be moving about 25-26%. This trend is not presented publicly gladly or willingly by the party on power, but it surely points on a downward trend that may continue in the near future.

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<sup>11</sup> The EU average is about 75%. Within the Union, Danes are the most satisfied (98%), followed by Finns (97%), Swedes (96%), while Bulgarians (34%) are the least satisfied.

## 9. FUTURE POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENTS

In the first half of 2010 are expected some developments regarding the “name issue” with Greece, which is inevitably the key factor that predetermines the upcoming political developments in the country. Presently, the changed milieu in Greece, after the elections may present a somewhat improved climate for better contacts between the two sides, however that alone is not a guarantee that a definite solution will be reached. Perhaps there will be arranged some kind of agreement that will evolve in phases, that will consist of defined predetermined steps in previously set timeframe. If that is achieved, the country will at last unlock its rapprochement process to NATO and EU.

If the situation remains status quo (due to various reasons primarily vested in the attitude of the ruling VMRO-DPMNE party), are expected unfavourable situations above all in the interior political situation, resulting in shaky relations between the coalition partners in government. The unresolved “name issue” shall further tensions among the ethnic Albanian parties, as well as among the ethnic Macedonian divisions of “patriots” and “traitors”. The Democratic Union for Integration as the ethnic Albanian party in power would not feel comfortable in its position in government, sensing that priorities of its electorate may start to differ from the official government ones. Therefore, there is a possibility of this party leaving the government, thus producing an actual fall and government recomposition. As there are no political parties directly interested for early elections, with the possible exception of VMRO-DPMNE (although this party currently claims not interested for the matter) the country may be looking at a future catch-all government that may be able with joint forces to deal with the “name issue”.

Opposition consolidating trends are going at a slow pace, due to the non-unifying forces that prevail. SDSM is regaining its strength, and although there is a visible increase in support among the citizens, the party is still not reaching the support level of its main opponent VMRO-DPMNE. Other opposition parties that had been SDSM partners in the past (LDP) are presently not in good terms with them. The ethnic Albanian political block other than the current main player (DUI) and its opponent DPA, has been subdued to some diversification, due to the emergence of New Democracy (Imer Selmani's party). This process may lead to future interesting trends among this electorate.

Economic trends are also viewed as status quo at least or taking an unfavorable turn (as a late backlash of the worldwide economic crisis), especially if the “name issue” is not resolved. As a result of that, social tensions are possible.