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European Union Mission, Skopje

Nº 3/2009

## ***EU TAKES STEPS TOWARDS VISA-FREE TRAVEL AND ENCOURAGES REFORM ON THE BENCHMARKS***

In the past three months, the relations between the EU and the country were marked by a number of high level visits to Skopje and the holding of the Stabilisation and Association Council. High Representative Solana came on a regular visit to the country in July, followed by the visit of Commissioner Rehn aimed to review the progress on the benchmarks and to underline the major step achieved with the proposal of the European Commission on visa free travel. In September, the Commissioner for Education and Culture, Jan Figel' came to Skopje to open the XIVth edition of the Biennale of Young Artists from Europe and the Mediterranean.

During his visit in Skopje on 23 July, Commissioner Rehn met with President Gjorgje Ivanov, Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski and Parliament Speaker Trajko Veljanovski. He addressed a formal session of the National Council for European Integration, also attended by representatives of a great number of civil society organisations and the media.

"There is a real chance for fulfilment of the benchmarks and in the autumn, the country could receive a recommendation for starting the negotiations with the EU. All depends on the results which the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia will deliver in the next two months," Commissioner Rehn said at the press conference held with the Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski.

[continues on page 3](#)



### **European Commission proposes lifting of the short-term visas**



On 15 of July, the European Commission confirmed its long standing commitment to visa free travel for the people of the Western Balkans with

[continues on page 3](#)

### **Commissioner Ján FIGEL' opened the Biennale of Young Artists**



On 3 September, Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, Ján Figel' paid a two-day visit to Skopje, taking part in the ...

[continues on page 11](#)

## Page 3

- Eu Takes Steps Towards Visa-Free Travel And Encourages Reform On The Benchmarks
- European Commission Proposes Lifting Of The Short-Term Visas

## Page 4

- Sixth Meeting Of The Stabilisation And Association Council
- High Representative Solana Visited The Country

## EU Assistance . . . . . page 5 to 8

- Financing Agreement Of The Regional Development Component Signed
- Interview With Miguel Angel Torres Segura, The Brave Spanish Judge
- The Twinning Project: Development Of Capacities To Combat Money Laundering (Phase II) Completed
- Bringing Municipal Services Closer To The Citizens
- European Films At The "Manaki Brothers" Film Festival
- Europe Day At The Ohrid Summer Festival

## EU Policies . . . . . page 9 to 10

- News From European Parliament

## Bienalle . . . . . page 11

- Commissioner Ján Figel' Opened The XIV Biennale Of Young Artists From Europe And The Mediterranean – Seven Gates: Skopje Biennial 2009

## EU InfoCentre . . . . . back page



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- [www.eu2009.se](http://www.eu2009.se) Swedish presidency of the Council of the European Union
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## EU TAKES STEPS TOWARDS VISA-FREE TRAVEL AND ENCOURAGES REFORM ON THE BENCHMARKS

continues from front page

In his address to the National Council for European Integration, Commissioner Rehn said that he was impressed by the quality and speed of the reforms implemented as part of the visa liberalisation roadmap and said that if that approach was applied with comparable determination on the reforms related to the benchmarks, the date for negotiations could become reality. Rehn also noted that the list of requirements to be met for starting the negotiations with the Union was getting shorter and that the European Commission would assess progress on the basis of the established criteria for opening accession negotiations.

Answering to questions from the audience, Commissioner Rehn encouraged the authorities to keep up the momentum of reforms and meet the outstanding benchmarks before the publication of the Commission's Progress Report on 14 October.



Olli Rehn addresses the National Council for European Integration

## EUROPEAN COMMISSION PROPOSES LIFTING OF THE SHORT-TERM VISAS

continues from front page

the adoption of a proposal for lifting the short-term visas for the citizens of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. The decision was officially announced by EC Vice-President Jacques Barrot and EU Commissioner for Enlargement Olli Rehn at a press conference in Brussels. "This is a historic moment in our relations with the Western Balkan countries. Visa liberalization will enable closer and more frequent relations between the citizens of these three countries and the citizens of the Schengen zone," Barrot said.

The Commission's proposal needs to be approved by the Council after having consulted the European Parliament. Once the Regulation on visa free travel is embedded, citizens of the country holding biometric passports will be able to travel and stay up to 90 days in all Schengen countries. This will facilitate people to people contacts, enhance the business opportunities and give the possibility to get to know the EU better. "Visa free travel means no more queuing at embassies, no more collecting of supporting documents such

as invitation letters, tickets, no more costs for their translation and no more visa fees. The citizens of these countries will be able to visit family and friends, spend holidays without having to undergo lengthy and cumbersome administrative procedures," stated Commissioner Rehn.

When presenting the European Commission's proposal Vice President of the Commission in charge of Justice, Freedom and Security Jacques Barrot said: "Our proposal brings truly good news to the people of the Western Balkans. I know how much visa free travel means to them. Today's proposal is the result of intensive and hard work for the authorities and the people of these countries in meeting the conditions. I congratulate them for this achievement". Visa free travel is possible only if the necessary conditions are met. This is why the European Commission launched a dialogue on visa liberalisation with the Western Balkans countries in early 2008. On the basis of tailor-made roadmaps prepared by the Commission, the countries have made important progress in improving passport security, in

strengthening border controls, in reinforcing the institutional framework to fight organised crime and corruption, as well as in external relations and fundamental rights.

The Commission has been thoroughly monitoring their preparations. The conditions were the same for all countries involved in the visa liberalisation dialogue. In its assessment of the implementation of the roadmaps in May 2009, the European Commission considered that the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia had met all the necessary conditions for visa liberalisation. For Serbia and Montenegro the liberalisation of the short term visa requirement would depend on fulfilment of all remaining open benchmarks of their respective roadmaps by the date of adoption of this proposal by the Council. Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina still need to continue their efforts to get a positive recommendation from the Commission. If the pace of reforms is maintained and if all the conditions are fulfilled, the Commission could envisage making a new proposal including these countries by mid-2010.

## SIXTH MEETING OF THE STABILISATION AND ASSOCIATION COUNCIL

The Stabilisation and Association Council between the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the EU (SA Council) held its sixth meeting in Brussels on 27 July 2009. The meeting was chaired by Antonio Milošoski, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Deputy Prime Minister Mr. Vasko Naumovski and Deputy Prime Minister Mr. Abdulaqim Ademi also attended the meeting. The EU delegation was led by Mr. Carl Bildt, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sweden. Mr. Carlos Fernandez-Arias, PSC Ambassador, Spain, Michael Leigh, Director General of the European Commission's Directorate General for Enlargement, and Mr Zoltan Martinusz, Director in the General Secretariat of Council also attended the meeting, together with the EU Special Representative and European Commission Head of

Delegation for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Erwan Fouéré.

The SA Council welcomed the positive assessment that the country has met all the benchmarks of the road map for visa liberalisation and the legislative proposal of the European Commission to establish visa free travel regime for the citizens of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The SA Council noted that the Council of the EU will examine the proposal without delay, in order to achieve a visa-free regime, ideally each by 2010.

The SA Council noted the country's primary objective and strong commitment to advance in the EU integration process by opening accession negotiations and welcomed the progress made in the implementation of key priorities of the Accession

Partnership. The SA Council recommended to the Government to keep up its efforts in order to fully meet the benchmarks related to the opening of the accession negotiations before the next Progress Report of the Commission. As regards alignment with the acquis, the SA Council noted that the country has made legislative progress in various areas such as electronic communications, customs, taxation, the internal market and competition. Continued efforts are needed to strengthen the capacity of the administration to implement and enforce the acquis. It welcomed the revised version of the National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis (NPAA) and the practice by the authorities to annually update the NPAA on the basis of the Commission's Progress Report.

[http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/en/er/109450.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/er/109450.pdf)

## HIGH REPRESENTATIVE SOLANA VISITED THE COUNTRY



The EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) Javier Solana visited the country on 14 July and met with the PM Nikola Gruevski, DUI leader Ali Ahmeti and with the leader of SDSM

Branko Crvenkovski.

At the joint conference with the PM Gruevski, Mr. Solana emphasized:

- I know that visa liberalisation is an important issue. It will be resolved and I hope in the next couple of days you will receive good news. It will help the citizens in the country, especially the young to travel freely and to get closer with people of the EU states. He expressed satisfaction on the relations between the country and the EU.

- Today I'm not bringing a date (for start of membership negotiations) but I bring spirit of constructiveness and good cooperation. We are especially satisfied from the way the country moves during the economic crisis

dealing with it in an intelligent manner, which is shown by economic indicators. PM Nikola Gruevski informed Mr. Solana on the country's efforts for gaining date for the start of pre-accession talks, the situation in the country and in the region.

- The country is in the final phase of completing the benchmarks. I assured Mr. Solana that we will make our best in finishing the foreseen tasks in the following period and the government is fully focused on having a successful period, Gruevski said. Dr Solana recommended the country to continue with the process of reforms and implementation of the laws related to the Ohrid Framework Agreement.

### EUSR Mandate Extended

On 15 September 2009, the European Council officially extended the mandate of the European Union Special Representative in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Erwan Fouéré, for a further 6 months to 31 March 2010. The joint action under which this decision was taken came after discussion and agreement amongst all of the member-states. EU Special Representative Fouéré's mandate is to contribute to a peaceful political process, and the full implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, thereby facilitating further progress towards European integration. In the first example of its kind, when he was initially appointed as Special Representative, he was also named as the Head of the European Commission Delegation, thus uniting the different functions of the EU present in the country.

## EU Assistance

### FINANCING AGREEMENT OF THE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMPONENT SIGNED



Ambassador Erwan Fouéré and Deputy Prime Minister Vasko Naumovski sign the Financing Agreement

On 14 September 2009, EU Special Representative and Head of the Delegation of the European Commission, Erwan Fouéré, and the Deputy Prime Minister in charge of European Affairs, Vasko Naumovski, signed the Financing Agreement of the Regional Development component of the pre-accession assistance (IPA). The Strategy for assistance under Component III, in line with the priorities set out in the Accession Partnership

for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, will support investment in the environment and transport sectors in order to contribute to the sustainable development in the country, environment protection as well as to the country's economic and social development, and its regional integration. One of the main purposes of component III is to prepare the country for future effective delivery of Structural Funds following the accession. The Commission granted the conferral of management powers for IPA component III (Regional development).

In July 2009, the Commission granted the conferral of management powers for IPA component III (Regional Development) to the authorities. The IPA regional development programme in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia can now really get started. Its wider strategic

objective is to contribute to sustainable development and the regional integration of the country into the Western Balkans. To this end, Community aid in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia will be concentrated initially on the transport and environment sectors, whereas regional competitiveness is expected to be incorporated at a later stage.

An overall allocation of almost € 80 millions for the years 2007-2009 (40,5 millions from IPA and app. 38 millions from national sources) will be dedicated to the following priorities:

- Priority 1: Completion of Corridor X Motorway
- Priority 2: Upgrading and Modernisation of the Transport Infrastructure
- Priority 3: Improvement of the Environmental Infrastructure

### Review of Labour Legislation

On 14 September, the closing conference of the twinning project Review of the Labour Legislation took place at the Business Hall of the Skopje Fair. The final conference presented the project's achievements and outcomes based on the mutual cooperation and partnership between the twinning parties: the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic and Regional Development Agency Senec-Pezinok, Bratislava Region.

The Twinning project brought together experts from the two countries to improve the capacity of the country in aligning the national labour legislation in the areas of labour law, anti-discrimination and equal treatment, as well as health



and safety at work with the EU legal provisions.

The project reviewed the labour policy and provided recommendations for the necessary revisions of the labour legislation needed to provide more and better jobs to the citizens of this country as well as to further align the working

conditions with the EU standards. Trainings for the stakeholders in charged to implement the legislative changes have also been provided.

The Twinning Project provided extensive assistance to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and social partner's representatives and other relevant stakeholders to ensure institutional capacity in fulfilling the planning, regulation, reporting and information requirements arising from the European legal provisions in the three above-mentioned areas.

The Twinning project "Review of the National Labour Legislation" was financed by the European Union for an amount of 0,54 million EUR.

## INTERVIEW WITH MIGUEL ANGEL TORRES SEGURA, THE BRAVE SPANISH JUDGE

*The Spanish Judge Miguel Angel Torres Segura took part in one of the conferences organised as part of the Twinning project "Development of Capacity to Combat Money Laundering – Phase II". In this edition of the newsletter we are publishing excerpts of the interview with Mr Torres Segura, provided with courtesy of the weekly magazine Forum (published on 19 June 2009).*



**Forum:** Who is Mr. Torres and what is his legal experience?

**Judge Torres:** I have been working as a judge in Spain for 12 years already and I gained the majority of my experience as a judge on the Spanish coast in the region of Marbella, where in the four years I spent there, I conducted many operations and cases of money laundering, corruption, drug trafficking, etc.

There is still resonance from some of those verdicts.

**Forum:** Was the verdict in the Malaya case the highlight of your career?

**Judge Torres:** Yes, this is the biggest success in my career, though I hope it will not be repeated again. It is no easy task to disrupt the interest of people from whom you have confiscated over one and a half billion dollars.

**Forum:** A few days training at the Twinning project for strengthening our capacities for prevention of money laundering in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia are ahead of you. You had a chance to meet Macedonian judges at the round tables and workshops. Could you draw a comparison between the two countries money laundering judicial practices?

**Judge Torres:** When we exchanged views with the colleagues at the round table, we found there is a lot in common between the two countries and our colleagues here are experiencing similar problems to the ones we are facing. The only difference is that our problems in Spain are on a greater scale as Spain is a much bigger country with a larger population.

This also means that we are a little bit more experienced than the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia when tackling issues of this nature. Also, the high influx of international funds means that this area is on a higher priority and of greater importance than in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Saying that, the problems and obstacles we are facing in this field are pretty much the same. In my opinion the goals and the intentions that the authorities in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia have when it comes to money laundering i.e. the directions and the ideas they have are very similar to the ones their Spanish counterparts have, since this is an area of crime gaining momentum in every country.

**Forum:** In the end, are you optimistic that justice will prevail in the fight against organized crime?

**Judge Torres:** It is unrealistic to have aspirations of total eradication of organized crime. We have to focus on the fact that the battle is hard, persistent and lengthy and that crime will not vanish. On the contrary, it will only get more organized as this will always be the easiest way to gain material wealth.

### Call for Proposals under Cross Border Cooperation programme with Bulgaria launched

Under the present Call for Proposals launched within the CBC programme between Bulgaria and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia an indicative amount of 4.1 million EUR are available for the project proposals from both partnering countries. Project proposals would have to target one of the following priority areas: 1) Economic Development and Social Cohesion and 2) Improvement the quality of life. The full Application Package may be downloaded from the following internet site:

<http://www.ipa-cbc-007.eu/en/page.php?c=4>

## TWINNING PROJECT: DEVELOPMENT OF CAPACITIES TO COMBAT MONEY LAUNDERING (PHASE II) COMPLETED

The twinning project Development of Capacities to Combat Money Laundering (Phase II) marked its completion on 9 September at a closing conference.

This project was part of the efforts of the European Commission to help strengthen the capacities for preventing and combating organised crime. The fight against money laundering and terrorist financing has been a top priority of the European Union for a number of years, based on the need to protect the financial system from contamination and misuse, and to aid the efforts to combat organised crime and terrorism.

The 3rd Anti Money Laundering Directive (Directive 2005/60/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of 26 October 2005) on the prevention of the use of the financial system for the purpose of money laundering and terrorism financing builds upon previous EU legislation and incorporates into the EU law for the larger part the standard of the Financial Action Task Force, the international standard setter in the fight against money laundering and financing of terrorism. The Directive is applicable to the financial sector as well as to lawyers, notaries, exchange offices, accountants, real estate agents, casinos, trust and company service providers. However, successfully fighting money laundering and combating terrorist financing requires more than legislation.

Effective enforcement of that legislation is the other and often more difficult part of the work. Money launderers and terrorist financiers might exploit the inadequacies in a national system, as well as those existing between jurisdictions.

The twinning project, implemented in partnership with the Institute of Fiscal studies of Spain, supports the country's preparation towards EU

accession, thus contributing to the government's own efforts to develop a functioning system to prevent money laundering and financing of terrorism, as well as to enable the authorities to co-operate internationally in accordance with European and International standards.

The project's objective was to support the Office for Prevention of Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism (OPMLFT) to further develop its capacities in accordance with the law on prevention of money laundering and financing of terrorism

The Twinning project was structured in two components:

The project provided training not only to the staff from the Office for prevention of money laundering and financing of terrorism, but also to the relevant staff in Ministry of Interior, financial police, Customs administration, Public Prosecution Office, courts and Ministry of Justice, Public Revenue Office, Securities and exchange commission, and the National Bank. A total of 81 activities have been undertaken in 92 weeks involving 93 experts from Spain, Bulgaria, Belgium, Italy, Slovenia, England and Austria, with over 1000 participants from different public or private institutions. The project, worth €1.5



1. Strengthening the administrative and technical capacity of the OPMLFT, as a unit for collecting, processing, analysing and disclosing of information about suspicions of money laundering and financing of terrorism.

2. Strengthening the inter-institutional cooperation between OPMLFT and the reporting institutions, the Public Prosecution Office, judges and the other law enforcement agencies.

million, has been implemented by the Spanish Institute for fiscal studies and the Macedonian Office for prevention of money laundering and financing of terrorism.

The EU-funded project "Development of capacities to combat money laundering – Phase II" was launched in September 2007, with a budget of €1,5 million and with a duration of 27 months.

## BRINGING MUNICIPAL SERVICES CLOSER TO THE CITIZENS

The European Union supports the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in achieving rapid progress in the implementation of the decentralisation process in particular with the strengthening of the municipalities' capacity in financial management and management of transferred competences and assets through training, consultancy and provision of equipment.

One of the major outcomes of the project 'Support to Decentralisation Process' is the establishment of fully operational Municipal Service Centres in 36 partner municipalities.

EU assistance includes refurbishment of the premises and provision of the furniture, IT hardware and tailor made Document Management System software in order to provide better services to the citizens, having the motto "circulate the papers, not the customers". "Opening of the Municipal Service Centre in Valandovo has great importance for our municipality, because the new way of our work will improve the quality of the municipality's services to the citizens. I hope we will have a perfectly functioning Centre; the gained knowledge at the trainings received

throughout the year will immensely contribute to it", said Mr Ivan Gligorov, employee at the Municipal Service Centre in Valandovo.

The European Union continues to assist the country in its efforts to strengthen the administrative capacities to supervise and facilitate the decentralisation process at central level, in particular of the Ministry of Local Self Government and of the Ministry of Finance in relation to fiscal decentralisation as well as the line ministries in their own areas of competence.

## EUROPEAN FILMS AT THE "MANAKI BROTHERS" FILM FESTIVAL

The 30th International Cinematographers Film Festival "Manaki Brothers" opened on 26 September in Bitola, with the screening of the British film *Slumdog Millionaire*, directed by Danny Boyle (2008). The Festival's programme encompassed selection of 11 short film nominees for the European Film Awards, 13 films in official competition, 6 documentaries, 5 films in "New Visions Programme" and many others in the additional programmes of the Festival. As part of the Festival's activities, a panel discussion entitled: The future of cinema is digital? was organised in collaboration with the European



Ambassador Erwan Fouéré hands over life achievement award to the British cinematographer Peter Suschitzky

Film Academy and participation of prominent cinematographers, such as Antony Dod Mantle (Cinematographer of the film *Slumdog Millionaire*), Yuri Klimentko, Danny Elsen,

who analysed the technical and aesthetic aspects of the topic.

Ambassador Erwan Fouéré handed over Life achievement award Golden Camera 300 to the British Cinematographer, Peter Suschitzky.

Actress Victoria Abril honoured the festival with her presence.

This year's Festival has been supported by the EU Mission's Information and Communication Programme, thus communicating diversity of European cultures and the art of film to the public.

## EUROPE DAY AT THE OHRID SUMMER FESTIVAL



On 9 August, the traditional Europe Day Concert at the Ohrid Summer Festival took place at St. Sofia Church, one of the most magnificent monuments in the country. In collaboration with the Swedish Embassy and the Ohrid Summer Festival, concert of two famous Swedish artists, Maximilian Bratt (violin) and Carl Ponten (piano) was organised. The Europe Day at the Ohrid Summer Festival was started in 2007. Sweden participated in this year's edition as part of its EU presidency programme.

## NEWS FROM EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

### Jerzy Buzek, New President of the EP



Jerzy Buzek was elected new President of the European Parliament on 14 July, with a vast majority of votes. The 69-year-old Polish MEP and former Primer Minister will lead

this institution until January 2012. President Buzek is the first President of the European Parliament to come from Central and Eastern Europe following the EU's enlargement in 2004. Describing his election as 'an enormous challenge and a great honour', the former activist of the 'Solidarność' trade union said that once his ambition had been to be a member of parliament in a free Poland, but now he was President of the European Parliament. He saw this as 'a measure of how Europe can change'.

Looking ahead to the challenges facing the EU, such as unemployment, energy security and climate change, Mr Buzek stressed that 'we first need the Lisbon Treaty so that the Union can be well-organised and effective'. The main points of his inaugural speech delivered on 15 September

included calls for an active policy towards the EU's partners in South Europe and neighbours in the East, promotion of democracy and good governance, strategic partnership with Russia, China, India and other emerging economies such as Brazil and South Africa, as well as working on the global stability, where the most important point is the Middle East.

As Polish Prime Minister, Buzek initiated accession negotiations with the EU in 1997 and guided Poland into the NATO structures in 1999. He was founder or co-founder of prominent science networks on environment and atmosphere protection, as well as of Polonia School of Diplomacy. In the years 2002-2004, he was Vice-rector of the Polonia University in Częstochowa.

### José Manuel Barroso, Re-elected President of the European Commission



By an absolute majority of votes (382 MEPs voted for him, 219 against and 117 abstained), the European Parliament re-elected on 16 September José Manuel Barroso as President of the European Commission for a new five-year term. Visibly moved, President Barroso thanked MEPs for the confidence shown in him. He also expressed gratitude to the members of the European People's Party for being the first to support his programme, as well as Portugal, his home country, which supported his candidacy for the post of President of the EC. Interpreting the vote as 'an acceptance of the ambitious programme for a Europe of freedom and solidarity' put forward recently, he restated his 'determination' to work closely with MEPs 'to build an even stronger Parliamentary democracy'.

## New Composition of the Delegation of the European Parliament to the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC)



**Dr Jorgo Chatzimarkakis,**  
new co-chair person (JPC)

Dr Jorgo Chatzimarkakis was first elected MEP for the German Liberal Party in 2004 and was a member of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy and of the Committee on Budgetary Control (in the latter he is coordinator for the liberal ALDE-group). In the 6th term of the European Parliament, he was Rapporteur for the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme. Chatzimarkakis studied agriculture and political sciences in Bonn and Oxford; holds a PhD in political science, obtained from the University of Bonn in 2000.

### Other members



**Jiří Havel,**  
Czech Republic,  
Group of the Progressive  
Alliance of Socialists and  
Democrats -  
**1st Vice President**



**Athanasios Plevis,**  
Greece,  
Europe of freedom and  
democracy Group -  
**2nd Vice President**



**Olle Ludvigsson,**  
Sweden, Group of the  
Progressive Alliance of  
Socialists and Democrats



**Anni Podimata,** Greece,  
Group of the Progressive  
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Confederal Group of the  
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Nordic Green Left



**Milan Zver,** Slovenia,  
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ny, Group of the European  
People's Party



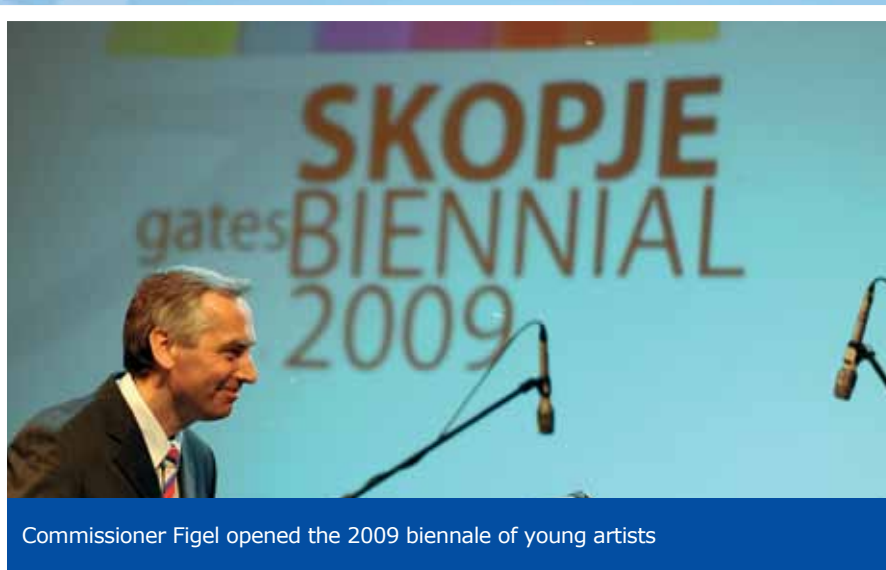
**Zoran Thaler, new rapporteur  
of the EP for the country**

Slovene MEP Zoran Thaler (member of the group of social democrats) will be the new rapporteur for the country in the European Parliament over the next five years. Mr Thaler, also a former Slovene foreign minister, is succeeding to the outgoing Dutch MEP Erik Meijer.



## COMMISSIONER JÁN FIGEĽ OPENED THE XIV BIENNALE OF YOUNG ARTISTS FROM EUROPE AND THE MEDITERRANEAN – SEVEN GATES: SKOPJE BIENNIAL 2009

On 3 September, Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, Ján FigeĽ paid a two-day visit to Skopje, taking part in the opening of the XIV edition of the Biennial of Young Artists from Europe and the Mediterranean – Seven gates (3-12 September 2009) at the main square of the capital. With the ten-day Biennial, under the patronage of Commissioner FigeĽ, Skopje will receive more than 700 artists from 46 countries and their creations will be exhibited in the public spaces of the city, which will become a meeting point for intercultural dialogue. "I am happy that this edition of the Biennial of Young Artists from Europe and the Mediterranean takes place in 2009, which is the European Year of Creativity and Innovation. There is nothing like culture and arts to better promote peaceful and constructive dialogue across political and cultural borders", stressed FigeĽ at the opening. The Biennial is supported by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), responsible for the management of certain parts of the EU's programmes in the fields of education, culture and audiovisual.



Commissioner FigeĽ opened the 2009 biennale of young artists

On the same day, Commissioner FigeĽ took part in the panel discussion on "EU opportunities for youth and students from the Western Balkans", held at the EU InfoCentre. He said, "European Commission took measures to make more and more scholarships available for the students of the Western Balkans in the framework of the Erasmus Mundus Programme and a new wider scholarship scheme targeting students at all levels and academic staff". Since 2004, nearly 1,200 students or scholars from the Western Balkans countries benefited from the two Erasmus Mundus Mobility schemes, including approximately 130 students and academic staff from the country. He encouraged the students to take full advantage of the extended opportunities offered under the EU's Erasmus programme for mobility. Furthermore, Commissioner FigeĽ addressed the participants at the 3rd informal meeting of Cultural Contact

Points (4-5 September 2009). Cultural Contact Points from Austria, Bulgaria, The Czech Republic, Croatia, UK, Finland, France, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Montenegro and their host – the Cultural Contact Point from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, gathered at the EU InfoCentre in Skopje. The objective of the meeting was to address the new challenges that the CCPs are facing in the implementation of the Culture Programme 2007 – 2013. The Minister of Culture, Ms Elizabeta Kančeska Milevska, also addressed the participants.

As part of his visit, Commissioner FigeĽ met the Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski, the Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration Vasko Naumovski, the Minister of Education Nikola Todorov as well as with the Minister of Culture Elizabeta Kanceska-Milevska.



### Promotion of the book "Europe at the Crossroads"

On 15 July 2009, the book 'Europe at the Crossroads' by Goran ILIK was promoted at the EU InfoCentre in Skopje.

The book was introduced by Ambassador Erwan FOUÉRÉ and Prof. Slavejko SASAJKOSKI.

During the short presentation of the book, the author explained that 'Europe at the Crossroads' is divided into three thematic parts and each part presents relevant and complementary thematic frame aimed at elaborating, defining and concluding the key aspects of the concrete issue under research – the Lisbon treaty and its implications on the foreign policy identity of the EU.

The three parts of the book are - the EU as a political union, the Treaty of Lisbon and EU's foreign policy identity and integration phase, as well as the role that the Union plays in the promotion of a new world order.



Ambassador Erwan Fouéré and the author of the book Mr Goran Ilik

During  
the summer period  
**July-September 09,**  
**EU InfoCentre**  
team welcomed **1207** visitors  
answered over **140** visitor's  
**EU related** questions  
and disseminated  
**7930**  
publications

### Press conference on raising awareness about Mobbing

On 31 August 2009, several NGOs held a press conference at the EU InfoCentre in Skopje on the efforts for creation of network for advocacy of the rights of the victims from mobbing.

Dragan TRAJCEV, from the NGO Permaculture and Peacebuilding from Stip, Gjuner NEBIU, from the NGO Antiko from Skopje, and Nadir REDGEPI, from the NGO Sonce from Tetovo explained the aims of the project "M.O.B.B.I.N.G.- Building Network of First generation of CSO's for representing the rights of victims of mobbing". The project is supported by the EU under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR).

An awareness raising campaign entitled "Mobbing - stand against it" was launched at the press conference.

### Transfer of the EU presidency from the Czech Republic to Sweden

On 07 July a press conference focused on the transfer of the EU presidency from the Czech Republic to Sweden took place at the EU InfoCentre.

Swedish Ambassador Lars FRÉDEN elaborated the priorities in the next six months during the Swedish presidency.



The coming six months will be characterised by both change and renewal. The newly elected European Parliament will begin its work and a new Commission will be appointed. The conditions for cooperation will change if the Treaty of Lisbon enters into force. The biggest and most important challenges are the economy, employment and climate", explained Ambassador Fréden.

He pointed out that the continued enlargement process is of strategic importance to ensure peace and progress in an open and united Europe.

Referring to the enlargement process, EUSR and Head of the Delegation of the European Commission in Skopje, Ambassador Erwan FOUÉRÉ stressed that the visa liberalization is an excellent example of what can be accomplished when there is political will to meet the criteria. He said that the efforts for meeting the EU benchmarks should be redoubled prior to the European Commission Progress Report in autumn.

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