

# **EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

## **DELEGATION FOR RELATIONS WITH THE COUNTRIES OF SOUTH-EAST EUROPE**

### **INFORMATION NOTE**

#### **ON THE WORK OF THE DELEGATION FOR RELATIONS WITH THE COUNTRIES OF SOUTH-EAST EUROPE UP UNTIL THE END OF THE 5<sup>th</sup> LEGISLATURE**

**DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR  
EXTERNAL POLICIES OF THE UNION**

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4 May 2004  
SMZ/pel/sw

The European Parliament's delegation for relations with South-East Europe has been in charge of interparliamentary relations with five countries in South-East Europe, i.e. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (now Serbia-Montenegro), and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

The delegation was constituted on 17 November 1994. It should be noted that in 1994 a separate delegation responsible for relations with Slovenia was established with a view to a future European Agreement. In the meantime, that delegation has become the European Parliament Delegation to the European Union-Slovenia Joint Parliamentary Committee, pending Slovenia's accession to the European Union. Albania was included in the same delegation as Romania and Bulgaria between 1991 and 1994, when it became part of the Delegation for relations with South-East Europe.

**Work of the Delegation for relations with the republics of former Yugoslavia and, subsequently, for relations with South-East Europe**

<b><u>Chairmen:</u></b>	1981 - 1984	Vincenzo BETTIZA (LDR, Italy)
	1985 - 1986	Lieselotte SEIBEL-EMMERLING (PES, Germany)
	1987 - 1989	Julian GRIMALDOS GRIMALDOS (PES, Spain)
	1989 - 1994	Paraskevas AVGERINOS (PES, Greece)
	1994 - 1999	Doris PACK (EPP, Germany) <sup>1</sup>
	1999 - 2004	Doris PACK (EPP, Germany) <sup>1</sup>

**Meetings and missions 1981 - 1994:**

- 3rd meeting: Strasbourg, 12-15 January 1981
- 4th meeting: Belgrade, 4-6 October 1982
- 5th meeting: Strasbourg, 16-18 January 1984
- 6th meeting: Belgrade, 16-19 September 1985
- 7th meeting: Strasbourg, 20-22 October 1986
- 8th meeting: Belgrade, 1-5 December 1987
- 9th meeting: Strasbourg, 13-16 March 1989
- visit of an ad hoc delegation: Belgrade, 28 May - 1 June 1989<sup>2</sup>
- 10th meeting: Belgrade, 11-13 February 1991 and mission to Kosovo on 13 and 14 February 1991
- Ad hoc delegation: monitoring of referendum in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 29 February - 1 March 1992

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<sup>1</sup> Chairman of the Delegation for relations with the countries of South-East Europe.

<sup>2</sup> At the invitation of the Federal Assembly of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, a delegation from the European Parliament visited Belgrade from 28 May to 1 June 1989 and unsuccessfully attempted to carry out a fact-finding visit to Kosovo, about which Parliament had expressed concern in a resolution (11 April 1989).

- 1st EP-Slovenia and EP-Croatia interparliamentary meetings: Ljubljana and Zagreb (22-26 November 1992)
- Ad hoc delegation: Mission to Zagreb and Sarajevo (9-11 May 1993)
- 2nd EP-Slovenia interparliamentary meeting: Strasbourg (27-28 October 1993)
- 2nd EP-Croatia interparliamentary meeting: Strasbourg (17-18 November 1993)
- Ad hoc delegation: Mission to Zagreb and Sarajevo (16-19 October 1994)

### **Work of the Delegation for relations with Albania ( Bulgaria and Romania)**

**Chairman:** 1991 - 1994 Alexander LANGER (V, I)

#### **Meetings and missions 1991 - 1994:**

- Ad hoc delegation: Election observation, 31 March 1991 (Tirana)
- Ad hoc delegation: Election observation, 20-22 March 1992 (Tirana)
- 1st EP/Albania interparliamentary meeting: 14-17 July 1992 (Tirana)
- 2nd EP/Albania interparliamentary meeting: 25-27 May 1993 (Strasbourg)

### **Work of the Delegation for relations with South-East Europe**

#### **1. Relations with Albania**

##### **Meetings and missions:**

- 3<sup>rd</sup> interparliamentary meeting: Brussels, 23-24 February 1995
- Ad hoc delegation to Albania: Tirana, 2-3 June 1997
- Ad hoc delegation for election observation: Albania, 27-30 June 1997
- 4<sup>th</sup> interparliamentary meeting: Tirana, 25-27 November 1997
- Tri-parliamentary missions of the EP and the parliamentary assemblies of the OSCE and the Council of Europe: Tirana, 23 January and 1 July 1998
- 5<sup>th</sup> interparliamentary meeting: Brussels, 9-10 November 1998
- Ad Hoc Delegation for Observation of the Constitutional Referendum in Albania, 20-23 November 1998
- 6<sup>th</sup> interparliamentary meeting: Tirana, 23-24 November 1999
- 7<sup>th</sup> interparliamentary meeting: Brussels, 20-21 November 2000
- Ad hoc delegation for election observation : Albania, 22-25 June 2001
- 8<sup>th</sup> interparliamentary meeting: Tirana, 11-12 October 2001
- 9<sup>th</sup> interparliamentary meeting: Brussels, 9-10 September 2002
- 10<sup>th</sup> interparliamentary meeting: Tirana, 27-28 October 2003

##### **Subjects discussed:**

The development of democracy and the economic reform to bring about a working market economy have been central topics in the interparliamentary dialogue between the European and Albanian parliaments at the first three meetings. Among other specific themes can be mentioned the question of the Greek minority in Albania, the problems in the neighbouring Kosovo and the future EU-Albanian relations.

The parliamentary elections of May-June 1996 in Albania cast a shadow over the democratisation process of the country and consequently the delegation decided to postpone the interparliamentary meeting scheduled for September 1996. The collapse of the pyramid schemes and the wide-spread political and social turmoil which led to the formation of an interim government composed of all major political forces were carefully followed by the delegation. The European Parliament decided to send ad hoc delegations to examine the situation in the country before the extraordinary parliamentary elections and to observe the first round of the elections in June 1997. Despite some serious shortcomings, the elections were deemed acceptable in the particular circumstances and the EP delegation called on the new parliament and government, as well as all the political parties, to co-operate in the spirit of reconciliation. This message was also conveyed at the 4<sup>th</sup> interparliamentary meeting held in November 1997 and it was reiterated in connection with the joint missions of the European Parliament and the parliamentary assemblies of the Council of Europe and the OSCE in January and July 1998. The European Parliament Delegation attached great importance to the process of drafting a new constitution for Albania and also sent an observer delegation to the referendum in November 1998. In other fields, the EP delegation has stressed the importance of raising the standards of democracy and human rights and to improve public order and internal security in the country. It has pointed out that prompt measures were needed to combat the alarming levels of criminal activity, trafficking, smuggling and corruption. The delegation has examined the efforts by the Community assistance and the WEU Mission in Albania.

Starting with the 6th meeting in 1999, the main topics for discussion included preparing Albania for the association and stabilisation process in the Western Balkans as a whole and the need for not just administrative and judicial reforms but also economic reforms. The need to settle personal disputes and, in general, to move away from a by now antiquated confrontational approach to politics was also discussed.

The local elections held in Albania in October 2000 were judged by international observers to have been conducted in a generally satisfactory manner, despite the occurrence of a few incidents.

Although the interparliamentary meeting held in 2000 focused on a number of new issues such as the environment, public health and education, one of the main topics for discussion was once again the rule of law and action to combat organised crime and trafficking in human beings, which often takes the outward form of illegal immigration.

The European Parliament decided to send an ad hoc delegation to Albania in June 2001 to monitor the parliamentary elections, which marked a further advance towards full respect of international standards governing democratic elections, as illustrated *inter alia* by the important role played by the mass media.

Despite this, the final report of the international monitoring organisations and the conclusions of the 8<sup>th</sup> interparliamentary meeting drew attention to various irregularities. The European Parliament delegation proposed that the Albanian partners review the electoral law and called on the opposition parties to return to Parliament so as to be able to play to the full their political role as a democratic opposition.

At the 9th interparliamentary meeting, the participants focused on the need, after the positive achievement represented by the consensual election of a new President of the Republic, to further stabilise political life in the country, to finish the work concerning the revision of the electoral law and to improve media-related legislation and human rights practises.

The economic situation, with infrastructures, energy and privatisation needs, was also debated along with the problems of organised crime, corruption and mal-functioning of the judiciary.

The parliamentarians also gave strong signals of encouragement to Albania for the completion of all necessary preparations for the negotiations of an Association and Stabilisation Agreement.

At the 10th interparliamentary meeting, parliamentarians welcomed the adoption of the new electoral code but also had to underline the shortcomings which occurred on the occasion of the October 2003 local elections and ongoing internal struggles in the Government. The conclusions also took into account the problems of the economy and those related to the fight against organised crime. The opening of negotiations for an SAA was welcomed and the need to continue serious reform and to guarantee implementation capacities were recalled.

## **2. Relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina**

### **Meetings and missions:**

- Ad hoc delegation for election observation in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Bosnia and Herzegovina, 11-16 September 1996
- Ad hoc delegation for election observation in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Bosnia and Herzegovina, 12-15 September 1997
- Meeting with Mr Milorad Dodik, Prime Minister of the Serb Republic: Brussels, 3 March 1998
- Ad hoc delegation for election observation in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Bosnia and Herzegovina, 10-14 September 1998
- 1<sup>st</sup> interparliamentary meeting: Strasbourg, 10 March 1999
- 2<sup>nd</sup> interparliamentary meeting: Sarajevo, 20-21 June 2000
- 3<sup>rd</sup> interparliamentary meeting: Brussels, 9-10 July 2001
- 4<sup>th</sup> interparliamentary meeting: Sarajevo, 27-28 June 2002
- Ad hoc delegation for election observation in Bosnia and Herzegovina: 5 October 2002
- Ad hoc delegation to Bosnia and Herzegovina (on the EUPM - European Union Police Mission-): 7-9 May 2003
- 5<sup>th</sup> interparliamentary meeting: Brussels, 9-10 July 2003

### **Subjects discussed:**

The political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been one of the central topics in the work of the delegation. After the end of hostilities the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement, the situation in Mostar and humanitarian assistance by the European Union were discussed in the meetings of the delegation.

The European Parliament sent a delegation of 14 members to observe the first post-Dayton elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1996 on the invitation of the OSCE. The delegation considered the holding of the elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina as a first step towards democracy and stability in a country which less than a year before had been at war. It also pointed out the serious shortcomings in the freedom of media in the election campaign and indicated out important deficiencies: there was no freedom of movement in the country, there were serious problems with the electoral lists and rules and regulations as well as in the organisation of the so-called absentee polling stations where people cast their votes choosing to vote for candidates of their pre-war residence without actually physically returning there. The delegation also called for the prolongation of the mandate of IFOR troops and the continuation of a strong EU presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The European Parliament also observed the first municipal elections which were held in September 1997 and reiterated its belief that greater cooperation should replace divisions in the country. The delegation urged the EU to accelerate the disbursement of reconstruction measures to democratically accountable municipalities. The delegation underlined its support to the moderate new leadership in the Serb Republic at a later stage by inviting the moderate Prime minister, Mr Dodik, to its meeting in March 1998.

There was yet another election observation delegation to Bosnia and Herzegovina in September 1998. The delegation expressed its disappointment with the organisation of the elections by the OSCE Mission and called for a more direct participation of the European Union in the work of the Mission. On a more general political level, the delegation recommended that the following objectives be supported by the EU Democracy Foundation: training of teachers and officials responsible for education and culture, preparation of country-wide school textbooks and organisation of inter-ethnic roundtables for politicians. The delegation also underlined the importance of the proper functioning of common institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the consolidation of democracy and rule of law in the whole territory.

The full and uncompromised implementation of Annex 7 of the Dayton Agreement concerning the return of refugees and displaced persons and the restitution of properties was one of the conclusions of the 1<sup>st</sup> interparliamentary meeting which was held in March 1999. It was even indicated that the High Representative should not hesitate to remove officials from their positions if they refused to implement the return plan. Job creation and other economic revitalisation were mentioned as key areas of assistance activities.

The delegations also addressed the need to consolidate the functioning of common institutions and especially to improve the work of the Parliamentary Assembly. They called on all Serbian elected members to participate constructively in the work of all common state-level institutions and expressed their support for the EU/BiH Consultative Task-Force aiming at helping the country to become a fully-functioning State and to prepare for closer cooperation with the EU.

At the 2<sup>nd</sup> interparliamentary meeting, the European Parliament delegation pointed out that the international assistance could not be maintained at the same level for a long period of time. It therefore encouraged the common institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina to operate on their own and, as far as possible, to find their own sources of funding. The issues of the return of refugees, restitution of refugees' property, establishment of the rule of law, genuine

cooperation between political movements and the need for the Bosnian State and Bosnian citizenship to take precedence over ethnic and national affiliations were also discussed at the meeting.

The third interparliamentary meeting focused a little more on the need to prepare Bosnia and Herzegovina for the association and stabilisation process, the prerequisites for which were full implementation of the Dayton agreements, the adoption of electoral and property laws, the establishment of a single economic area for the whole country, and reform of the police.

In more general terms, the European Parliament emphasised the need for reconciliation and tolerance, the reorganisation of civil society and genuine cooperation between the various political groupings in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

At the 4th interparliamentary meeting, participants welcomed the signals of better co-operation among the political forces and urged them to do everything to allow the State Institutions to function effectively; they expressed the view that Bosnia and Herzegovina should develop and consolidate as a single economic area, through more efficient management of State finances and economic reforms. The issues of justice and home affairs were also discussed and, finally, on the SAP and on regional co-operation, Members expressed satisfaction at progress achieved and encouraged further steps.

During the election observation mission of October 2002, the EP delegation confirmed the Institution's long-standing commitment to the process of consolidation of democracy in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the country's participation in the SAP. These elections were considered to be the most important since the Dayton Peace Agreement, because they were organised and conducted by the authorities of the country and because the institutions being elected had been given a longer mandate (4 years) than in the past.

EP observers concluded that voting took place in a calm and peaceful atmosphere, and the voting procedures were conducted generally in a well-ordered and efficient way. The chair of the EP election observation delegation, Mrs. Doris Pack, called on the elected representatives to continue the process of national reconciliation and to create conditions for sustainable return, and to assume ownership of the process of tackling the country's main challenges by implementing the necessary economic and legal reforms and co-operating in mutual trust for the strengthening of the State.

During the ad hoc delegation to Bosnia and Herzegovina of May 2003, the main purpose was to assess the European Union Police Mission, which had started on 1st January 2003, and in particular its future needs and funding. The conclusions of the EP ad hoc delegation had to take into account the need to enhance visibility of the EU in the country, the insufficient Government's performance to keep electoral promises and their insufficient ownership of the reform process, as well as the weakness of administrative capacities, and the increasing importance of the rule of law agenda. The delegation noted that there was no progress in the economy, yet, and wondered whether the OHR imposed decisions were always appropriate. Concerning the EUPM, the delegation noted that some players already wished for an extension of its mandate and that serious shortcomings were affecting the local police: different structures mixed between police and politics, low salaries, inappropriate methods of investigation.

At the 5th interparliamentary meeting, the parliamentarians insistently asked Bosnia and

Herzegovina's Parliament to strengthen its legislative role, welcomed the significant reform of the complex system of government which should allow the State's Institutions to function more effectively and to be self - sustainable -. In their final declaration, the chairpersons considered that the time had already come for a gradual reduction of the role of the OHR, addressed important questions belonging to the fields of justice and home affairs and to the economic sector, and, after welcoming the conclusions of the Thessaloniki European Council, looked forward to the outcome of the Feasibility Study for the possible opening of negotiations for a Stabilisation and Association Agreement.

### **3. Relations with Croatia**

#### **Meetings and missions:**

- 3rd meeting: Zagreb, 22-24 March 1995
- 4th meeting: Strasbourg, 17-18 July 1996
- Meeting with General Klein, UNTAES<sup>1</sup> and representatives of ethnic communities of eastern Slavonia: Brussels, 26 February 1997
- Ad Hoc Delegation for election observation: Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and western Sirmium, 12-14 April 1997
- 5<sup>th</sup> meeting: Vukovar and Zagreb, 18-20 June 1997
- 6<sup>th</sup> meeting: Brussels, 2-3 February 1998
- 7<sup>th</sup> meeting: Zagreb and Dubrovnik, 20-22 April 1999
- 8<sup>th</sup> meeting: Brussels, 3-4 April 2000
- 9<sup>th</sup> meeting: Split, 25-27 March 2001
- 10<sup>th</sup> meeting: Brussels, 20-21 March 2002
- 11<sup>th</sup> meeting: Zagreb, 24-25 March 2003
- 12<sup>th</sup> meeting: Brussels, 17-18 February 2004

#### **Subjects discussed:**

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> interparliamentary meetings there was a wide exchange of views on the political and economic situation in Croatia including the return of refugees and displaced persons, the situation in eastern Slavonia, the rights of minorities, media freedoms, transport and communication links and the economic stabilisation and privatisation programmes.

The EP delegation pointed out the crucial role of Croatia in the peace process in the neighbouring Bosnia and Herzegovina and urged the Croats to reinforce their efforts to enhance the democratisation of their society and to secure the full respect for the Dayton Peace Agreement. The EP delegation took the view that the EU could have used its instruments in a more pro-active way as far as the consolidation of democracy in Croatia is concerned.

The European Parliament sent an ad hoc delegation to the local elections in eastern Slavonia, Baranja and western Sirmium in April 1997 to observe what it perceived as “the first important

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium.



step toward a peaceful reintegration of the area into Croatia". This matter was also discussed at the 5<sup>th</sup> interparliamentary meeting in June 1997 when the delegation also visited Vukovar. In the conclusions, the delegation urged the Croatian Government to facilitate the return of displaced persons and called for more EU assistance to this purpose and to start the TEMPUS and PHARE Democracy Programmes to support the democratisation and opening of the Croatian society. These same points were reiterated at the 6<sup>th</sup> meeting in February 1998 when both the delegation of the European Parliament and the Sub-Committee of the Croatian Sabor for relations with the European Parliament emphasised that the return of refugees and displaced persons was a cornerstone of the peace and reconciliation process. The need to assist all ethnic communities impartially was also mentioned, as was the need to give back properties to their original owners.

At the 7<sup>th</sup> meeting the delegation stated that Croatia's contractual status with the EU should be upgraded as soon as the key requirements concerning the reform of the electoral law, democratisation of the state television and the continuation of the programme for the return of refugees have been fulfilled. This should happen in the general framework of the Stability Pact for South-eastern Europe as proposed by the German Presidency. Provisions for training of young civil servants in matters relating to the EU institutions, exchanges of university students and the organisation of European studies in Croatia were singled out as important policy objectives where the European Commission should take appropriate action to build bridges between Croatia and the EU.

The eighth interparliamentary meeting welcomed the continuation of the democratisation process and the efforts made by Croatia to liberalise the media and provide public funding for education, science, cultural activities and public health. Despite this, concern was expressed about the country's economic difficulties and unemployment levels. The situation should improve as Croatia was brought more closely into line with EU structures and the region as a whole became more stable.

The regional approach (normalisation of relations, the inviolability of borders and sovereignty, stepping up economic relations and trade) was one of the main topics of the ninth meeting, which also focused on improving overall working conditions for the media, cooperation with the Hague Tribunal, thorough judicial investigations of war crimes, a sound policy on the return of refugees and the economic measures to be taken. The two delegations also welcomed the revision of the Constitution and called for further efforts to be made to reduce the backlog of court cases.

The stabilisation and association agreement between Croatia and the European Union was signed on 29 October 2001 in Luxembourg.

At the 10th interparliamentary meeting, the parliamentarians underlined that Croatia should continue to strengthen the rule of law, and broadly discussed the situation of the media, stressing the importance of pluralism and independence from political pressure. In the framework of the SAP, the two delegations expressed their conviction on the convergence of Croatian and EU priorities and stressed the important role to be played by Parliaments in monitoring the implementation of the various obligations assumed in the SAA.

On the economy, parliamentarians addressed detailed recommendations to the Government. Other topics discussed were refugee return, minorities and co-operation with the ICTY.

At the 11th meeting, the parliamentarians welcomed and supported Croatia's application for EU

membership, which had been submitted the month before, and recalled that it reflects a natural aspiration and a right which belongs to each country of South East Europe. The two delegations reiterated recommendations on refugee return, national minorities (although welcoming the adoption of a constitutional law on this matter), the judiciary, public radio and television, fight against crime and terrorism and, of course, co-operation with the ICTY.

At the 12th meeting, the final declaration looked forward to the European Commission's opinion on Croatia's application and asked the Council to take a prompt decision, if that opinion was positive, so that the accessions negotiations would start before the end of 2004. The joint statement of the two chairpersons also referred to necessary reforms in the field of the judiciary, public administration, fight against corruption and crime. Open issues with neighbouring countries were mentioned also, for the first time.

#### **4. Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, as from 4 February 2003, State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, including Kosovo**

##### **Meetings and missions:**

- Meeting with Mr Ibrahim Rugova, president of the Democratic Union of Kosovo (LDK): Strasbourg, 16 April 1996
- Meeting with the leaders of the Serbian opposition, Messrs. Draskovic and Djindjic and Ms Pesic: Brussels, 8 October 1996
- Ad Hoc Delegation to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: Belgrade and Pristina, 23-25 February 1997
- Meeting with Mr Milo Djukanovic, President of Montenegro: Brussels, 26 May 1998
- Meeting with representatives of Kosovo Albanian political leaders: Brussels, 10 November 1998
- Ad hoc visit to Kosovo: 31 May-3 June 2000 (fact-finding visit to gather information on implementation of UNMIK and European Union Agency for Reconstruction projects)
- Fact-finding visit to Montenegro: 18-19 June 2000
- Visit to Belgrade by the delegation's bureau: 15-16 October 2000
- Ad hoc visit to Belgrade: 8-10 February 2001
- Fact-finding visit to Kosovo: 10-11 October 2001
- Ad hoc delegation to monitor the elections in Kosovo: 15-19 November 2001
- EP-FRY 1<sup>st</sup> interparliamentary meeting: Belgrade, 3-4 December 2001
- EP-Kosovo 1<sup>st</sup> informal interparliamentary meeting: Brussels, 2 December 2002
- Fact finding visit and EP-Kosovo 2<sup>nd</sup> informal interparliamentary meeting: Pristina, 3-5 March 2004

##### **Subjects discussed:**

As a result of the international embargo against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the deficiencies in the democratic development and the serious situation in Kosovo, there were no formal institutional relations between the European Parliament and the Parliament of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia between the beginning of the conflict in Bosnia and the stepping down of Milosevic after the federal presidential elections of 2000. The delegation has

nevertheless followed the general situation in the country very carefully with a special emphasis on the situation in Kosovo and Montenegro and on the freedom of the media in Serbia.

Following the conflict in Kosovo and the NATO military intervention in Yugoslavia and, in particular, the establishment of the United Nations Interim Administration mission (UNMIK) in Kosovo, and the European Agency for Reconstruction, the delegation closely monitored developments and, of course, the implementation of expenditure for the various reconstruction and democratisation projects. The delegation re-established political contacts in the autumn of 2000, immediately after Milosevic was replaced as President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. These contacts led to the 1st European Parliament-Federal Republic of Yugoslavia interparliamentary meeting being held in Belgrade in December 2001, and to the organisation of two informal interparliamentary meetings with a delegation of the Kosovo Parliamentary Assembly.

The two main issues discussed at the 1st interparliamentary meeting were the FRY's future constitutional set-up and the uncertainty caused by the possible secession of Montenegro, and co-operation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.

According to an agreement, brokered by the European Union and signed in Belgrade on 14 March 2002, the Parliaments of Serbia and Montenegro adopted at the end of January 2003 the Constitutional Charter of "Serbia and Montenegro" (a loose Union which must replace the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia). On 4 February 2003 the new State Union of Serbia and Montenegro was proclaimed and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia formally ceased to exist. The two partners in the new Union are semi-independent states with their own currencies, tax systems and external tariffs. However, on the international scene, the country will be represented as one entity. It has a president (Svetozar Marovic), a five-minister executive (defence, foreign affairs, external economic relations, internal economic relations, human and minority rights) and a 126-seat parliament (which held its inaugural session on 4 March 2003).

During 2002 and 2003 it did not prove possible to organise interparliamentary meetings with the State Union.

Regarding Kosovo, the fact-finding delegation of October 2001 met representatives of the Serb community, and discussed their participation in the forthcoming elections for the self-governing provisional Institutions. Other talks were with the UNMIK (EU Pillar), the OSCE, with various leading political figures, with the European Agency for Reconstruction and with some representatives of the EU Member States. The overall conclusion of the visit was a strong recommendation to the Serb political leaders to introduce their lists of candidates for the Kosovo general elections, to the Serb community to vote, an absolute condemnation of any form of terrorism, intimidation or discrimination towards any of the communities living in Kosovo, and, finally, the commitment of the European Union and notably of the EP for the monitoring and support of the democratisation process of Kosovo.

At the election observation mission in November 2001, the parliamentarians welcomed the peaceful atmosphere of the election and the chair of the EP delegation declared that the people of Kosovo were ready to take a larger part in managing their own affairs and that the elections opened the way for a more balanced partnership with the international community.

The first informal EP-Kosovo IPM was intended to be a first "bilan" one year from the elections

of the provisional self-government Institutions. Parliamentarians discussed items such as the working methods and competencies of the Kosovo Parliamentary Assembly, the situation of the Serb community in Kosovo, the role of the international community, and notably, of the UNMIK.

At the second informal EP-Kosovo IPM, parliamentarians discussed the activity of the Kosovo Parliamentary Assembly and the position of some Serb parliamentarians and members of Government, the standards for a democratic and multi-ethnic Kosovo, the co-ordination between the UNMIK and the provisional self-government Institutions, the boycott of Parliament by the Serb members and the situation of minorities in Kosovo. No press release or official statement were published at the conclusion of the informal IPM. The provisional self-government institutions did not give the impression to be in a position to function effectively.

The programme of the fact-finding visit comprised meetings with representatives of the European Agency for Reconstruction, the EU Member States, the EU Pillar of UNMIK, the Ombudsman, the Prime Minister, the Head of UNMIK, the President of Kosovo, the Inter-Ministerial Co-ordinator for Returnees and Communities, as well as visits to Housing, Schooling and Enterprise Development Projects in Magura and Gracanica.

## **5. Relations with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**

### **Meetings and missions:**

- Visit of a working group: Skopje, 30 October - 2 November 1995
- 1<sup>st</sup> meeting: Skopje, 26 November 1996
- 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting: Brussels, 29-30 September 1997
- 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting: Ohrid, 2-4 June 1998
- 4<sup>th</sup> meeting: Brussels, 15-16 March 1999
- 5<sup>th</sup> interparliamentary meeting: Skopje, 22 November 1999
- 6<sup>th</sup> interparliamentary meeting: Ohrid and Skopje, 10-11 July 2000
- 7<sup>th</sup> interparliamentary meeting: Brussels, 22-23 January 2001
- Bureau visit: Skopje, 5-6 October 2001
- Bureau visit: Skopje, 30th May-1st June 2002
- Ad-hoc delegation for election observation: 13-16 September 2002
- 8<sup>th</sup> interparliamentary meeting: Skopje, 27-28 September 2003
- 9<sup>th</sup> interparliamentary meeting: Brussels, 20-21 January 2004

### **Subjects discussed:**

There was a permanent Parliamentary Group, now Committee, for Co-operation with the European Parliament in the Assembly of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia with whom the EP delegation has met.. The main topics of the first meetings have been the country's relations with its neighbours and the EU, the internal political, economic and in particular inter-ethnic situation. Special attention has been given to the position of the Albanian minority in the country.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting, held in September 1997, noted the improved relations between the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and its neighbours and assessed the development of the relations with the EU positively. The recommendations made by the EP delegation at the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting concerning the implementation of the PHARE programme, co-operation with EU officials and in the field of inter-ethnic relations were by and large met before the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting held in March 1999. In the joint declaration the chairpersons of the delegations noted with satisfaction that the parliamentary elections in November 1998 had been free and fair and that the democratic transition of power proved the country's commitment to parliamentary democracy. The inclusion of a party representing the Albanian minority in the government coalition was also mentioned as a factor of stability. The declaration supported the wish of the Cooperation Council to upgrade the contractual relations between the European Union and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and called for an early opening of negotiations for association of the country to the EU.

Given the decision of the Council of the European Union of 21 June 1999 to invite the Commission to present a formal recommendation for negotiating directives for a Stabilisation and Association Agreement, a further meeting was held in 1999 between the EP delegation and the Macedonian partners (fifth interparliamentary meeting). The holding of an extraordinary meeting served to emphasise the European Parliament's support for the association and stabilisation process and, in general, the stepping up of relations between the two bodies. The EP delegation again made a point of encouraging Macedonia's political leaders to cooperate more closely with the neighbouring countries and to ensure equal treatment for all sections of the population in Macedonia.

The joint statement adopted by the two delegations at the end of the sixth interparliamentary meeting drew attention to both political (administrative, educational and social security reform) and economic priorities. It drew particular attention to the stabilisation and association process and the process of bringing Macedonia more closely into line with EU structures (discussions on judicial and home affairs, visas, and the conclusions of the Santa Maria da Feira European Council on the prospect of considering the Balkan States as potential candidates for EU membership), and commended Macedonia for the constructive role it was playing in the region and as a signatory of the Stability Pact.

The seventh interparliamentary meeting held in Brussels in January 2001 again closed on a positive note, with attention being drawn to Macedonia's good relations with its neighbours and the improvements achieved in various areas, including infrastructure (transport, progress in the cultural sphere), and Macedonia being encouraged to continue gradually to bring its standards into line with those of the European Union, *inter alia* in the judicial sphere.

2001 though has been a critical year for the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Late February saw the start of a wave of terrorist activity and acts of violence perpetrated by ethnic Albanians, particularly in the north of the country, in the Tetovo and Kumanovo areas. The tensions were sparked off by alleged State discrimination against ethnic Albanians in Macedonia. The extremely serious unrest, which was aggravated by the use of firearms, continued for around six months and led to an exodus of thousands of refugees and the enforced displacement of persons within the country. On 13 August, an agreement providing for an end to the violence in return for a commitment to implementing a programme of constitutional and legislative reforms was signed in Ohrid under the auspices of the EU and the United States. (the so-called

"Framework Agreement")

Another major event was the signing, on 9 April 2001, of the stabilisation and association agreement with the European Union, to which the European Parliament gave its assent on 3 May 2001.

Despite the implementation of the first constitutional reforms in the autumn of 2001 - a process which proved to be extremely difficult - and the collection by NATO troops of weapons held illegally by the Albanian rebels ('Essential Harvest' operation), the level of political tension in Macedonia remained extremely high until the end of the year.

The European Parliament continued to monitor the situation extremely closely and gave its full support to the internal peace-making process, as is illustrated by Mrs Fontaine's visit to Skopje in September 2001 and the ad hoc visit by the bureau of the Delegation for relations with South-East Europe in early October of the same year, whose programme comprised meetings with the EU Special Envoy, the Head of the European Commission's delegation, the President of Parliament, the Prime Minister, leaders of the main political parties, the President of the Republic and chairman and members of the parliamentary committee for relations with the EP.

During the bureau visit of May-June 2002, parliamentarians had meetings with the President of the Republic, EU Member States representatives, the President of Parliament, the Minister of Education, the State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, the Rector of the Skopje University, the European Agency for Reconstruction, members of the parliamentary committee for co-operation with the EP, the Prime Minister and they animated a public debate organised by the European Movement of the FYROM.

At the end of the programme, the EP delegation visited the University of South-East Europe in Tetovo and met some officials of the mixed police patrols, internally displaced persons and the Nato "Amber Fox" operation military staff.

The result of the visit was an overall positive assessment of the implementation of the Framework Agreement. Discussions were also held on the question of the State's name, border problems, EU Member States' ratification of the SAA, the preparation of the forthcoming parliamentary elections, the reconstruction process and the role of the European Agency for Reconstruction, the return process, the fight against corruption and trafficking, the education system in the country and the regional co-operation in that matter, as well as co-operation with the Council of Europe and individual European States, participation in EU programmes for education and students' mobility.

The EP election observations delegation which visited the FYROM in September 2002 considered the parliamentary elections of 15 September, which had been regularly organised by the authorities of the country, had gone well, from a general point of view, despite occasional incidents. Nevertheless, family and group voting should not be tolerated anymore, and there were problems of understanding different languages in the country.

The 8th interparliamentary meeting was exceptionally held 2 years after the previous one. This was a result of the interethnic clashes of 2001 and the subsequent reconciliation process. In

the joint statement of the chairpersons, the resolute will of the country for democracy and political pluralism was recognised; parliamentarians, members of Government and political leaders were strongly encouraged to create the conditions for confidence and tolerance, and to take advantage of the political instruments provided for by the Ohrid Framework Agreement; the continuity of interest for European integration was welcomed. Detailed recommendations on economy and on the fight against corruption and crime were addressed to the Government. On the SAP, parliamentarians welcomed the Council's Conclusions on the European perspective for the Western Balkans. The chairpersons stressed the importance of a smooth passage from NATO to the EU of the "Allied Harmony" military operation.

At the 9th interparliamentary meeting, the chairpersons' statement welcomed the important progress achieved from the political and parliamentary point of view and encouraged those concerned to speed up the final implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement. The fight against corruption and crime and justice and police reforms were again discussed in detail and important recommendations were addressed to the Government.

The statement welcomed the conclusion of the SAA ratification process and demanded its entry into force as soon as possible, welcomed the conclusions of the Thessaloniki European Council and the Thessaloniki Agenda for the Western Balkans, as well as the shared aspiration and support, among the political parties and the population of the country, for EU membership.

In fact, on 22 March 2004, the FYROM submitted to the Irish Presidency of the Council an application for EU membership.

On 1st April, the SAA between the EU and its Member States and the FYROM entered into force.