



DECLASSIFIED¹
AS/Mon (2026) 01
27 January 2026
amondoc01_2026
or. Engl.

Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee)

Post-monitoring dialogue with North Macedonia

Information note about the co-rapporteurs fact-finding visit to Brussels (Belgium), on 15 and 16 January 2026

Co-rapporteurs: Ms Sibel Arslan, Switzerland, Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group, and Mr Joseph O'Reilly, Ireland, Group of the European People's Party

1. Introduction

1. At its meeting in Paris on 9 December 2025, the Monitoring Committee approved our report on the post-monitoring dialogue with North Macedonia, adopted a draft resolution and proposed to close this procedure.² This proposal now needs to be approved by the Parliamentary Assembly at its forthcoming part-session (26-30 January 2026).

2. As North Macedonia is a candidate for membership in the European Union (EU), our report is based, amongst others, on the European Commission's findings included in its annual reports on North Macedonia and the rule of law. Nevertheless, due to our various commitments, we did not have the time to consult the EU institutions before the adoption of the report in the committee. Since we believed that it was important to hold informal discussions with the European Union's representatives and members of the European Parliament working on the relations between the country and the European Union, we decided to undertake a visit to Brussels (Belgium) before the examination of the report by the Assembly scheduled for the January 2026 part-session (26-30 January 2026).

3. Therefore, on 15 and 16 January 2026, we undertook a fact-finding visit to Brussels, during which we had informal consultations on relations with Western Balkans' countries and possible synergies with representatives of the European External Action Service (EEAS) and European Commission's Directorate-General for Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood (DG ENEST) and with Ambassador Zulfi Ismaili, head of North Macedonia's Mission to the European Union. We also exchanged with MEPs Thomas Waitz (Austria, Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance), rapporteur on North Macedonia, and Thijs Reuten (the Netherlands, Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats) (online – with the latter), shadow rapporteur on North Macedonia. These meetings provided valuable insights into the current state of the country's accession negotiations with the European Union and the matters examined in our report.

¹ Document declassified by the Monitoring Committee at its meeting on 27 January 2026.

² [Doc. 16317](#) of 8 January 2026.

2. Recent developments concerning North Macedonia's relations with the European Union

2.1. Political developments

4. Following the last EU-Western Balkans summit that took place in Brussels on 17 December 2025, European leaders adopted a declaration, in which they reaffirmed their 'unequivocal commitment to the European Union membership perspective of the Western Balkans'. They also welcomed the 'Western Balkan partners' commitment to uphold European values and principles, in line with international law, the primacy of democracy, fundamental rights and values and the rule of law' and called on them again to implement the necessary reforms and, in particular, to 'guarantee the rights and equal treatment of persons belonging to minorities'.³ The Brussels Declaration also stresses the role of inclusive regional cooperation, reconciliation and good neighbourly relations and the need to implement international agreements, including bilateral ones, in good faith and 'with tangible results'.⁴

5. At the same time, the Council of the European Union did not adopt its annual conclusions on enlargement due to Hungary's opposition; its conclusions concerning North Macedonia were published as the Danish EU presidency's conclusions. These conclusions stress that North Macedonia has maintained EU integration as its strategic goal and call upon it to intensify efforts in advancing the EU-related reform. They also note that North Macedonia has not adopted the constitutional changes to which it has committed itself.⁵

2.2. Funding from the EU

6. Under the [Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans](#) for the period from 2024 to 2027, North Macedonia benefits from the European Union's financial assistance for the delivery of EU-related reforms, and " (...) in particular inclusive and sustainable socio-economic reforms and reforms concerning fundamentals of the enlargement process, aligned with Union values, as well as investments to implement their respective Reform Agendas(...)"⁶

7. Disbursement of EU support is subject to the successful implementation of reforms by the beneficiary State, which has to prepare a Reform Agenda,⁷ which is consulted, assessed and approved by the European Commission following positive assessment by the Council of the European Union.⁸ The EU's financial assistance is channelled directly to the State's treasury (loans) and through the Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF) investment pipeline (at least 50% of the total amount, which includes loans and grants).⁹

8. North Macedonia benefits from a programmed allocation of EUR 750.4 million (out of EUR 6 billion foreseen for the whole region) for key reforms in six policy areas: public administration reform, green (energy), digitalisation, human capital, private-sector development, and fundamental rights and rule of law.¹⁰ In October 2024, the European Commission approved North Macedonia's Reform Agenda.¹¹

9. On 18 March 2025, North Macedonia received EUR 52.5 million (7%) as pre-payment of the total amount provided for under the Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans. Out of this amount, 24.4 million out was disbursed for the State budget as support for the implementation of the reforms envisaged by the Reform Agenda, while the remaining EUR 28.1 million was injected directly to the WBIF for infrastructure projects.¹²

10. In July 2025, the European Commission disbursed the first tranche of approximately EUR 7.9 million, having positively assessed the adoption of the public financial control law and the reform of the governance of state-owned companies. In October 2025, the European Commission agreed to the disbursement of the

³ Council of the EU, [Brussels Declaration](#), 17 December 2025, items 2 and 5.

⁴ Ibid, item 6.

⁵ [Danish EU Presidency conclusions: EU remains committed to North Macedonia's gradual integration in internal market](#)

⁶ Regulation (EU) 2024/1449 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on establishing the Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans, Article 1 paragraph 2.

⁷ According to Regulation 2024/1449 (Article 2(5)), a "Reform Agenda" means a comprehensive, coherent and prioritised set of targeted reforms and priority investment areas in each beneficiary, including payment conditions that indicate satisfactory progress or completion of related measures, and an indicative timetable for their implementation."

⁸ [Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans - Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood](#)

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ European Commission, North Macedonia Report 2025, [SWD \(2025\)753 final](#), 4 November 2025, p. 97.

¹¹ Supra note 7.

¹² Supra note 9, p. 97.

second tranche of approximately EUR 17.1 million, following the adoption of relevant legislation in the digitalisation area.¹³

11. North Macedonia also benefits from the [Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance \(IPA\)](#), which is aimed at supporting reforms in key areas such as rule of law and fundamental rights, democracy and good governance, environment and climate action, transport, competitiveness and innovation, social development, agriculture & rural development and regional and territorial cooperation. The country's indicative funding allocation for the period 2014-2020 was of € 608.7 million.¹⁴ The current IPA programme (IPA III) allocates EUR 67 million for a three-year period from 2025 to 2027 and aims to support key areas such as rule of law, good governance, education and the integration facility.¹⁵

2.3. Other developments

12. In October 2025, North Macedonia's banks, along with those from Albania, the Republic of Moldova and Montenegro joined the Single Euro Payments Area (SEPA). This step will facilitate transactions in euro between these four States and the European Union and will allow individuals and businesses to make savings on transaction fees, thus accelerating the socio-economic integration of these countries into the European Union. It is also a good example of the impact of the Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans on aligning national rules with EU rules.¹⁶

13. As of 1 October 2023, works have also been underway in order to eliminate roaming costs between the EU and its Western Balkans partners, including North Macedonia ('Roam like at Home' policy).

3. Conclusions of the fact-finding visit

14. All of our interlocutors in Brussels supported the proposal of the Monitoring Committee to close the post-monitoring dialogue of the Assembly. North Macedonia remains dedicated to its European integration process and receives considerable financial support from the EU to advance major institutional, legal, and socio-economic reforms. However, they underscored that some issues still need to be resolved, particularly with regard to the state of the rule of law and the fight against corruption, including at medium level (especially with regard to procurement and the use of EU funds). In that respect they highlighted that, Montenegro and Albania are much more advanced in their EU accession negotiations.

15. According to all our interlocutors, the question of amending North Macedonia's Constitution following the 2022 'French proposal' remains an issue to be addressed. So far, North Macedonia's parliament has been unable to reach a compromise on amending the Constitution by including a reference to Bulgarian and other ethnic minorities in its preamble. This constitutional change is a condition for progressing in the negotiation process for accession to the European Union. The previous government had accepted this, and a change in government cannot justify failing to fulfil this commitment. According to the commitments stemming from the Treaty on Friendship, Good Neighbourliness and Cooperation concluded with Bulgaria, both North Macedonia and Bulgaria should demonstrate goodwill and maintain good neighbourly relations. However, the unstable political situation in Bulgaria, which is soon to hold new elections,¹⁷ does not facilitate a continuous and friendly dialogue between the two States. As a member State of the European Union, Bulgaria is in a dominant position with regard to North Macedonia and can block developments related to the latter's negotiations with the EU. Against this background, we call on both States, which are members of the Council of Europe, to do their utmost to maintain good neighbourly relations and strengthen their cooperation in view of North Macedonia's EU membership. Disputes over culture, language and identity should not delay this process.

¹³ Ibid, p. 98.

¹⁴ Supra note 7.

¹⁵ Supra note 9, p. 98.

¹⁶ [Commission welcomes Albania, Moldova, Montenegro and North Macedonia as first Enlargement partners to join SEPA schemes - Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood](#)

¹⁷ The vote will be Bulgaria's eighth election in four years, following the last government's collapse in December 2025.