

First session

10:00-10:30

Registration of participants

10:30-10:40

Introductory notes:

Malinka Ristevska Jordanova, Director, EPI

10:40-12:10

From frontrunner to laggard: A failure of EU conditionality in Macedonia?

Speakers:

- Florian Bieber, Center for South-East European Studies, University of Graz
- Fatmir Besimi, Deputy Prime Minister for EU Affairs
- MP / VMRO DPMNE (TbC)
- Stevo Pendarovski, SDUM

Moderator: Simonida Kacarska, EPI

12:10-12:45

Break
Press corner

Round Table

EU AND THE CURRENT POLITICAL CRISIS IN MACEDONIA: LEVERAGE, INVOLVEMENT, PROSPECTS



Date:
30 March 2015 (Monday)

Place:
Hotel Holiday Inn Skopje, Millennium Hall 1

Second session

12:45-14:15

Plausible involvement of EU and the options for change

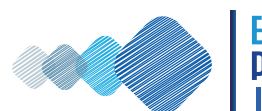
Speakers:

- Nikola Dimitrov, The Hague Institute for Global Justice
- Kristof Bender, European Stability Initiative
- H.E. Ernesto Massimino Bellelli, Ambassador of Republic of Italy to the Republic of Macedonia
- Mersel Bilalli, University Professor

Moderator: Aleksandar Jovanoski, EPI

14:15-15:00

Snacks



Aim

The aim of the round table is to encourage an open and constructive debate between state and non-state EU and national actors on options for resolution of the current political crisis in Macedonia.

The debate will primarily focus on the interplay of domestic and EU actors in the current political crisis in Macedonia and plausible modalities and options for EU leverage in this specific situation.

Background

In the late 90s Macedonia was the frontrunner of the Stabilisation and Association Process, having avoided conflicts following dissolution of ex-Yugoslavia. The break-out of ethnic conflict in 2001 ended with the internationally brokered Ohrid Agreement, which resulted in constitutionally redefined power-sharing between the majority ethnic Macedonian and the non-majority Albanian community and improved community rights. The reconciliation and implementation of the Ohrid Agreement and the implemented democratic reform, largely encouraged by the EU integration prospects, led to granted candidate status for EU membership in 2005. In 2008, Macedonia's entry in NATO was blocked by Greece, due to the name dispute. For the same reason the six recommendations by the European Commission 2009-2014 have not resulted in a Council's decision to launch accession negotiations. Efforts to resolve the name issue remain fruitless.

In the meantime, a harsh backslide in democratic standards has been observed, gradually evolving into the current political crisis. The latest EC report was the most critical ever, pointing to the *"increasingly divisive political culture, serious concerns about increasing politicisation and government control over state institutions and media, and a still fragile inter-ethnic situation."*

The political crisis has been further evolving. The Government, led by the VMRO – DPMNE, which has been in power for 9 years, in January 2015 pressed criminal charges against four persons including the leader of the opposition, stating that he attempted to commit the crime „violence against representatives of highest state authorities“ in a process named “Putsch”. The process “Putsch” is based on allegations of espionage done for a “foreign service”. On 9 February 2015, the opposition SDUM revealed that the State Intelligence Agency illegally tapped over 20.000 citizens and started to publically broadcast the tapped conversations, primarily those of ministers. SDUM pressed charges against the Prime Minister, Ministers and the Chief of the National Security and Counter-Intelligence Agency. Recordings of tapped journalists and diplomats were handed directly to them.

Following his visit in Macedonia in February 2015, exploring possibilities for EU mediation, EC Commissioner Hahn stated that Macedonia was in “deep political crisis” and EC President Juncker cancelled his meeting with Prime Minister Gruevski.

In their reactions, the EU institutions and several EU member states have mainly expressed “deep concern” over the situation, calling upon the institutions to resolve the cases in a “fair and transparent manner”.