



TEXTS ADOPTED

P10_TA(2025)0157

2023 and 2024 reports on North Macedonia

European Parliament resolution of 9 July 2025 on the 2023 and 2024 Commission reports on North Macedonia (2025/2021(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of North Macedonia, of the other part¹,
- having regard to North Macedonia's application for membership of the European Union, submitted on 22 March 2004,
- having regard to the European Council decision of 16 December 2005 to grant North Macedonia EU candidate country status,
- having regard to the European Council conclusions of 19-20 June 2003, including the annex thereto entitled 'The Thessaloniki agenda for the Western Balkans: Moving towards European integration',
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/1529 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 September 2021 establishing the Instrument for Pre-Accession assistance (IPA III)²,
- having regard to 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 Balkans³,

¹ OJ L 84, 20.3.2004, p. 13, ELI:
[http://data.europa.eu/eli/agree_internation/2004/239\(2\)/oj](http://data.europa.eu/eli/agree_internation/2004/239(2)/oj).

² OJ L 330, 20.9.2021, p. 1, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/1529/oj>.

³ OJ L, 2024/1449, 24.5.2024, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1449/oj>.

- having regard to the Commission communication of 5 February 2020 entitled 'Enhancing the accession process - A credible EU perspective for the Western Balkans' (COM(2020)0057),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 8 November 2023 entitled '2023 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy' (COM(2023)0690), accompanied by the Commission staff working document entitled 'North Macedonia 2023 Report' (SWD(2023)0693),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 8 November 2023 entitled 'New growth plan for the Western Balkans' (COM(2023)0691),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 20 March 2024 on pre-enlargement reforms and policy reviews (COM(2024)0146),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 24 July 2024 entitled '2024 Rule of Law Report' (COM(2024)0800), accompanied by the Commission staff working document entitled '2024 Rule of Law Report - Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in North Macedonia' (SWD(2024)0830),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 30 October 2024 entitled '2024 Communication on EU enlargement policy' (COM(2024)0690), accompanied by the Commission staff working document entitled 'North Macedonia 2024 Report' (SWD(2024)0693),
- having regard to the Reform Agenda of North Macedonia as approved by the Commission under the Reform and Growth Facility on 23 October 2024,
- having regard to the declarations of the EU-Western Balkans summits of 13 December 2023 and of 18 December 2024 in Brussels as well as the declarations of the EU-Western Balkans summits held in Sofia, Zagreb and Brdo pri Kranju in 2018, 2020 and 2021 respectively, and the Declaration on the Common Regional Market and the Declaration on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans agreed on 10 November 2020 at the Sofia Summit within the Berlin Process,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 18 July 2022 on Enlargement - North Macedonia and Albania and the Council conclusions on Enlargement of 17 December 2024,
- having regard to the final report of 23 September 2024 of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) Election Observation Mission on North Macedonia's presidential election on 24 April 2024 and parliamentary elections on 8 May 2024,

- having regard to the Berlin Process launched on 28 August 2014,
 - having regard to the Treaty of friendship, good neighbourliness and cooperation between Bulgaria and North Macedonia, signed on 1 August 2017 and ratified in January 2018;
 - having regard to the Final Agreement for the settlement of the differences as described in the United Nations Security Council resolutions 817 (1993) and 845 (1993), the termination of the Interim Accord of 1995, and the establishment of a strategic partnership between Greece and North Macedonia, agreed on 17 June 2018, also known as the Prespa Agreement,
 - having regard to the joint staff working document entitled 'Objectives and Indicators to frame the implementation of the Gender Action Plan III (2021-25)' (SWD(2020)0284) accompanying the joint communication of the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of 25 November 2020 entitled 'EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) III – An ambitions vision for gender equality and women's empowerment in EU external action (JOIN(2020)0017), as well as the Country Level Implementation Plan (CLIP) for North Macedonia,
 - having regard to the 2023 European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) Report on North Macedonia, adopted on 29 June 2023 and published on 20 September 2023,
 - having regard to the declaration and joint recommendations adopted at the 23rd meeting of the EU-North Macedonia Joint Parliamentary Committee, held on 27 and 28 February 2025 in Skopje,
 - having regard to its previous resolutions on North Macedonia, and in particular its resolution of 24 October 2019 on opening accession negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania¹,
 - having regard to Rule 55 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (A10-0118/2025),
- A. whereas North Macedonia has held EU candidate country status since 2005 and successfully completed the screening process in December 2023;
- B. whereas the aspirations of citizens of North Macedonia to become part of the EU have led to progress in terms of democracy and socio-economic reforms, while the EU accession process continues to experience regrettable delays for various reasons;

¹ OJ C 202, 28.5.2021, p. 86.

- C. whereas the EU has mobilised approximately EUR 210 million in macro-financial assistance loans since 2020, aimed at stabilising the Macedonian economy, aiding its recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and accelerating its reform progress;
- D. whereas North Macedonia is a partner that is aligned with the EU's common foreign and security policy in the vast majority of cases and has played a constructive role in the region; whereas North Macedonia's recent abstention from United Nations General Assembly Resolution ES-11/7 of 24 February 2025 on Ukraine and its co-sponsorship of an alternative resolution led by the United States indicates an unexpected and regrettable shift in its foreign policy alignment;
- E. whereas North Macedonia participates in EU military crisis management operations, including EUFOR Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- F. whereas the Council reached new conclusions in July 2022 which mean that North Macedonia needs to adopt the outstanding constitutional changes, in line with its commitments, so that the opening phase of accession negotiations can be completed immediately;
- G. whereas the geopolitical changes, the war in Ukraine, disinformation and misinformation have a strong impact on all European countries, both politically and economically;
- H. whereas North Macedonia remains a target of foreign malign influence operations, including efforts to fracture the country's social fabric and weaponise anti-EU sentiment, notably via Serbian-language tabloids and media outlets, which function as regional amplifiers of Kremlin narratives and enjoy considerable influence; whereas North Macedonia expelled 13 Russian diplomats between 2018 and 2023 for activities incompatible with their diplomatic status, suggesting an ongoing presence of covert influence networks; whereas China has sought to expand its influence through information control, investment diplomacy and coercive clauses in infrastructure loan agreements;
- I. whereas North Macedonia's authorities have proposed solutions for constitutional change that did not meet the conditions of the July 2022 Council conclusions;
- J. whereas any accession country is expected to respect democratic values, the rule of law and human rights, and to abide by EU law;
- K. whereas the Council has not excluded unequivocally the adoption of further new conditions for the starting of accession negotiations;

1. Reiterates its full support for North Macedonia's continued and persistent commitment to join the EU and for the necessary transformative changes that are required to fulfil the accession criteria; commends the country's commitment to European integration and encourages continued efforts in advancing EU-aligned reforms, despite the challenges and setbacks that have tested the patience and trust of the Macedonian society;
2. Underlines that EU accession remains a matter of political will in fulfilling the criteria and implementing the commitments undertaken, in terms of both making the necessary reforms and adopting the necessary constitutional amendments;
3. Recalls the need to maintain the momentum and credibility of the EU integration process; notes that North Macedonia continues to demonstrate commitment to EU integration and alignment with EU policies; calls for the swift advancement of accession negotiations, while noting the importance of adopting the constitutional amendments; urges the European Council to signal, publicly and unequivocally, that the Council intends to swiftly and unconditionally take the positive decision to enter into the next phase of accession negotiations with North Macedonia once the conditions of its conclusions of 18 July 2022 have been fulfilled; encourages all political parties in North Macedonia to engage in constructive dialogue to achieve the necessary consensus on these amendments, which would strengthen the country's multi-ethnic character and accelerate its progress towards EU membership; believes that strengthening the links between the multiple ethnicities is essential for improving social cohesion and ensuring more effective governance; calls on the Member States, the Council and the Commission to safeguard the predictability and credibility of the accession process, also with a view to maintaining popular support for accession in enlargement countries;
4. Welcomes the successful completion of the screening process for North Macedonia at the end of 2023; encourages North Macedonia to adopt the constitutional amendments that the country committed to making and implementing, as required by the Council, in order for the accession negotiation process to proceed;
5. Commends the commitment of the Macedonian people to EU integration and the support they show to this project two decades on from starting the process; urges the Commission to do the utmost to help the authorities of North Macedonia accomplish the necessary steps before entering into the next negotiation phase as well as further along the negotiation process, to help deliver on the expectations of citizens and the country and to explore all measures for gradual integration into the EU structures, thus increasing trust in the EU and its democratic values;

6. Recalls that the accession process should not be used to settle bilateral disputes, obstruct merit-based progress on the European path or outweigh the broader strategic interests of the Union, but that such disputes must rather be addressed through open dialogue and genuine cooperation; underlines that accession negotiations should follow a clear path, guided by objective criteria and solely based on merit and the fulfilment of the accession criteria (Copenhagen criteria), which require in-depth reforms across fundamental areas, as well as the presence of stable institutions that guarantee democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and the protection of minorities;
7. Reaffirms that the respect for linguistic, cultural and national identity is a fundamental component of the EU accession process and a cornerstone of democratic societies which will be further affirmed with the accession to the family of European nations;
8. Repeats its calls for the EU's capacity to act to be enhanced through a reform of its decision-making, including through the introduction of qualified majority voting on the intermediate steps in the accession process, in particular at the start of negotiations and the opening and closing of individual negotiating clusters and chapters;
9. Welcomes the new Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans which will provide EUR 750 million in grants and loans to North Macedonia when it meets the conditions set out in its Reform Agenda; welcomes, in this context, the excellent and ambitious Reform Agenda, which sets clear, transparent goals and targets, and calls on the authorities to focus on its rigorous implementation; underlines the need to focus on incentivising reforms and reinforcing economic stability as well as on public administration, governance, the rule of law and the fight against corruption, decarbonisation and the green transition, digitalisation, connectivity and human capital development, while addressing social challenges;
10. Notes the funds being received by North Macedonia from individual Member States and the good cooperation between them; warns however about strengthening alliances with illiberal regimes;
11. Commends North Macedonia on its continued commitment to the EU integration process and regrets the delays in the accession process; welcomes the stability of and encourages continued efforts to secure interethnic relations and the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement;
12. Encourages North Macedonia to achieve tangible results in complying with the EU's expectations under the negotiating framework and the Council conclusions of July 2022, including relevant constitutional changes, in line with the country's commitments;

13. Urges North Macedonia to intensify efforts to strengthen the rule of law and judicial independence, including in judicial appointments and the functioning of the Judicial Council, to counter corruption, reform its public administration and improve the transparency and concentration of media ownership; encourages further implementation of systemic measures to ensure transparency and efficiency in governance;
14. Expresses its profound sorrow and heartfelt solidarity following the tragic Kočani nightclub fire that led to the death of more than 50 young people and injuries to more than 150 others and offers its condolences to the victims and their families; commends the rapid use of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and the help provided by the Member States to save as many lives as possible; commends neighbouring and EU countries, in particular Greece and Bulgaria, for the immediate support and solidarity they showed and the medical treatment they provided to victims;

Functioning of democratic institutions

15. Notes that, while democratic institutions in North Macedonia function satisfactorily, political polarisation remains a major stumbling block to necessary reforms; calls on the political parties represented in the country's parliament to work together to reach an agreement on those reforms;
16. Welcomes the adoption of new rules of procedure by the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia (Sobranie), facilitated by the European Parliament within the framework of the Jean Monnet Dialogue; stresses, however, that persistent political polarisation continues to delay important reforms and appointments; emphasises that cross-party collaboration and an improved political climate remain vital to accelerate the implementation of EU-related reforms and strengthen democratic institutions;
17. Notes with concern that about half of all laws enacted by the Sobranie in 2023 were approved through shortened procedures; calls on the Sobranie to improve its legislative planning, coordination and quality through proper consultation procedures and parliamentary oversight, in particular with a view to the conclusions of the Jean Monnet Dialogue and to avoid fast-track procedures;
18. Stresses that, while the 2024 parliamentary and presidential elections were competitive, and democratic amendments to the Electoral Code have been made, comprehensive electoral reform is still needed; calls strongly for the implementation of the outstanding recommendations made by the OSCE/ODIHR and the Venice Commission through an inclusive revision of the Electoral Code, while underlining the importance of insulating future electoral processes from malign foreign interference and information

manipulation, including through the adoption of robust cybersecurity and online campaign transparency rules;

19. Calls for improved regulation of the financing of political parties and campaigns, including measures to increase transparency regarding the funds and expenses of political parties; urges a revision of the rules on state advertising in commercial media and paid political advertisement; emphasises the need for functioning oversight mechanisms to ensure integrity in party financing and for equal and adequate media access for political parties and independent candidates;
20. Calls for the continued modernisation of a merit-based public administration, addressing systemic challenges of politicisation, strengthening transparent recruitment processes, and reforming local self-government to provide better social services for citizens and to develop tailor-made local and regional development strategies; urges the authorities to step up their efforts and adopt and implement the necessary legislation with a view to improving public trust in the administration and fostering a resilient and capable public service that can effectively respond to contemporary challenges and serve the needs of the community; commends the 2023-2030 public administration strategy and the related action plan for 2023-2026 adopted in July 2023; acknowledges that they cover all relevant reform areas and set out a clear baseline, objectives and targets, thus identifying crucial policy challenges; regrets, however that the implementation rate remains low;
21. Calls for further steps to ensure the systemic accountability of public institutions through meaningful and public stakeholder consultations, including with regard to the implementation of the Reform Agenda, and to provide feedback from the consultations conducted; commends the law on general administrative procedures that is providing for simplification, but strongly recommends that it be implemented systematically across the administration;
22. Urges the authorities of North Macedonia to refrain from opaque, politicised dismissals from, and appointments to, positions within independent bodies and agencies, as well as to ensure that the institutions are adequately funded and that decisions and recommendations are implemented consistently; notes with regret the continued lack of progress in strengthening the office of the Ombudsman;

Media and civil society

23. Welcomes North Macedonia's steady progress in assuring media freedom; recalls however, the need for continued reforms to ensure an independent and resilient media landscape, including reforming the legal framework governing online and offline media to align fully

with the European Media Freedom Act¹, addressing persistent challenges in media ownership transparency, digital media disclosure and media concentration; underlines the need for media reform that prioritises anti-concentration measures to safeguard journalistic integrity; emphasises the urgent need to counter malign foreign influence in the media landscape, including disinformation disseminated by actors linked to Russia and China;

24. Calls on the authorities to adopt a legal framework that effectively protects journalists, human rights defenders, environmental activists and other stakeholders from strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs), and to implement the provisions of the EU Anti-SLAPP Directive²;
25. Urges the authorities to ensure full transparency and unimpeded access to information for citizens;
26. Notes with concern the reinstatement of government advertising in commercial media in North Macedonia; stresses the heightened risk of this measure opening the media market to disruption and undue political influence, thus endangering media independence and media pluralism; reiterates its calls for the comprehensive reform of the rules governing state financing and political party advertising in the media, noting the lack of transparency, the ongoing misuse of state funds for political advertising, and the continued risk of compromising media independence through opaque funding mechanisms; calls strongly for these reforms to be adopted and implemented before the local elections planned for autumn 2025;
27. Underlines the need to strengthen the independence and capacity of the media regulator, the public service broadcaster and the regulator of electronic communication;
28. Encourages action to enhance the editorial and financial independence, impartiality and professionalism of public service broadcasters and media regulators, while noting the continued delay in appointing key oversight bodies and the need for comprehensive modernisation efforts; calls for stricter transparency and ownership rules to expose covert influence, including foreign-sponsored media

¹ Regulation (EU) 2024/1083 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 establishing a common framework for media services in the internal market and amending Directive 2010/13/EU (European Media Freedom Act) (OJ L, 2024/1083, 17.4.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1083/oj>).

² Directive (EU) 2024/1069 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 on protecting persons who engage in public participation from manifestly unfounded claims or abusive court proceedings ('Strategic lawsuits against public participation') (OJ L, 2024/1069, 16.4.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/1069/oj>).

content, and for the establishment of mechanisms to identify and disrupt coordinated foreign disinformation networks;

29. Notes that certain Chinese diplomatic entities have financed paid content and opinion pieces in Macedonian media outlets without clear labelling; recalls that a 2023 analysis found that Russian state-affiliated actors had used Serbian media proxies to disseminate narratives hostile to NATO and to claim that the EU is pressuring North Macedonia to 'abandon its identity';
30. Expresses concern over the ongoing threats and attacks against independent journalists and media professionals, including misogynistic online harassment targeting women journalists, often targeting those reporting on the rule of law, corruption and justice; welcomes the assignment of a dedicated prosecutor to monitor these attacks on journalists and oversee the establishment of cyberbullying reporting mechanisms; calls for stronger measures to protect media professionals from physical and non-physical threats, harassment and the inappropriate use of language by public figures;
31. Encourages North Macedonia to continue the efforts to combat hate speech in all of its forms and targeting all groups, to proactively prevent and thoroughly investigate all instances of hate speech, hate crimes and intimidation, systematically prosecute related attacks, with a view to achieving convictions and ensuring the safety and security of their targets, such as journalists, people belonging to minorities, communities such as Bulgarians, and other vulnerable groups;
32. Expresses concern about the rise in hate speech and growing threats from disinformation in online media, over which the national Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services has no regulatory authority; calls for strengthened measures to support investigative journalism, fact-checking capabilities and media literacy and to improve the legal framework and interinstitutional capacity in order to combat hate speech, disinformation and foreign interference; is concerned by widespread disinformation campaigns which call into question democratic values and the country's goal of EU membership; calls, in this regard, for the support of the EU institutions to help the country mitigate these malicious effects; welcomes civil society initiatives promoting media fact-checking, digital literacy in schools and the combating of the spread of hate speech, and notes that nearly 50 % of the citizens of North Macedonia have adopted false narratives about international events, particularly regarding the war in Ukraine, underscoring the urgency of reinforcing societal resilience against malign information manipulation;
33. Underlines that civil society is vital in fostering democracy and pluralism and promoting good governance and social progress;

welcomes the country's vibrant and constructive civil society, which plays a very crucial and positive role in the reform process, and recalls that further efforts are needed to ensure inclusive, timely and meaningful consultation and transparency, as well as formal mechanisms for cooperation; welcomes, against this backdrop, the recent initiation of the process for re-establishing the Council for Cooperation with and Development of the Civil Society Sector and calls for enhanced cooperation between the government and civil society, especially in mitigating the implications for civil society of the recent 'freeze' of US Agency for International Development (USAID) funds; notes that, while civil society organisations operate in an overall enabling environment, legal and financial frameworks need to be implemented to ensure that their public funding is increased and that public funding mechanisms are transparent; is concerned about reports of an increase in hostile statements towards civil society and encourages the Ministry of Internal Affairs to work with civil society organisations to develop a security protocol for human rights defenders to ensure their protection against threats from non-state actors; calls strongly for further enhancement of the role of civil society by ensuring that it continues to be meaningfully included in the decision-making process and by consulting the Venice Commission before adopting future legislation related to non-governmental organisations (NGOs);

Fundamental rights

34. Commends North Macedonia for ratifying most international human rights instruments; expresses concern, however, about the level of implementation, the lack of progress in gender equality, the rise of anti-gender movements and the increase in their influence, which have a negative impact on legislative and policymaking processes; urges the government to fully implement the Istanbul Convention; calls on the authorities to adopt the new Law on Gender Equality and to strengthen formal government structures designed to promote gender equality and improve the status and rights of women at all levels, as well as to ensure the effective implementation of the gender equality strategy and the national action plan, notably by ensuring adequate funding, enhancing interinstitutional coordination and aligning national policies with the EU *acquis*;
35. Urges the authorities to ensure the full and effective implementation of the existing legal framework for the protection of victims of gender-based and domestic violence, by allocating sufficient budgetary resources for prevention, and by improving access to support services, protection mechanisms and the enforcement of legally guaranteed social and economic rights of survivors; notes, against this background, the adoption in 2023 of the Law on Payment of Monetary Compensation to Victims of Violent Crimes, which integrates the standards of the Istanbul Convention to provide better protection for victims of gender-based violence; urges the

authorities, furthermore, to strengthen their efforts to reduce and mitigate gender-based violence and domestic violence, and to increase shelter capacity and personnel, as well as the number of well-trained and gender-sensitive law enforcement officers, judges, medical personnel and social workers;

36. Notes, with concern, the dire situation of young women in prison, including juvenile girls aged between 14 and 16, who lack education and job skills training and are often overmedicated, with insufficient healthcare; urges the authorities of North Macedonia to take urgent measures to improve the detention conditions for all inmates, to reduce corruption and stop inhuman treatment, and to enhance the probation and reintegration of ex-prisoners into society;
37. Urges North Macedonia to fully implement the recommendations outlined in the 2023 ECRI report on North Macedonia in order to effectively address the human rights violations identified;
38. Welcomes the fact that interethnic relations remain stable and the Ohrid Framework Agreement continues to be implemented; commends North Macedonia's efforts in strengthening minority rights protections, while encouraging further financial support; calls for adequate funding and staffing for institutions protecting the rights of non-majority communities; calls on political representatives of minority communities to avoid promoting divisive ethnic narratives echoing policies that caused profound suffering and wars in the region's recent past; urges North Macedonia to fully implement the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities as regards the 'One society for all and interculturalism' strategy; calls on North Macedonia to provide sufficient funding and staff for the Language Implementation Agency and the Agency for Community Rights Realization; regrets that North Macedonia did not ratify the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages; awaits a final decision on the contested Law on the Use of Languages, which may have an impact on interethnic relations;
39. Welcomes the progress the country has achieved in aligning its legislative and institutional framework for the rights of the child with the EU *acquis* and international human rights standards; notes the progress in implementing the strategy for deinstitutionalisation and welcomes the successful relocation of children from institutions to foster care or small group homes; notes with concern, however, the continued instances of child violence and discrimination, including against Roma children; calls, therefore, for the country to set up a national body responsible for coordinating all policies relating to the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the optional protocols thereto;

40. Encourages North Macedonia to take meaningful steps toward recognising and incorporating national minorities and communities into its constitution, fostering inclusivity, protecting diversity, fighting discrimination and strengthening social cohesion in line with European values and democratic principles; calls on North Macedonia to fully guarantee equal rights and opportunities for all ethnic communities in the country;
41. Notes that persons with disabilities continue to face significant barriers as the country's legislation is still not aligned with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; welcomes the national strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities for 2023-2030 and calls strongly for its proper implementation, including in regard to ensuring a sufficient number of educational assistants, in order to effectively and smoothly include children with disabilities in the education process;
42. Welcomes the first court ruling on hate speech against the LGBTIQ+ community, but calls strongly for the systematic prosecution of all instances of hate speech, hate crimes and intimidation, as well as for the inclusion of hate speech in the Criminal Code and for the state institutions responsible to keep adequate statistics on cases of hate speech and hate crimes;
43. Notes with concern the widespread hate speech on social media, particularly towards Roma, LGBTIQ+ persons and other marginalised groups; urges all political actors to amend the Law on Civil Registry and ensure swift and unimpeded legal gender recognition on the basis of self-determination, to uphold human rights, ensure dignity, and establish a clear and accessible legal process in line with international standards; recommends that the new Law on Primary Education maintain explicit protection against discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation and gender identity, ensuring alignment with national and international commitments; encourages the Assembly of North Macedonia to promptly (re-)establish an active interparliamentary LGBTIQ+ group to support and advance LGBTIQ+ rights;
44. Calls on North Macedonia to strengthen migration management, improve alignment with the EU *acquis* and address persistent challenges in handling regular and irregular migration while upholding fundamental human rights; welcomes enhanced cooperation on border management and the strengthening of the country's capacity to manage migration flows and combat migrant smuggling, human trafficking and other organised crime; encourages the continued development of asylum procedures and integration policies and the improvement of reception conditions, in alignment with EU migration frameworks; stresses the importance of regional cooperation in migration management and urges the EU to provide further support in terms of resources, technical assistance and

capacity-building in order to address migration challenges effectively;

45. Calls on North Macedonia to step up its efforts in the fight against human trafficking, notably by further aligning the Criminal Code with the EU *acquis* and its legislation on drugs;

Rule of law

46. Notes, with serious concern, that the country's track record in fighting corruption, including high-level corruption, has worsened, as also evidenced by its decline in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, particularly owing to Criminal Code amendments that have weakened the legal framework, resulting in the termination of many ongoing cases; reiterates that this decline underscores the urgent need for comprehensive reforms; calls strongly for the anti-corruption framework to be strengthened and for effective accountability to be ensured, in particular in high-level corruption cases, through proper investigation, prosecution and convictions; urges a review of recent amendments to the Criminal Code in relation to sentencing standards and the statute of limitations, in order to ensure that the prosecution of corruption, especially of complex and high-level cases, is not negatively affected;
47. Recalls that sufficient financial and human resources are needed to ensure effective and consistent application of dissuasion, prevention, detection, investigation and sanction mechanisms for public office holders through broad measures covering conflicts of interest, lobbying, codes of ethics and whistle-blower protection;
48. Notes that the perceived level of trust in the judiciary remains very low and that further efforts are needed to prevent undue influence and intimidation; underlines the lack of progress in the implementation of the 2020 strategies for human resources management in the courts and in the public prosecutor's office; calls strongly for the critical shortage of judges and prosecutors, which impacts the quality and efficiency of justice, to be addressed; calls for the independence and transparency of judicial bodies to be strengthened and for the funds necessary for their effective functioning to be allocated;
49. Calls for the strengthening of the Judicial Council and the Council of Prosecutors and for the allocation of necessary funds, while ensuring their independence; strongly urges political actors to cease interfering in judicial institutions;
50. Notes, with concern, the lack of progress in preventing and fighting corruption, and that financial investigations remain problematic; underlines how corruption continues to severely affect crucial policy areas; calls for the operational capacity and cooperation of agencies responsible for fighting organised crime and financial crime to be

significantly strengthened, including through ensuring the necessary financial resources; encourages the country to improve its fight against organised and economic crime and cybercrime through a strengthened partnership with Europol, the European Cybercrime Centre and Eurojust; calls on North Macedonia to enhance its efforts to combat money laundering;

51. Calls for all necessary measures to be put in place to effectively counter organised crime; urges the authorities to improve coordination through the National Coordination Centre for the Fight Against Organised Crime as well as to allocate the necessary funds and staffing to the Office of the Basic Public Prosecutor for Organised Crime and Corruption; underlines the need to direct particular attention and resources towards uncovering money-laundering schemes;
52. Notes, with concern, North Macedonia's partial alignment with the EU *acquis* in the fight against organised crime; reiterates its call for further alignment with the EU *acquis* and for systematic financial investigations, stepping up the freezing, confiscation, management and disposal of illegally acquired assets;
53. Calls for a thorough and transparent investigation of the Kočani nightclub fire on 16 March 2025, to bring to justice the persons responsible, and also for the legislation to be updated and thoroughly implemented to prevent similar tragedies and ensure better public safety and regulatory compliance to protect citizens;
54. Calls for the swift implementation of the ongoing reforms in the security and intelligence sectors, and for the independence of security and intelligence bodies to be strengthened through the establishment of appropriate regulatory frameworks, while also enhancing democratic oversight mechanisms; notes, with concern, that the National Security Agency is still located on the premises of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, calling into question its status as an independent state administration body;
55. Commends North Macedonia's strong determination to counter hybrid threats; welcomes the government's initiative to create a national strategic framework to counter disinformation as well as the adoption of the national cybersecurity strategy 2025-2028; calls for further efforts to build resilience against foreign interference and information manipulation; underlines the need to work on a national strategy to build resilience against disinformation as a security threat to the state, including through enhanced cybersecurity measures and strategic communication as well as education and media literacy; calls for the full operationalisation of EU mechanisms, such as the rapid alert system, to detect malign foreign influence in real time during key democratic processes, including elections;

56. Is deeply concerned that North Macedonia and other EU accession countries in the Western Balkans are being particularly hard hit by foreign interference and disinformation campaigns, including hybrid threats, strategic corruption, opaque financial flows and coercive investment practices, notably originating in Russia and China; is alarmed by the roles of the Hungarian and Serbian Governments in advancing China's and Russia's geopolitical objectives; notes, in this context, the risk of dependence on China caused by asymmetrical loan agreements, as well as the recent loan from the Hungarian bank Eximbank, which appears to be sourced from China;

Socio-economic reforms

57. Recommends that North Macedonia continue to pursue steps to improve the business climate and infrastructure, strengthen education and digital infrastructure, and enhance social protection systems and their connection to employment initiatives; welcomes the inclusion of human capital-related reforms in the Growth Plan Reform Agenda and calls on North Macedonia to dedicate sufficient effort to implementing these reforms to achieve sustainable results in the development of human capital for children and young people, as the foundation of resilient societies and sustainable growth;
58. Welcomes the adoption of the Reform Agenda and the multiannual work programme under the Reform and Growth Facility for North Macedonia, which will provide support for small and medium-sized enterprises, cut red tape and digitalise the public system, and welcomes the steps provided for in the Reform Agenda regarding the digital infrastructure roll-out and the new Law on Electronic Communications, aligning the national legislation with the relevant EU *acquis* and keeping up with the digital transition worldwide;
59. Encourages labour market activation strategies for young people, the long-term unemployed, and low-skilled individuals, as well as for women, persons with disabilities and Roma, and calls for these measures to be properly evaluated; takes note of the long-term improvement in unemployment rates, notes, however, that this must be accompanied by a rise in real wages, the improvement of working conditions and the protection of workers' rights, including trade union rights; calls for the full implementation of the Law on the Peaceful Settlement of Labour Disputes;
60. Encourages North Macedonia to advance its digital transformation, particularly by improving the digital skills of all citizens and by providing online access to public services; recognises the demographic challenges faced by North Macedonia, including population decline, the emigration of young professionals, and an ageing workforce, and underlines the need to address the brain drain, especially in the medical, technological and educational fields; calls for the implementation of targeted policies to reverse the brain

drain, enhance family-friendly social policies and attract return migration; encourages cooperation with the EU on demographic resilience strategies, including labour market incentives, housing support for young families, and investment in education and skills development to align with future job market needs; calls for increased support for innovation and competitiveness;

61. Welcomes the positive effects of the Youth Guarantee on the reduction of youth unemployment; calls on North Macedonia to intensify its efforts to reduce the unemployment rate of young people aged between 15 and 24, which remains high at 29.3 %; underlines the need to address social challenges, ensure quality employment policies, foster upward social cohesion and convergence towards EU standards and support progress on the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights;
62. Welcomes the efforts to amend the labour law; urges full alignment of the Law on Working Relations with EU directives to effectively guarantee the right to equal pay for equal work, ensure pay transparency and enhance protection against discrimination based on pregnancy and maternity; insists on the need to strengthen the competencies and capacities of the State Labour Inspectorate to ensure effective protection of workers' rights, including safeguards against labour discrimination;
63. Commends North Macedonia for joining the single euro payments area (SEPA), recognising this as an important step toward deeper financial integration with the European market and the facilitation of faster, more efficient cross-border transactions; urges North Macedonia to introduce structural reforms to strengthen the economy and secure the country's debt sustainability;
64. Welcomes the calls for the prompt integration of all of the Western Balkans into the EU's digital single market at the earliest opportunity, which would crucially benefit the creation of a digitally safe environment;
65. Urges the authorities to fully implement existing legal provisions to ensure access to primary healthcare services, with a particular focus on sexual and reproductive health for women, mothers and children, and eliminate barriers related to geography, finances or other hardships; calls for targeted measures to support vulnerable groups of women in accessing healthcare, including Roma women, rural women and those living in poverty;
66. Welcomes the progress made in the implementation of the Strategy for Inclusion of Roma 2022-2030; regrets, however, that the strategy lacks a clear approach to participation, empowerment and capacity building; calls on the authorities to implement the respective action plans, ensuring proper monitoring and meaningful and transparent

participation of civil society organisations, notably from the Roma community;

Environment, biodiversity, energy and transport

67. Welcomes the adoption of the Energy Law in 2025 and underscores its importance for guaranteeing a safe, secure and high-quality supply of energy as well as for creating an efficient, competitive and financially sustainable energy sector; encourages the authorities to continue on this ambitious path and recalls that additional efforts are needed to fully meet the targets for energy efficiency, renewable energy, security of supply and emissions reductions; urges the country's authorities to align their environment and climate change legislation with the EU *acquis* and to ensure its enforcement; notes, with concern, the lack of progress on climate action and the pending adoption of key legislation; stresses the need to integrate gender equality and social inclusion into climate action planning so that women, low-income households and marginalised communities are actively consulted and benefit equitably from the transition;
68. Welcomes the European Investment Bank's continued financial and technical support in North Macedonia, including strategic infrastructure projects such as the Rail Corridors VIII and X, the Skopje wastewater treatment plant, and municipal water infrastructure development; calls for an inclusive and just transition which protects the socially vulnerable, by mobilising public and private financing for the green transition, fully operationalising dedicated funding mechanisms and leveraging EU and international support; stresses the need to address the problems of a lack of specialised staff and weak institutional and administrative capacity, which undermine quality control and the adequate performance of environmental impact assessments;
69. Notes, with concern, that air and water quality and wastewater management remain particularly challenging issues for the country; urges the central government and local authorities to step up their efforts in order to improve air quality and reduce potentially lethal pollution; recalls that the situation is particularly alarming in Skopje, which has consistently been one of the most polluted cities in Europe;
70. Recognises North Macedonia's great potential as a regional hub with regard to the use of renewable energy sources; urges North Macedonia to fully align its environmental impact assessment with the EU *acquis*, with a particular focus on secondary legislation concerning small hydropower projects;
71. Stresses the urgent need to prioritise environmental protection; strongly urges the authorities to adopt the necessary legislation and to step up measures on biodiversity, water, air and climate action,

and regional waste management, including through comprehensive impact assessments, rigorous prosecution of environmental crime and proper public consultation that allows for the meaningful and transparent involvement of local communities, NGOs and scientific institutions;

72. Calls on North Macedonia to establish legal protections for Emerald Sites designated under the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (the Bern Convention) to safeguard them from environmentally harmful projects; encourages the country to expand its protected areas, with a view to fulfilling the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework targets; reiterates the urgent need to adopt the law on the re-proclamation of Mavrovo National Park to ensure the continuation and completion of its essential conservation efforts; encourages North Macedonia to include Jablanica on its list of protected areas, thus ensuring the conservation of habitats that are critical to the survival of species;
73. Encourages the authorities of North Macedonia to implement stricter protection and management strategies for the habitats of endangered species, as well as for the species themselves, particularly the Balkan lynx, including rigorous enforcement of laws against wildlife crimes, specifically illegal killing and poaching, to safeguard biodiversity;
74. Welcomes North Macedonia's continued cooperation with Kosovo and Albania regarding the transboundary Sharr Mountains National Park; encourages North Macedonia to intensify and speed up collaborative efforts with its neighbouring countries to designate transboundary protected areas and establish coherent transboundary management plans;
75. Stresses the need to tackle financial challenges faced by national parks to improve various aspects, including human resources and overall management, with the aim of strengthening their role in biodiversity conservation, providing recreational opportunities and supporting local economies;
76. Welcomes the progress made in the construction of Corridors VIII and X of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) and commends the completion of the Kriva Palanka-Dlabochica-Stracin expressway; urges, however, the authorities of North Macedonia to step up their efforts to prioritise sustainable transport and upgrade energy infrastructure work towards integration in European networks and regional connectivity as well as to address persistent delays in the development of critical infrastructure, including through bilateral negotiations; calls on the Commission to assist in these efforts where needed;

77. Calls for additional efforts to accelerate progress on all priority sections of the core network for both rail and road, including by increasing the number of border crossings wherever possible; notes the strategic importance of Corridor VIII for the EU's and NATO's geostrategic autonomy, serving as a key logistics route along NATO's southern flank;

Regional cooperation and foreign policy

78. Welcomes North Macedonia's valuable and significant contributions to regional cooperation and stability via its engagement in regional economic and diplomatic initiatives such as the Berlin Process, the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, and the implementation of common regional market agreements, underlining the importance of their inclusiveness;
79. Welcomes the country's commitment to nurturing good neighbourly relations and acknowledges its role as a model for the peaceful resolution of bilateral disputes through dialogue and mutual understanding; emphasises, in this regard, the importance of full implementation of international agreements with tangible results in good faith by all sides, including the Prespa Agreement with Greece and the Treaty of friendship, good neighbourliness and cooperation with Bulgaria; calls for consistent commitment to dialogue and cooperation with neighbouring countries to strengthen regional stability and foster mutual trust; calls for the further promotion of people-to-people contacts across south-eastern Europe;
80. Expresses concern about the so-called 'Serbian world' project and that some representatives of the Government of North Macedonia have been advocating and promoting this concept; condemns the participation in meetings that attempt to establish a sphere of influence undermining the sovereignty of other countries and the stability of the region;
81. Recalls the need to open up Yugoslav secret service archives (UDBA and KOS), kept in both North Macedonia and Serbia; emphasises the need to open these archives region-wide to deal with the totalitarian past in a transparent way, with a view to strengthening democracy, accountability and institutions in the Western Balkans;
82. Welcomes North Macedonia's continued commitment to Euro-Atlantic security; commends North Macedonia's active role in the OSCE, in particular its chairmanship of the OSCE in 2023 in a complex geopolitical environment, and substantial contributions to EU crisis management missions and military operations; commends the country's alignment with the EU's foreign, security and defence policy, including its clear-cut response to Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine by aligning with the EU's restrictive measures against

Russia and Belarus and providing support to Ukraine; welcomes the signing of a security and defence partnership with the EU in 2024;

83. Regrets, however, that North Macedonia, was the only country in the Western Balkans to abstain on the European resolution on Ukraine in the UN General Assembly in February 2025 and instead co-sponsored the US resolution, alongside countries such as Georgia and Hungary, representing a negative signal regarding North Macedonia's alignment with the EU's common foreign and security policy and with the collective European commitment to upholding peace, international law and democratic principles;
84. Acknowledges North Macedonia's NATO membership as a significant geostrategic contribution to regional security and Euro-Atlantic stability, including through the country's active participation in NATO missions and operations and its strategic role in fostering peace and cooperation in the Western Balkans, as well as through the ongoing modernisation of its armed forces and reforms in the fields of crisis management, critical infrastructure and cyber defence; highlights the fact that NATO membership strengthens North Macedonia's defence capabilities, enhances security coordination with EU and NATO allies, and serves as a deterrent against external destabilisation efforts; encourages North Macedonia to deepen cooperation with the EU and NATO on countering hybrid threats, including through cybersecurity coordination, joint disinformation tracking and resilience-building, and to pursue its efforts to deter external destabilisation attempts; encourages North Macedonia to continue its investment in defence modernisation and alignment with NATO strategic priorities in order to further solidify its role as a reliable security partner;
85. Welcomes the agreement concluded at the EU-Western Balkans summit in Tirana on reduced roaming costs; calls, in this respect, on the authorities, private actors and all stakeholders to facilitate achieving the agreed targets of a substantial reduction of data roaming charges between the Western Balkans and the EU and further reductions leading to prices close to the domestic prices by 2027; welcomes the entering into force of the first phase of implementation of the roadmap for roaming between the Western Balkans and the EU;

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86. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the President of the European Council, the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the governments and

parliaments of the Member States, and the President, Government and Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia.