



TEXTS ADOPTED

P10_TA(2026)0218

2025 Commission report on North Macedonia

European Parliament resolution of 17 June 2026 on the 2025 Commission report on North Macedonia (2025/2254(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 Council conclusions of 18 July 2022 on Enlargement – North Macedonia and Albania and of 17 December 2024 on Enlargement,
- 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 Reform Agenda of North Macedonia as approved by the Commission under the Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans on 23 October 2024,
- 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 '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 8 July 2025 entitled '2025 Rule of Law Report' (COM(2025)0900), accompanied by the Commission staff working document entitled '2025 Rule of Law Report – Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in North Macedonia' (SWD(2025)0930),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 4 November 2025 entitled '2025 Communication on EU enlargement policy' (COM(2025)0690), accompanied by the Commission staff working document entitled 'North Macedonia 2025 Report' (SWD(2025)0753),
- having regard to the European Convention on Human Rights and the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights,
- having regard to the EU-Western Balkans summits, held in Sofia, Zagreb and Brdo pri Kranju in 2018, 2020 and 2021 respectively, and their declarations,
- having regard to the declaration of the EU-Western Balkans summit held in Brussels on 17 December 2025,
- 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 19th meeting of the Stabilisation and Association Committee between the European Union and the Republic of North Macedonia,
- having regard to the joint recommendations adopted at the 24th meeting of the EU-North Macedonia Joint Parliamentary Committee, held on 26 and 27 November 2025 in Strasbourg,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on North Macedonia, in particular its resolution of 24 October 2019 on opening accession negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania⁴,
- having regard to its resolution of 29 February 2024 on deepening EU integration in view of future enlargement⁵,
- having regard to its resolution of 11 March 2026 on the EU enlargement strategy⁶,
- having regard to the 2001 Ohrid Framework Agreement,
- 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 UN 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 on 17 June 2018, also known as the Prespa Agreement,
- having regard to the Third UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names in 1977,
- having regard to the post-monitoring dialogue with North Macedonia and the respective report adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on 8 January 2026,
- having regard to the sixth report of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance on North Macedonia, adopted on 29 June 2023,
- 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 from 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 Agenda 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 Rule 55 of its Rules of Procedure,

⁴ OJ C 202, 28.5.2021, p. 86.

⁵ OJ C, C/2024/6746, 26.11.2024, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/6746/oj>.

⁶ Texts adopted, P10_TA(2026)0077.

- having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (A10-0162/2026),
- A. whereas North Macedonia has held EU candidate country status since 2005 and successfully completed the screening process in December 2023;
- B. whereas North Macedonia's strategic commitment to EU accession and the national consensus among political parties are unwavering, and the support among citizens for EU membership has increased by almost 10 % to 71 % compared to 2024;
- C. whereas the EU's enlargement policy remains a strategic investment in peace, democracy, stability and prosperity on the European continent, and the credibility of the accession process depends on strict conditionality and fair treatment of candidate countries; whereas candidate countries must fully comply with the Copenhagen criteria and adhere to European values; whereas bilateral issues should be resolved bilaterally and in line with international law and should not be used to block or further politicise the enlargement process; whereas the credibility of the EU's enlargement policy depends equally on candidate countries delivering reforms and on the EU honouring its commitments once all conditions have been met;
- D. whereas Parliament has consistently supported North Macedonia's European perspective and maintained a continuous dialogue with the authorities of North Macedonia, stakeholders and civil society, underlining the need for sustained reforms, respect for democratic values, the rule of law and human rights, and the fulfilment of agreed commitments;
- E. whereas emigration continues to affect North Macedonia negatively, posing long-term risks to the financial sustainability of essential public services;
- F. whereas political polarisation, limited cross-party cooperation and the slow implementation of reforms continue to reduce public trust and involvement;
- G. whereas, especially in complex historical contexts, matters of language, identity and culture are inherently sensitive; whereas adding such issues to the enlargement discussions risks complicating and politicising the accession process of candidate countries, and should therefore be addressed with restraint and responsibility, in a manner that preserves the integrity of the EU's enlargement policy;
- H. whereas North Macedonia has made measurable yet slow progress on the implementation of its Reform Agenda, mainly covering reforms in areas other than the fundamentals; whereas the implementation of the Reform Agenda helps contribute to the

modernisation and development of the society, economy and institutions of North Macedonia;

- I. whereas the Council has concluded that it stands ready to hold an intergovernmental conference without further delay or additional political decisions, as soon as North Macedonia has fulfilled its commitment to complete the required constitutional changes, in line with its internal procedures;
 - J. whereas individual EU Member States have expressed their positions on North Macedonia's negotiating framework;
 - K. whereas finding a common approach to communicating and engaging with the past and establishing a culture of remembrance in a mutually respectful way is the foundation on which Bulgaria and North Macedonia should build their future relationship; whereas the relationship between the future generations of North Macedonia and Bulgaria will be a reflection of the education processes in the two countries;
1. Reiterates its full support for North Macedonia's dedication for EU membership, based on clear and measurable progress and strict but fair conditionality, as well as 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; recalls, however, that progress in accession negotiations continues to depend on persistent and in-depth reforms and be strictly merit-based;
 2. Notes, with regret, the lack of progress since its last report; underlines that the reform momentum requires renewed political commitment and clear actions, including the necessary constitutional amendments, constructive cross-party cooperation and effective parliamentary oversight; understands that the constitutional amendments are an important but divisive topic in a country that has overcome many challenges on its way to becoming an independent nation; underscores, in this regard, that all political stakeholders committed to the country's European path should urgently join forces to implement the necessary constitutional changes that will enable the opening of the first negotiation cluster; recalls that cross-party cooperation will continue to be essential when aligning national legislation with the EU *acquis* throughout the negotiations;
 3. Welcomes recent political signals in North Macedonia about a renewed commitment to undertake reforms; underlines, however, that the country will be assessed on the basis of a track record of implemented reforms only; underscores that the lack of cross-party cooperation to advance constitutional amendments is not an excuse to delay other necessary reforms, which would benefit the country and its citizens regardless of its European path;

4. 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 public support for accession in enlargement countries; urges, in this regard, the European Council and the Member States 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; notes that North Macedonia is one of the longest pending candidate countries, having been granted candidate status over two decades ago; underlines that the European Council's repeated postponement of the start of accession negotiations with North Macedonia has contributed to the country's political stakeholders and citizens having a negative perception of the prospects of EU accession;
5. Reiterates the European Council's call from its 2024 conclusions on North Macedonia to accelerate the completion of the constitutional changes; recalls that the Council has reaffirmed its readiness to convene another intergovernmental conference, without further delay or additional political decisions, as soon as North Macedonia has fulfilled its commitment, in line with its internal procedures, and that thereafter, the Council stands ready to open the first negotiating cluster as soon as possible, in line with the negotiating framework;
6. Commends the commitment of the citizens of North Macedonia to EU integration and the support they show to this project two decades on from starting the process; calls on the Commission to present clear proposals on how to apply instruments of gradual integration and guarantee their effective implementation, including those under the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, as a complement to and not as a substitute for full membership, in as many areas as possible to allow the citizens of North Macedonia to benefit from EU integration before accession;
7. Recalls the need for unanimous decision-making on the opening and closing of accession negotiations as major political milestones in the enlargement process; reiterates its call to enhance the EU's capacity to act through simplified processes, such as the use of qualified majority voting in the intermediate steps in the enlargement process, fully in line with the Treaties;
8. Recalls that bilateral disputes between countries should be addressed through open dialogue, involving civil society and experts, and genuine cooperation, in good faith and in accordance with international law, and should not be instrumentalised within the accession process;
9. Underlines that linguistic, cultural and national identities are the genuine foundation of every country and should not be put in

question by third parties; notes, furthermore, that such matters should not influence the EU accession process, which focuses on the implementation of the EU *acquis* and alignment with EU values and principles as set out in the Copenhagen criteria and the principles of good neighbourly relations, and which should be guided by objective criteria and solely based on merit; firmly rejects ethno-nationalist rhetoric, including by political actors, that foments division and undermines good neighbourly relations and relations between ethnic groups and communities; calls for the EU to step up efforts to curb such rhetoric and its impact;

10. Welcomes the stability of interethnic relations in North Macedonia and the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, including through equitable representation mechanisms; calls on all actors to preserve the foundations of stability and integrity of the country, advance relations, cooperation and exchanges between ethnic and minority groups and other communities, and avoid divisive rhetoric;
11. Takes note of the decision of the Constitutional Court of North Macedonia of 18 September 2024 on the annulment of certain provisions concerning quotas for representatives of Albanian and other communities in public institutions; underlines that the administration of the country should reflect its multi-ethnic composition; calls on the authorities to ensure the adequate and fair representation of all communities in line with the Ohrid Framework Agreement and to amend and implement the respective draft law fully in line with the opinion of the Venice Commission and EU standards; urges the authorities of North Macedonia to swiftly resolve the matter of the use of the Albanian language for state exams to ensure the practical implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement in both law and spirit, and not to portray the student protests disingenuously as politically driven or as a destabilising factor;
12. Notes that the Stabilisation and Association Committee recently welcomed progress in achieving the benchmarks for the opening of the fundamentals cluster through roadmaps for public administration reform and for the rule of law chapters; encourages North Macedonia to prepare and finalise all work related to the opening benchmarks for the fundamentals cluster in a transparent and meaningful consultation process with all relevant stakeholders, including civil society;

Functioning of democratic institutions

13. Notes that, while democratic institutions in North Macedonia function satisfactorily, political polarisation persists and delays much needed reforms and appointments; regrets that no attempts have been made to adopt the constitutional changes to which the country

has committed, and which are needed to open the fundamentals cluster; urges all political parties represented in the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia to overcome the heated campaign rhetoric and work together in a bipartisan fashion towards reaching an agreement on the necessary reforms; calls for the EU institutions and Member States to step up efforts to facilitate the resolution of this issue, including through technical assistance and dialogue facilitation;

14. Underlines that parliamentary oversight of the executive should be further strengthened and calls for enhanced scrutiny mechanisms, including greater involvement of opposition parties and civil society actors;
15. Welcomes the fact that the local elections held in October and November 2025 were generally competitive and that the election administration managed electoral preparations in a mostly efficient manner, despite some procedural shortcomings; notes that a comprehensive electoral reform is still overdue; reiterates its call for the implementation of the outstanding recommendations made by the OSCE/ODIHR and the Venice Commission in a transparent manner, involving all relevant stakeholders; calls, furthermore, for more transparency regarding the financing and the expenses of political parties and political advertising, both in traditional media and online, especially on social media; calls on North Macedonia to close regulatory gaps that enable covert influence in elections, in particular by regulating online political advertising, including through mandatory sponsor identification, expenditure transparency and meaningful disclosure of targeting criteria, and by addressing third-party financing and campaign-related spending channels; calls for equitable state funding and for all political parties and independent candidates to have equal access to the media;
16. Calls for genuine and meaningful political empowerment of women at local, regional and national level to enhance their participation in the electoral process and political decision-making; further recommends introducing gender quotas where they are not yet in place in order to ensure compliance with the gender balance commitment set out in the national gender equality strategy;
17. Recognises that moderate progress has been achieved in public administration reform and digital transformation, enhancing transparency and efficiency in the public sector, including through the recently adopted legislation on electronic identification in line with EU regulations; notes, however, that further efforts are needed, including reforms of local self-government and stronger implementation of the 2023-2030 public administration strategy that would enable local administrations to provide better services to citizens, develop and implement local and regional development

strategies, and ensure that the necessary administrative capacity is in place;

18. Urges further depoliticisation of the public administration and full implementation of merit-based recruitment and senior management selection procedures, in line with EU standards;
19. Welcomes the recent appointment of the new Ombudsperson; positively notes the format of public hearings for the appointment of public posts, which increase transparency and public scrutiny; expresses concern, however, regarding indications of political favouritism in the appointment process of members of the Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination; stresses that equality bodies must operate independently and free from political interference;

Media and civil society

20. Welcomes the fact that North Macedonia provides adequate legal guarantees on the freedom of expression; notes, however, the need for further improvement towards a truly enabling environment for free and independent media; calls on the media to exercise restraint in publishing rhetoric that may undermine relations between ethnic groups and communities; underscores the need for social media platforms to strengthen content moderation, particularly in relation to ethnic hate speech; encourages, furthermore, the development of local and regional private media;
21. Notes that effective implementation of the legal provisions for the protection of journalists remains challenging, particularly in cases of online harassment and gender-based violence targeting female journalists; is concerned that the lack of specific anti-SLAPP (strategic lawsuits against public participation) legislation and the limited awareness of this issue among judges, lawyers and journalists remain obstacles to effectively protecting journalists and public critics from SLAPPs; underlines the need for national legislation aligned with the Anti-SLAPP Directive⁷ to be adopted; expresses concerns about the socio-economic insecurity of media workers, with particular concerns for women working in media; calls on law enforcement and judicial officials to ensure effective investigations and sanctions for attacks, threats, harassment and pressure against journalists, with a specific focus on female journalists; urges the relevant authorities to proactively prevent and systematically prosecute all instances of hate speech, hate crimes

⁷ 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>).

and intimidation, to thoroughly investigate related attacks and to ensure the safety and security of their targets, such as journalists and people belonging to minorities, communities and other vulnerable groups;

22. Notes with concern the increasing concentration of media ownership and the risks of hidden control through intermediaries; calls for stronger safeguards for editorial independence, transparent state advertising practices and the protection of journalists; emphasises the urgent need for effective media reform and the adoption of effective anti-concentration measures, including full transparency of media ownership and of the allocation of public funds for state advertising, as well as compliance with rules on competition, State aid and intellectual property rights; emphasises that media pluralism is essential for democratic resilience; underlines the need to strengthen the independence and capacity of the media regulator, the public service broadcaster and the regulator of electronic communications;
23. Expresses concerns over the strategic acquisition of key television stations and news portals by Hungarian media executives, thereby enabling anti-European narratives to permeate public discourse in North Macedonia;
24. Expresses serious concern about persistent attempts to distort public debate and undermine trust in democratic institutions and the country's European path through coordinated manipulation of the information environment, including covert influence operations and malign narratives; calls for the EU and its Member States to undertake further efforts to support North Macedonia in combating malign foreign interference in the country, including through technical assistance; underlines that malign foreign influence weakens institutional credibility and polarises society; calls on the authorities to establish a comprehensive and institutionalised framework for democratic resilience with clearly defined responsibilities, regular risk assessments and public reporting, in line with evolving EU standards for the protection of democratic processes; calls, furthermore, for enhancing media and digital literacy, promoting fact-checking, combating hate speech in all its forms and strengthening resilience to hybrid threats that challenge democratic values and the country's goal of EU membership;
25. Notes that the lack of EU accession prospects in recent years has created space for authoritarian actors to increase their engagement in the country; encourages, therefore, transparent and fact-based public communication on EU-related reforms and the accession process in order to maintain broad societal support and counter disinformation; urges the Commission, in this regard, to communicate more effectively with the Macedonian public about the

persistent lack of political will to advance reforms that would address issues affecting all citizens of North Macedonia;

26. Welcomes the generally enabling environment for civil society organisations, while underlining the need to involve civil society more in priority areas and public consultations; notes the reactivation of the Council for Cooperation between the Government and Civil Society; calls for transparent public funding for civil society organisations and improvement of legislation and its alignment with international standards such as recommendations of the Venice Commission and the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance; underlines the importance of ensuring inclusive consultations and transparency with civil society organisations; calls on the Commission to support civil society organisations that are thoroughly monitoring and, if necessary, criticising the implementation of EU-related reforms;

Fundamental rights

27. Underlines the obligation of all member states of the Council of Europe to promptly implement pending judgments of the European Court of Human Rights; highlights that any legislative changes should comply with international standards and recommendations of the Venice Commission and be in line with the Recommendation of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, including the Law on Associations and Foundations and the implementation of court rulings concerning the registration of associations;
28. Notes that the general legal framework for fundamental rights is largely in line with European standards; calls, however, on the Government of North Macedonia to strengthen its implementation in practice, in particular by improving the institutional framework for gender equality and ensuring effective protection mechanisms against gender-based and domestic violence, access to healthcare services and the allocation of sufficient resources to victim support services; calls for the final adoption of the Law on Gender Equality, the Law on Labour Relations and the Law on Prevention and Protection from Harassment at Work, in line with international standards and the EU *acquis*, with a view to improving women's quality of life by addressing key gender equality issues, particularly regarding access to political, economic and social life;
29. Welcomes the 2023 amendments to the Criminal Code aligning domestic legislation with the Istanbul Convention; notes, in particular, the shift to a consent-based definition of rape and the explicit recognition of gender-based violence; welcomes, furthermore, the 2026 amendments strengthening the prosecution of domestic and gender-based violence and criminalising the non-consensual dissemination of intimate images; considers that these reforms represent meaningful alignment with European standards;

30. Underlines the need to continue working to improve the situation of non-majority communities, including with regard to the use of languages, as well as to fight discrimination and promote diversity; welcomes progress on the action plan on the protection of the rights of persons belonging to minorities or communities, and encourages North Macedonia to finalise it in an inclusive manner, establishing clear benchmarks, measurable indicators and a dedicated monitoring mechanism, with the goal of guaranteeing effective protection against discrimination and improving the fundamental rights of all citizens of North Macedonia; urges the relevant political stakeholders to refrain from using polarising and escalatory language that may affect relations among communities and minorities;
31. Stresses that North Macedonia's ethnic and cultural diversity constitutes an invaluable asset and should be turned into a source of strength to further consolidate democratic and inclusive governance and accelerate North Macedonia's path towards EU accession; encourages North Macedonia to include all of its ethnic communities in its constitution, foster inclusivity, protect diversity, fight discrimination and strengthen social cohesion in line with European values and democratic principles, and fully guarantee equal rights and opportunities for all;
32. Calls for intensified efforts to address the persistent socio-economic exclusion of Roma; urges the authorities to ensure the effective implementation of the strategy for Roma inclusion, with measurable indicators, proper institutional monitoring and adequate budget allocation; expresses concern about the continued practice of school segregation in certain municipalities and calls for proactive desegregation measures;
33. Notes, with concern, that hardly any progress has been achieved on reducing the barriers persons with disabilities face in most aspects of life; encourages greater effort to complete the legal and institutional framework on the rights of persons with disabilities and to improve its implementation and enforcement; notes persistent structural challenges in the work of North Macedonia's Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination owing to a lack of resources;
34. Calls for the legal protection of the rights of LGBTIQ+ persons to be improved and for hate speech against the community to be addressed, including online; is deeply alarmed by the escalation of hatred against LGBTIQ+ persons and civil society organisations in North Macedonia;
35. Urges all political actors to amend the Law on Civil Registry, ensure swift, accessible and unimpeded legal gender recognition and establish a transparent legal procedure in line with international

standards and the respective 2019 judgment of the European Court of Human Rights;

36. Urges the authorities to restore key anti-discrimination terminology in the Law on Primary Education and calls for the reintroduction of provisions on mandatory reporting of school violence in order to protect vulnerable groups;
37. Notes, with concern, the living conditions in prisons in North Macedonia, which need to be addressed urgently;
38. Welcomes enhanced cooperation on border management and calls on North Macedonia to strengthen migration management, combat criminal networks of migrant smugglers, human traffickers and other types of organised crime, improve alignment with the EU *acquis* and address persistent challenges in handling regular and irregular migration in full respect of human rights and international law; underlines that illegal pushbacks at North Macedonia's borders need to be prevented;
39. Commends the Government of North Macedonia for its rapid response to the antisemitic arson attack targeting a Jewish community building in Skopje on 12 April 2026;

Rule of law

40. Expresses concern that the judicial system, the independence of courts and the prosecution, and efforts to strengthen the rule of law and anti-corruption frameworks have not advanced sufficiently; calls on political stakeholders to urgently refrain from political interference in the judiciary; notes, with concern, deep structural weaknesses and negative trends in the functioning of the judiciary, including inadequate financing and staffing of judicial institutions, undermining its independence; calls, therefore, on North Macedonia to accelerate the implementation of the Strategy for Judicial Reform 2024-2028;
41. Underlines the importance of safeguarding the integrity and independence of the judiciary, including by strengthening the Judicial Council in line with the recommendation and opinion of the 2023 Venice Commission peer review mission;
42. Expresses concern that the amendments to the Criminal Code in North Macedonia, which have shortened statutes of limitations and reduced penalties for high-level corruption and abuse of office, have undermined ongoing judicial proceedings, including high-profile cases, generating a perception of impunity for prominent political actors and further weakening public confidence in the judiciary;

43. Calls on the competent authorities to ensure adequate follow-up on cases of potential hate crime, including those concerning ethnic groups and communities;
44. Notes, with concern, that no progress has been made in preventing and combating corruption and that corruption remains prevalent in many areas; underscores that a significant and inexplicable gap remains between formally announced corruption investigations and judicial findings of guilt in high-level corruption cases; calls on the Government of North Macedonia to improve the implementation of its national strategy for the prevention of corruption and conflict of interest and to adopt a new Criminal Code in line with the EU *acquis* and international standards; calls, furthermore, for strengthened whistleblower protection, as it remains weak, thus discouraging individuals from reporting instances of corruption; welcomes, however, North Macedonia's active participation in the International Treaty on Exchange of Data for the Verification of Asset Declarations, positioning the country as a regional reference point in this mechanism;
45. Urges the timely adoption of a comprehensive anti-corruption strategy for 2026-2030 with clear responsibilities and measurable targets, and calls for the implementation of outstanding recommendations of the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO);
46. Notes, with concern, that delays in court proceedings and resource constraints continue to hinder the establishment of a robust track record of high-level corruption cases; calls, in particular, for investigations and final convictions in high-level corruption cases, which could serve as an example that corruption is being addressed at all levels and that there will be no impunity;
47. 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;
48. Calls on North Macedonia to enhance its efforts to combat money laundering;
49. Calls for a more concerted effort in effectively countering organised crime; calls on the Government of North Macedonia to align national legislation on weapons, narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances with the EU *acquis*;
50. Encourages the national authorities to establish a comprehensive support framework for female survivors of gender-based violence, including by providing legally guaranteed financial assistance, guaranteeing free legal aid and exemption from court costs, creating a state fund to cover unpaid child support, and increasing investment

in women's economic empowerment through targeted training, social enterprises and local employment initiatives;

Socio-economic reforms

51. Supports continued efforts to modernise the economy, address skills mismatches, strengthen the digital economy and improve the business environment, which are consistent with responding to the competitive pressures of the EU internal market; emphasises that sustainable economic growth depends on the rule of law, the predictability of the judiciary and effective action against corruption; calls for the implementation of the 2023 Organic Budget Law, introducing fiscal rules and a Fiscal Council and strengthening the medium-term budget procedure;
52. Underlines the need to address social challenges, ensure high-quality employment policies, foster social convergence towards EU standards and achieve progress as regards the European Pillar of Social Rights;
53. Welcomes the first steps in implementing the Reform Agenda and the multiannual work programme under the Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans, which is on track to deliver concrete benefits to citizens; encourages North Macedonia to continue implementing its Reform Agenda; highlights the need to considerably speed up and deliver on the Reform Agenda, in particular on the fundamentals cluster; stresses that the disbursement of funds must remain strictly conditional on the fulfilment of agreed reform objectives and milestones; welcomes the adoption of the comprehensive cybersecurity framework and the updated Law on Electronic Documents, Electronic Identification and Trust Services; welcomes the objective and fact-based manner in which the Commission has assessed the implementation of reform steps thus far; warmly welcomes the recent disbursement of EUR 65,7 million to North Macedonia under the Reform and Growth Facility, following a positive assessment of reform implementation, namely in the areas of digitalisation and education;
54. Calls for the EU and North Macedonia to pursue strengthened oversight and meaningful participation of civil society organisations, business associations and social partners in all stages of the Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans, including the design of reform measures, implementation of projects and monitoring of results; recognises the need to improve the business climate and the functioning of the market economy; calls for greater focus to be placed on measures to correct market distortions and on social protective measures; calls for greater attention to be paid to negative demographic trends and to tackling the informal economy and its negative social and fiscal impacts;

55. Calls on the authorities to safeguard the independence and legitimate role of representative trade unions, and ensure respect for fundamental labour rights, including collective bargaining, in law and practice; calls, furthermore, on the authorities to ensure constructive and meaningful dialogue with trade unions to address urgent issues such as wages, working conditions and social protection, including as regards platform work;
56. Recognises the strategic importance of the cultural and creative sectors and the need for a stable, EU-aligned copyright framework; calls on North Macedonia to ensure fair remuneration for authors and performers, align collective rights management with the EU *acquis* and strengthen enforcement against piracy; underlines that weak protection of rights holders undermines media sustainability and the development of high-quality audiovisual content;
57. Calls for the continued implementation of labour market activation strategies for young people, the long-term unemployed, low-skilled individuals and disadvantaged groups, such as women, persons with disabilities, Roma and Egyptians;
58. Encourages the strengthening of youth policy by amending the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, establishing effective monitoring and a dedicated budget code, and improving local youth structures;
59. Welcomes the integration of North Macedonia into the geographical scope of the single euro payments area (SEPA);
60. Warmly welcomes the Commission proposal and the Council's authorisation to open negotiations to extend the EU 'roam like at home' regime to Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia and calls on the Commission and the Western Balkan partners to swiftly take the necessary steps for the reciprocal opening of the EU's and the Western Balkan partners' roaming markets; emphasises that extending the 'roam like at home' area to the Western Balkans would deliver tangible benefits to citizens and businesses alike, fostering people-to-people contacts, boosting economic ties, supporting educational exchanges and facilitating tourism;
61. Calls on North Macedonia to align with the EU *acquis* on the screening of foreign direct investments;

Environment, biodiversity, energy and transport

62. Calls for increased investments in transport and energy infrastructure and in advancing efforts to bring transport, energy and environmental legislation closer to EU standards; calls for national legislation to be aligned with EU passenger rights rules; underlines the need to strengthen connectivity and ensure

unimpeded trade flows, in particular in road traffic; calls for the implementation of the EU's Entry/Exit System, while bearing in mind its impact on professional drivers and supply chains;

63. Highlights the importance of cross-border connections such as the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) corridors VIII and X, as they are vital in increasing economic cooperation with neighbouring countries and people-to-people contacts; counts on the effective implementation of the commitments undertaken; welcomes the agreement between Bulgaria and North Macedonia on the construction of a cross-border railway tunnel, marking a decisive step towards completing the rail link along corridor VIII; notes the strategic importance of corridor VIII for the EU and NATO's geostrategic autonomy, serving as a key logistics route along NATO's southern flank;
64. Welcomes the adoption of the Energy Law in May 2025, but underlines that the country is still heavily dependent on coal; calls for the swift uptake of renewable energy and for increased focus to be placed on energy efficiency, especially for buildings;
65. Regrets that little progress has been made in environmental legislation; calls, in particular, for urgent action to address air and water quality and waste water management, including through increased and clearly earmarked national funding for water supply and sanitation infrastructure in urban and rural areas, integrating village water systems into public utilities where feasible, with clearly assigned institutional responsibilities, and ensuring regular sanitary and laboratory controls, with public disclosure of results and strengthened inspection oversight, including the introduction of sanctions for unregulated, poorly maintained, or polluting systems;
66. Notes, with concern, the persistently high levels of air pollution, particularly in urban areas, which are strongly linked to coal combustion and cement production; expresses serious concern, in this context, about the new Law on Control of Industrial Emissions and urges the authorities to amend it through a transparent and inclusive public procedure involving all relevant stakeholders, notably environmental experts and civil society organisations; stresses the urgent need to improve air quality in cities, including through measures such as the introduction of low emission zones and the acquisition of modern, less polluting public transport vehicles;
67. Notes, with concern, the limited progress in implementing horizontal environmental legislation and urges North Macedonia to fully align and effectively implement the Environmental Impact Assessment⁸

⁸ Directive 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on the assessment of the effects of certain

and Strategic Environmental Assessment⁹ Directives, including secondary legislation related to small hydropower projects;

68. Urges the Government of North Macedonia and local authorities to step up measures on biodiversity, to establish effective legal protection for Emerald sites designated under the Bern Convention and to accelerate the identification and designation of future Natura 2000 sites; urges the Government of North Macedonia to prioritise and expedite the adoption of a new law on nature protection to replace the outdated legal framework and ensure full alignment with the EU Habitats¹⁰ and Birds¹¹ Directives;
69. Welcomes North Macedonia's continued cooperation with Kosovo and Albania regarding the transboundary Sharr Mountains National Park; reiterates the urgent need to adopt the law on the re-proclamation of Mavrovo National Park and to finalise and effectively implement its management plan; encourages the inclusion of Jablanica in the national list of protected areas; urges North Macedonia to develop and implement a national action and management plan for the conservation of the Balkan lynx, aligned with the regional strategy and in cooperation with neighbouring countries, including with a view to maintaining ecological connectivity between key habitats, including Mavrovo and Jablanica and transboundary areas;

Regional cooperation and foreign policy

70. 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;
71. 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; underlines the importance of implementing international agreements in good faith, such as the

public and private projects on the environment (OJ L 26, 28.1.2012, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2011/92/oj>).

⁹ Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2001 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (OJ L 197, 21.7.2001, p. 30, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2001/42/oj>).

¹⁰ Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (OJ L 206, 22.7.1992, p. 7, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/1992/43/oj>).

¹¹ Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds (OJ L 20, 26.1.2010, p. 7, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2009/147/oj>).

Prespa Agreement and the Treaty of Friendship, Good-neighbourliness and Cooperation with Bulgaria;

72. Acknowledges the existence of differing interpretations concerning the historical characteristics of Macedonian society; underscores that its report does not aim to prejudge or constrain scholarly discourse on these matters nor do such interpretations bear influence on its assessment of North Macedonia's progress towards EU accession, which remains anchored in the Copenhagen criteria and the principles of good neighbourly relations; urges all parties to resume the work of the Joint Multidisciplinary Expert Commission on Historical and Educational Issues of Bulgaria and North Macedonia and to fulfil its work in good faith, thereby bringing societies closer together; condemns any attempts to replace historical monuments and/or artefacts, including the destruction of authentic cultural heritage; regrets the destruction and falsification of Bulgarian inscriptions;
73. Expresses strong concern that the most recent session of the Joint Intergovernmental Commission, set up under Article 12 of the Treaty of Friendship, Good-neighbourliness and Cooperation, was held on 17 July 2022 and that no new session has been held since then; urges the Governments of Bulgaria and North Macedonia to swiftly organise the third session of the Joint Intergovernmental Commission so as to advance the implementation of the Treaty and its Protocols;
74. Strongly urges the Joint Multidisciplinary Expert Commission on Historical and Educational Issues of Bulgaria and North Macedonia, established as a result of the Treaty of Friendship, Good-neighbourliness and Cooperation with Bulgaria, to achieve clear and tangible results; underlines that the texts should reflect the interpretation of historical facts and figures from the common history of both peoples based on objective, authentic and evidence-based historical sources and documents, scientific interpretation and historical events, as stipulated in the second protocol to the Treaty with Bulgaria;
75. Notes, with concern, the increasingly strong links between North Macedonia and the Government of Serbia, which pursues an illiberal agenda; cautions, furthermore, against growing Chinese economic and political influence in the region, in particular through infrastructure projects and lending; notes, with equal concern, reports of Russian efforts to project influence in North Macedonia; calls for the EU to support North Macedonia in strengthening resilience against external influence conducted through religious networks; expresses concern over narratives promoted in the region that question the sovereignty and territorial integrity of countries, including the so-called Serbian World;

76. Recalls the need to open the 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;
77. Commends North Macedonia's strong and long-standing alignment with the EU's foreign, security and defence policy, including on restrictive measures; regrets, however, the increase in abstentions on important votes in international bodies instead of following the majority EU position; calls, therefore, on the Government of North Macedonia, in cases of doubt, to align with the majority position within the EU; highlights North Macedonia's geostrategic significance and its important role as a member of NATO; welcomes the country's active participation in EU missions and operations under the common security and defence policy and its contribution to the EU's leading role in peacekeeping, conflict prevention and international crisis management; welcomes North Macedonia's readiness to enhance cooperation with the EU within the framework of the Security and Defence Partnership;

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78. 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.