**Follow up to the European Parliament non-legislative resolution on
the 2019-2020 Commission Reports on North Macedonia**

1. **Rapporteur:** Ilhan KYUCHYUK (Renew / BG)
2. **Reference numbers:** 2019/2174 (INI) / A9-0040/2021 / P9\_TA-PROV(2021)0114
3. **Date of adoption of the resolution:** 25 March 2021
4. **Competent Parliamentary Committee:** Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET)
5. **Brief analysis/ assessment of the resolution and requests made in it:**

The resolution adopted by the European Parliament is supportive of the EU accession perspective of North Macedonia and welcomes the country’s accession to NATO. The resolution calls on the Council to approve the negotiating framework and hold the first intergovernmental conference with North Macedonia as soon as possible to prevent further delays, confirming the credibility, objectivity and reliability of the accession process.

Overall, the resolution is largely in line with the major findings of the Commission’s 2019-2020 reports on North Macedonia in most areas of the EU acquis. It underlines that North Macedonia has made consistent progress and shown dedicated commitment on its path towards the EU. It acknowledges that the country is maintaining a steady pace in adopting EU reforms, in particular in key areas such as the rule of law, fight against corruption and organised crime, intelligence services and public administration reform and functioning of democratic institutions and encourages the leaders and stakeholders to make consistent efforts to further advance EU reforms. It takes note of the adoption by the government of two reform plans, namely the ‘Europe at Home’ agenda and the action plan on the fight against corruption, which aim to streamline the reform agenda in the areas of the fundamentals. Overall, the resolution shares also the assessment of the Commission regarding the economic situation, including the need to tackle unemployment and the informal economy. It recalls the EU support to address the consequences of the COVID-19 crisis and urges the authorities to make full use of continuing EU support, including by using the opportunities offered by the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans, aimed at bringing the region closer to the EU single market.

Concerning regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations, the resolution underlines the cooperative and constructive approach adopted by North Macedonia throughout the negotiations of the Prespa agreement with Greece and the Treaty on Good Neighbourly Relations with Bulgaria. It regrets that Bulgaria and North Macedonia have yet to find an understanding on pending bilateral issues and encourages the partners to continue to resolve bilaterally all outstanding bilateral issues that do not have a bearing on the accession process and to act in a constructive manner, and to refrain from actions that might undermine European integration and the EU’s wider interests. It encourages Bulgaria and North Macedonia to make full use of the framework provided by the Friendship Treaty and to reach a compromise over an action plan of concrete measures, the implementation of which will be regularly assessed in accordance with the Friendship Treaty. The resolution warns against the dangerous precedent for the future accession processes of the rest of the Western Balkan countries, if the accession process is misused for the settlement of cultural-historical disputes by the EU.

1. **Response to the requests and overview of the action taken, or intended to be taken, by the Commission:**

The resolution calls on the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Commission to improve coordination and strategically address disinformation and hybrid threats that seek to undermine the European perspective across the region (paragraph 57). The Commission services and the EEAS will continue to coordinate and strategically address issues related to disinformation and hybrid threats, including by supporting initiatives to enhance media literacy in the country. In its 2020 Report, the Commission encouraged the national authorities to increase efforts to fight disinformation and build up the resilience of media outlets. The Commission will continue to monitor the developments in these areas, including in its annual reports.

On the allocation of a sufficient amount of COVID-19 vaccines to the citizens of all Western Balkan countries (paragraph 59), the Commission is focusing on providing vaccines to the region as soon as possible. The COVAX mechanism, to which the EU has contributed over EUR 3 billion, delivered the first doses to the Western Balkans. In addition, the Commission is working with EU Member States and vaccine manufacturers to operationalise the resale of vaccine doses to the Western Balkans under the Advance Purchase Agreements for which the EU has made available EUR 70 million in grants to the Western Balkans. A first success was the conclusion of agreements announced on 20 April 2021 for the delivery of 651 000 doses of BioNTech/Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines to all the Western Balkans. These are funded by the grants and shared with the facilitation of Austria. The first delivery to all the partners in the region took place in early May, with regular deliveries to continue until August.

On the implementation of the ‘more for more’ principle rigorously, in particular in relation to North Macedonia for IPA (Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance) III or the Western Balkans Economic and Investment Plan (paragraph 68), the Commission implemented the ‘performance reward’ mechanism under IPA II, given notable progress made towards meeting the membership criteria and particularly good results achieved through the implementation of pre-accession assistance. Under IPA III, the entire programming mechanism is based on rewarding performance, both in terms of selection of the most relevant and mature projects and in terms of measurement of the overall progress made by the countries towards accession and commitments to reforms.