



Dear readers,

The political crisis is also keeping us on tenterhooks. Sometimes one gets the impression that the interests of the citizens are not the main focus of the political parties. Nobody knows how this will end.

Despite all concerns we will continue our commitment to the people. In our seminars, workshops and conferences you can experience a different Macedonia full of motivation to create a better future for the country and Europe. Party membership, religious affiliation and ethnicity don't play a role at all. Especially the youth tries to make a difference.

Best,

Johannes D. Rey  
& Team

Edited by Matthias  
Meyer

## FOCUS

### **Dissolution of Parliament, Opposition Boycott, Amnesty and Demonstrations**

Without the presence of the MPs from the opposition, the Macedonian Assembly was dissolved on 6 April. Parliament speaker Trajko Veljanovski did not call for voting in the previously submitted conditional resignations of the Ministers and Deputy Ministers from the oppositional SDSM, who were part of the Interim Government in charge for organizing and conducting the elections. According to the constitutional prerogatives in terms of new elections, the Parliament Speaker signed his decision on 15 April with the date of the elections set for 5 June.

After the announcement for the dissolution of Parliament, Zoran Zaev, leader of SDSM, stated at a press conference that his party will not participate in the elections. He supported his decision by arguing that the principles and necessary conditions of the Przino Agreement have not been fulfilled. Some smaller parties also announced their decision to boycott the elections if they are to be held on 5 June.

President Gjorgje Ivanov made a general act to abolish all criminal procedures against politicians who are undergoing judicial proceedings, both from the governing and opposition parties. He stated that this step was for the sake of the stability of the country and the protection of national interests. Ivanov is convinced he was taking a huge step towards mutual reconciliation with this decision and that he was helping the international representatives as well, who were having honest intentions for Macedonia. He further stated he wanted a finale with fair and democratic elections according to all standards, supported and acknowledged by the international community, and that he was taking full responsibility for this decision.

The President's decision for the general amnesty was received by the public with surprise, disagreement and protests. The international community demanded further explanations for this act, expressing doubts over the achievement of the goal set by the President. Further, the decision has raised serious concerns regarding the rule of law and the international community asked Ivanov to reconsider his decision. The major political parties in the country, VMRO-DPMNE, SDSM and DUI, as well as other smaller parties, expressed their disagreement with Ivanov's decision.

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### GUEST CORNER

The European Movement in the Republic of Macedonia (EMRM) acts in the frames of the European Movement International (EMI) with headquarters in Brussels. In accordance with the EMI's Statute, which enshrines the key European values such as: development of democracy, maintaining of peace and stability, socialization for tolerance, emphasis on the importance of the economic development and well-being, the EMRM makes efforts to affirm these values among the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia. Essentially, every phase of the transitional period of Macedonia included debates in the EMRM on current issues, including transparent public activities in order to bring the EU closer to the citizens as well as building bridges between the Government, municipalities, students and the citizens in general.

The celebration of the 9 May-Europe Day is an event carried out by EMRM each year, by organizing a number of debates and celebrations

Following the developments of the political situation in the country, the international community has initiated a meeting of the leaders of the four main political parties in order to find a solution for the crisis. The meeting should have taken place on 22 April in Vienna and would have also been attended by the three MEPs involved in achieving and implementing the Przino Agreement, Ivo Vajgl (EU-rapporteur on Macedonia), Eduard Kukan and Richard Howitt (EU and US Ambassadors to Macedonia), as well as EU Enlargement Commissioner Johannes Hahn. The leader of the oppositional SDSM, Zoran Zaev, announced two conditions for his participation on the mediation talks in Vienna, i.e. President Ivanov to withdraw the decision for abolishment and withdrawing of the decision for dissolution of the Parliament and conducting elections on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June. Thus, this effort of the EU aimed at resolving the crisis in the country has failed and the meeting in Vienna was cancelled.

### Continuous Tensions on the Macedonian-Greek Border

After the closure of the Balkan route, Macedonia is facing constant pressure on its southern border due to the daily attempts of thousands of refugees who are stuck in Idomeni, trying to cross the border illegally. On 10 April, 14 policemen and nine army members were injured whilst Macedonian security forces intervened as a group of several thousand migrants tried to enter Macedonian territory from Greece. The incident occurred when about 2.000 migrants began violent protests about 200 meters from the border at quota 59 and started throwing stones and various objects at Macedonian security forces. Afterwards, the security forces took measures to deter the migrants and used tear gas. Following this event, Greece delivered two demarches to the Macedonian authorities, stating that the use of violence would not help solve the refugee problem and violates both international and humanitarian law.

On 13 April, the Presidents of Macedonia, Croatia and Slovenia, Gjorge Ivanov, Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic and Borut Pahor paid a visit to the allied police forces and the migrant transit center in Gevgelija. After the closure of the Balkan route, Macedonia has met its commitments in refugee crisis management and securing the southern border. However, Europe must send a clear signal to the people who have been waiting to see if some-one grants entry or not, the Presidents said during their visit.

### AND WE SAY...

#### Regarding the Current Political Situation

Having in mind that the country finds itself in a political crisis for a longer period already, facing extraordinary political confrontations and destructive politics, the decision of President Ivanov for abolishment has contributed to even bigger disappointment, polarization and revolt in the public.



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featuring intellectual discourse, including events with the involvement of a great number of people. We have to emphasize that the citizens of Macedonia accept these events with great enthusiasm. During those days we really live with the spirit of Europe. The question that was always being asked a couple of years ago was: When will Macedonia become an EU member? Although this question was unrealistic, in all its naivety it always created sympathies. We have to emphasize that the situation changed in the last three years. Unfortunately, the citizens are not asking this question anymore. Having in mind all the accumulated problems, the European integration process has become a more distant issue in comparison to the everyday life of the people. The discourse on the European values and European perspective diluted in the debates on political issues, institutional erosion and low standard of living which burden the daily life of the citizens, but also because of the

The political situation deteriorated even more and has left the country at a stage where it was before the signing of the Przino Agreement.

The upcoming parliamentary elections are more than needed because this undefined political situation surely affects the country's economic development and its Euro-Atlantic perspective, causing serious damage to both the country and its citizens. But elections without the participation of the opposition, together with the possibility of permanent protests and riots until the election day will not solve the crisis. Certainly, this crisis can only be solved through political means: negotiations between the political parties and the implementation of strict guaranties. Not only in terms of meeting the highest international standards for conducting fair and democratic elections but also regarding the exact date for the elections without any possibility for future delay.

The cancelation of the meeting in Vienna is a further proof that at the moment the political elites are not delivering any constructive steps towards resolving the political crisis. Any further delay or ignorance of the Przino Agreement will only move the country further away from its Euro-Atlantic aspirations. Finally, all political actors, the governing parties as well as the opposition, should be aware of their responsibility to ensure a democratic progress and need to put the interests of the country and of its citizens above party interests.

#### Regarding the Recent Developments on the Southern Border

The situation at the Macedonian-Greek border raises concerns because of recent incidents with migrants in Greece trying to enter Macedonian territory illegally. If the Balkan route is going to remain closed, then the people left in the camp should be relocated as soon as possible because the existence of the refugee camp in Idomeni gives its inhabitants the hope that the corridor might be reopened eventually.

It is more than necessary that the EU-Turkey agreement on the relocation of refugees is going to be implemented fully and without any difficulties. The announcement that Greece will probably host the mini Balkan summit on 20 April, dedicated to find ways to tackle the refugee crisis, raises hopes that the countries in the region will find ways to improve their cooperation despite all their disputes, not only regarding the refugee crisis but also in other areas of common interest.

#### KAS NEWS CORNER

From 30-31 of March, the KAS office in Macedonia hosted representatives from both the KAS office in Greece and the KAS Headquarters in Berlin: Ms. Suzanna Vogt (official representative of the KAS Office in Athens) and Ms. Christina Krause (coordinator of projects and activities dealing with

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name issue. Having in mind the above, the key word describing this year's celebration of the Europe Day is: Where is the key for the European integration process of Macedonia? A significant segment of the EMRM's activities concern the youth. Here we would emphasize the great student event that was jointly created by EMRM and KAS. This event is taking place at many different locations with over 200 students from all universities in Macedonia. It is very interesting to participate in a debate where the students from the Tetovo University discuss with the students from Shtip. We notice that there are no barriers between the young people, but everyone is cautious when choosing their words – not to say something that would accidentally change the atmosphere of unity at the event, at which the lesson on the relevancy of tolerance is repeated. Regardless of this caution by the young people, still they are brave enough to speak openly about the barriers they are facing on the path towards their future: unemployment, nepotism, corruption, instrumentalization of the education and the confusing plan for the future.

the problematic of refugees and migration). On this occasion, a working meeting with the Mayor of Gevgelija, Mr. Ivan Frangov, was held where the possible cooperation between the two offices of KAS in Skopje and Athens in terms of fostering the Macedonian-Greek cooperation was discussed. The guests also paid a visit to the refugee camp in Idomeni.



*KAS-Delegation with the Mayor of Gevgelija, Mr. Ivan Frangov*

KAS emphasizes the inclusion of young people in politics and society. For this reason, we supported the organization of the international seminar "Digital Europe: Youth Policies for Prosperity". The seminar took place from 7-10 April in Skopje and was organized by The Democrat Youth Community of Europe (DEMYC) in cooperation with the Youth Forces Union of the VMRO-DPMNE and with the support from KAS and the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies.

KAS is dedicated to build bridges and promote a new political dialogue. We hosted the representatives from the Eduardo Frei Foundation (EFF) from the Netherlands. During their visit, the representatives of EFF held numerous meetings with political and NGO representatives. Furthermore, a seminar on the topic "Successful Politics by and for Women" was organized where representatives of the Women's Union of VMRO-DPMNE took part. During the seminar, the current role of women in politics and society was discussed, but also the need to continuously promote and foster equal opportunities for women in all aspects of society. The EFF delegation also had the opportunity to be informed about the impact of the refugee crisis and was introduced to the measures undertaken in the process of dealing with this challenge.

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The topic for debate this year will be: "Awaiting the European Integration: Emigration from the Country or fight for better Opportunities for young People". This event will also include a public speaking competition on the following topic: "The big Wait at the Doorstep of the European Union: Where is the Key?"

Prof. Mileva Gjurovska  
(PhD)

President of EMRM

*Views expressed in the Guest Corner are the personal views of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation.*



*With the participants of the seminar "Successful Politics by and for Women"*

**HAVE YOU HEARD?**

The Republic of Macedonia and the Federal Republic of Germany exercise a considerable trade cooperation ever since independence in 1991. Nowadays, Germany is Macedonia's most important trading partner. External trade with Germany amounted to 12.6% of total imports and 44.3% of total exports in 2015. As the largest trading partner, Germany participates in both foreign direct investment (FDI) as well as in opening branch offices across the country. About 150 German companies efficiently operate in different sectors, especially in the automotive industry. This successful cooperation between both countries, in particular FDI, results in the creation of jobs for about 15.000 Macedonian citizens.