

## Summary

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (fYRoM) held trouble-free elections on Sunday despite recent ethnic and political unrest, in a boost for the Balkan country's hopes to start European Union entry talks later this year. The fYRoM's bid to join the EU and NATO has been held hostage for years by a long-running dispute with neighbouring Greece over the country's name, which Greece wants changed because it is also the name of a northern Greek province. However, mindful of the threat of instability, the EU has signalled it might agree to open accession talks with the fYRoM this year even without a solution to the name dispute. The West brokered a deal whereby the guerrillas disarmed and entered politics but relations remain tense, exacerbated by the fYRoM's slow progress towards EU membership. After boycotting parliament for over two months, the leftist opposition of Social Democrats joined the elections at the last moment. (uk.reuters.com, UK, 24/3).

- uk.reuters.com, UK, 24/3, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2013/03/24/uk-macedonia-election-idUKBRE92NOK220130324?feedType=RSS&feedName=worldNews>

The European Union is ready to help the peace process started in Turkey said EU High Representative, Catherine Ashton and EU Enlargement Commissioner, Štefan Füle. Thousands have died in the 30-year war for an ethnic Kurdish homeland in Turkey's south-east. Ashton and Füle expressed the wish that concrete steps be taken to implement the truce. In a joint statement they said the EU has repeatedly encouraged all sides to work non-stop to bring peace and prosperity to Turkish citizens. The European Union will therefore give all its support to this process and is ready to give aid through funding to assist countries which have applied for EU membership (ansa.it, IT, 22/3). Frankfurter-Rundschau suggested that Europe might well have reached the end of a 30-year conflict. Closing the final chapter on the Turkish-Kurdish conflict could well be the beginning of serious accession talks with the EU (Frankfurter-Rundschau, DE, 22/3).

- ansa.it, IT, 22/3, [http://www.ansa.it/europa/notizie/rubriche/politica/2013/03/22/Turchia-Ashton-Ue-pronti-aiutare-processo-pace\\_8443858.html](http://www.ansa.it/europa/notizie/rubriche/politica/2013/03/22/Turchia-Ashton-Ue-pronti-aiutare-processo-pace_8443858.html)

- Frankfurter-Rundschau, DE, 22/3, [http://194.250.231.110/delivery/20130322/mi/item\\_151978447.pdf](http://194.250.231.110/delivery/20130322/mi/item_151978447.pdf)

Croatia, it was reported, had performed eight of the ten tasks that the European Commission imposed last October, so the Croatians are expecting a positive signal from Brussels. Prime Minister Zoran Milanović said that the fight against corruption should be continued as this was an important precondition for Croatia's accession to the Schengen area. It is Croatia's first objective after the country becomes a member of the EU he said (vg.hu, HU, 25/3).

- vg.hu, HU, 25/3, <http://www.vg.hu/kozelet/politika/eu-csatlakozas-pozitiv-jelzest-varnak-a-horvatok-brusszelbol-400303>

The Prime Minister of Serbia Ivica Dačić called for compromise in the dialogue with Kosovo stressing it will be hard to reach an agreement on April 2, if the proposal by Belgrade on the functions of the Association of Serbian Municipalities are not adopted (focus-fen.net, BG, 25/3). Public opinion both in Kosovo and in Serbia, which frequently interprets any compromise as defeat, only adds to the problem (Dnevnik, SI, 23/3).

- focus-fen.net, BG, 25/3, <http://www.focus-fen.net/?id=n302562>

- Dnevnik, SI, 23/3, [http://194.250.231.110/delivery/20130323/mi/item\\_152175869.pdf](http://194.250.231.110/delivery/20130323/mi/item_152175869.pdf)

## Key Quotes

**Croatia: EU final report issued today (Tuesday). "The Conclusions will be positive", EU sources said. EU Enlargement Commissioner Štefan Füle will personally hand the report to Government Representatives in Zagreb** (Milano Finanza, IT, 25/3).

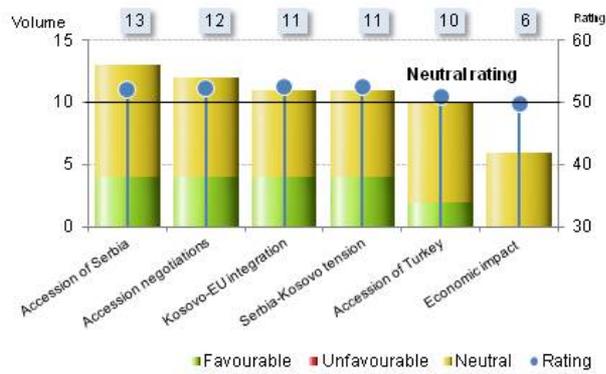
[http://www.milanofinanza.it/news/dettaqlio\\_news.asp?id=201303251634076665&chkAgenzie=TMFI](http://www.milanofinanza.it/news/dettaqlio_news.asp?id=201303251634076665&chkAgenzie=TMFI)

**Vincent Degert stated that in spite of the growing Euro scepticism among the Serbian citizens which is an emotional response to the crisis in the EU and the dialogue with Pristina, the majority of citizens are aware of the importance of the reform processes, and they also support the reforms** (ansamed.info, IT, 25/3).

[http://www.ansamed.info/ansamed/en/news/nations/serbia/2013/03/25/Serbia-journalists-awarded-reporting-EU-integration\\_8458005.html](http://www.ansamed.info/ansamed/en/news/nations/serbia/2013/03/25/Serbia-journalists-awarded-reporting-EU-integration_8458005.html)

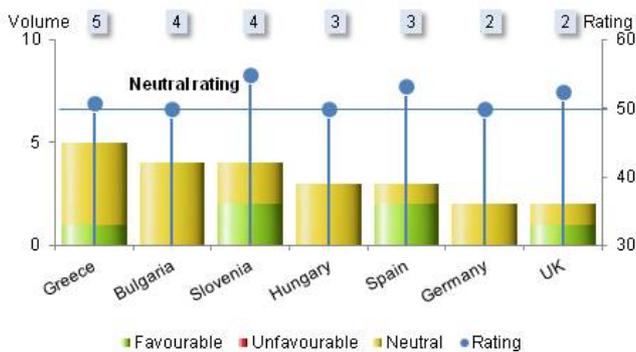
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ELARG: **Highlights**  
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Volume	25 items
Rating	51.6
Favourable %	24%
Unfavourable %	0%
Neutral %	76%

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ELARG: **Key Stakeholders & Sources**  
by volume, favourability & rating

ELARG: Stakeholders & Sources	Number of mentions
Baroness Catherine Ashton, (High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, EU)	12
Hashim Thaçi (Prime Minister, Kosovo)	10
Ivica Dačić (Prime Minister, Serbia)	10
Angela Merkel (Chancellor, Germany)	6
Gerhard Schroeder (Former German Chancellor)	6
Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (Prime Minister, Turkey)	4
Štefan Füle (Enlargement Commissioner, EC)	3
Aleksandar Vučić (First Deputy PM)	3

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