



## Summary

Enlargement Commissioner Štefan Füle and a group of states, led by Austria, put pressure on ministers to start negotiations with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (fYRoM) as soon as possible, but Greece has firmly said no (Vecer, SI, 13/12). It was however the opposition of Bulgaria which ignited the powder keg in Skopje, where the media have accused Sofia of doing "*the dirty work of the Greeks*." according to Figaro (FR, 13/12). The government of the fYRoM has expressed regret that once again it failed to get a date to start negotiations with the European Union (bTV-Bulgaria, BG, 12/12).

- Vecer, SI, 13/12, [http://194.250.231.110/delivery/20121213/mi/item\\_142654098.pdf](http://194.250.231.110/delivery/20121213/mi/item_142654098.pdf)
- Figaro, FR, 13/12, [http://194.250.231.110/delivery/20121213/mi/item\\_142639210.pdf](http://194.250.231.110/delivery/20121213/mi/item_142639210.pdf)
- bTV-Bulgaria, BG, 12/12 (no link available)

In Bulgaria, the President, Rosen Plevneliev, said that Bulgaria would judge the fYRoM's good will only upon the latter's actions, wrote the fYRoM daily Dnevnik. Plevneliev remarked that there was a need for the good neighbourly relations between the two countries to be secured before the fYRoM would be given a chance to join the European Union. "*I welcome the decision of the Council of the EU ministers. It is a wise, and fair decision, because it points at the problems and takes account of the position of the EU member states in the region, which are well acquainted with the current situation and have something to say,*" he added (focus-fen.net, BG, 13.12). But Bulgaria's first democratically elected president, Zhelyu Zhelev said it was a mistake; "*not the right thing to do*" according to Dnevnik. In his opinion, Bulgaria's decision not to give a date for the start of accession talks brings Bulgaria down to the level of Greece, who blocked their NATO and EU accession purely because of the name. "*This does not mean that we should put up with the lies and fabrications in the fYRoM about Bulgaria, but this is another matter of concern, when the support to Macedonia's EU bid is a responsibility of Bulgaria,*" Zhelev remarked (focus-fen.net, BG, 13/12).

- focus-fen.net, BG, 13.12, <http://www.focus-fen.net/?id=n294612>
- focus-fen.net, BG, 13/12, <http://www.focus-fen.net/index.php?id=n294621>

According to the Suddeutsche Zeitung (DE, 13/12), the European Commission's attempt to have the member states determine a fixed date for Serbia joining the EU has failed. The causes are Germany and Lithuania's reservations regarding the normalisation of the relationship between Kosovo and Serbia. The core of the dispute is the underlying question of whether HR Catherine Ashton's mediation between Serbia and Kosovo concerning common border controls on two border crossing points has led to sustainable and visible improvements of the relationship between the two states. Germany is particularly concerned about existing Serbian parallel structures in Northern Kosovo. Thus, instead of being able to reward Serbia for its efforts, Ms Ashton now has to make a report on the state of progress of Serbian-Kosovo relations. European Union officials said the door to Serbia and its former province Kosovo remained open if their relationship improved, pledging to review their bids to strengthen ties with the EU in the next six months. "*A visible and sustainable improvement in relations between Serbia and Kosovo is needed so that both can continue on their respective European paths,*" European affairs ministers from the EU's 27 members, most of which recognise Kosovo, said in a joint statement (uk.news.yahoo.com, UK, 12/12).

- Suddeutsche-Zeitung, DE, 13/12, [http://194.250.231.110/delivery/20121213/mi/item\\_142640506.pdf](http://194.250.231.110/delivery/20121213/mi/item_142640506.pdf)
- uk.news.yahoo.com, UK, 12/12, <http://uk.news.yahoo.com/eu-holds-promise-review-ties-serbia-kosovo-134849113.html>

## Key Quotes

**Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borisov: "Our position toward Macedonia is resolute: we have always wholly supported the country in its EU and NATO accession. It is our closest country and our best friend, but criteria have to be met first, especially good neighbourly relations".** (Newsbeast.gr, Bulgaria, 14/12)

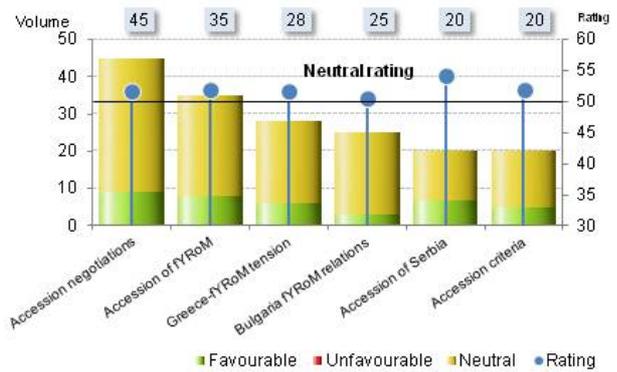
<http://www.newsbeast.gr/world/arthro/458794/prepei-na-ekplirothoun-prota-ta-kritiria/>

**Dismissing claims that Mr Barroso had the power to enforce his opinion and remove an independent Scotland's EU membership, Ms Sturgeon said: "The European Commission, however important, is not the final arbiter of these matters,"** continuing, "**Mr Barroso's statements do not constitute a 'ruling', as some have suggested.**" (NewsnetScotland.com, UK, 14/12)

<http://newsnetScotland.com/index.php/referendum/6432-independent-scotland-will-not-be-forced>

## Charts

ELARG: **Leading Daily Issues**  
by volume, favourability & rating

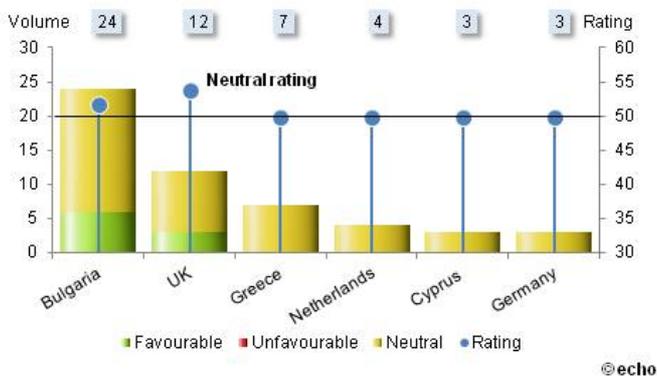


ELARG: **Highlights**  
by volume, favourability & rating

Volume	59 items
Rating	52
Favourable %	20%
Unfavourable %	0%
Neutral %	80%

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ELARG: **Leading Daily Countries**  
by volume, favourability & rating



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

ELARG: Stakeholders & Sources	Number of mentions
Rosen Plevneliev (President of Bulgaria)	15
Štefan Füle (Commissioner for Enlargement, EC)	9
Boyko Borisov (Prime Minister, Bulgaria)	6
José Manuel Barroso (President, European Commission)	5
Nikolay Mladenov (Foreign Minister, Bulgaria)	5
Miroslav Mišković (Serbian businessman)	4
Aleksandar Vučić (Minister of Defence, Serbia)	4

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