



Summary

Reacting to the European Council's failure to achieve an agreement about a starting date for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia's (fYRoM) accession negotiations, the United Macedonian Diaspora says that the Union's agreement with the nationalistic programmes of Greece and Bulgaria is disturbing the stability in the region and that Macedonia should be proud of its progress in the reforms, building of a market economy and a solid macro economic situation, as well as of the development of a multicultural society and religious tolerance (focus-fen.net, BG, 15/12). *"The only guarantee for the further existence of the fYRoM is its faster EU accession and immediate accession to NATO"* President of FOCUS News Agency Krasimir Uzunov said in an article entitled 'Macedonia Cries' (focus-fen.net, BG, 15/12)

- focus-fen.net, BG, 15/12, <http://www.focus-fen.net/index.php?id=n294702>
- focus-fen.net, BG, 15/12, <http://www.focus-news.net/index.php?id=n1728969>

Shortly before joining the European Union, Croatia was shocked by its downgrade to junk status by Standard & Poor's as many Croats are hoping for economic recovery by joining the EU (Presse-Austria, AT, 17/12). According to the Sunday Times (UK, 16/12) the European Commission is planning to spend £16m on a public relations campaign to promote European enlargement ahead of Croatia's entry next year. The commission has awarded the PR contract in order to combat *"myths, prejudices and misinformation"* about enlargement. The move follows wide-spread criticism that both Bulgaria and Romania were woefully ill-prepared when they joined in 2007. It also comes after a Commission report warned that Croatia's centre-left government had to strengthen the rule of law and step up its fight against corruption. *"The EU has already pumped millions into persuading the people of Croatia to join the EU. Now it wants to spend millions more to convince them? and us? that they haven't made a colossal mistake,"* said Paul Nuttall, a UKIP MEP. A spokesman for the commission said: *"Enlargement is a key EU policy supported by all members and one which defines the European project."* The PR contract is intended to *"support an informed debate on this."*

- Presse-Austria, AT, 17/12, http://194.250.231.110/delivery/20121217/mi/item_143007651.pdf
- Sunday-Times, UK, 16/12, http://194.250.231.110/delivery/20121216/mi/item_142949990.pdf

Slovene Foreign Affairs Minister Karl Erjavec will propose that the government should prolong the mandate of France Arhar, the Slovene representative in the Slovene-Croatian dispute over the Ljubljanska Bank. Erjavec also allowed for the possibility that Slovenia would not ratify the Croatian accession treaty with the EU by the summer if the issue is not resolved in time. He stressed that Slovenia supported Croatian EU membership, but added that the issues that burden Slovene-Croatian relations had to be resolved first. (Delo, SI, 15/12). In Croatia the President, Ivo Josipović said *"It really wouldn't be good if we quarrelled with the neighbours in a way that would jeopardise our membership of the European Union, and it certainly wouldn't be good for the neighbours either"* adding *"It's important to find a just solution. A solution that will, on the one hand, be sustainable and allow our Slovenian neighbours to meet existing commitments, and on the other, to ensure, in the long and short term, that all citizens get their money"* (Vecer, SI, 17/12).

- Delo, SI, 15/12, http://194.250.231.110/delivery/20121215/mi/item_143009886.pdf
- Vecer, SI, 17/12, http://194.250.231.110/delivery/20121217/mi/item_143023342.pdf

Key Quotes

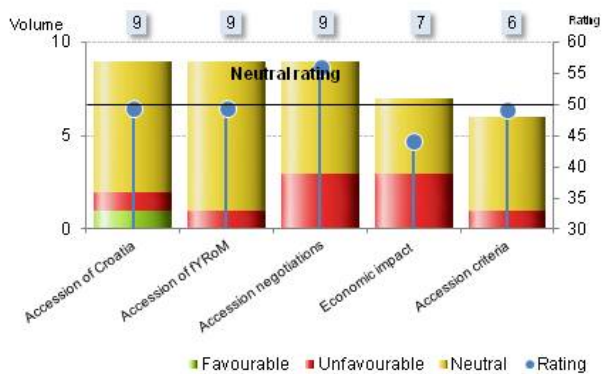
We fully back the accession of all Balkan countries to NATO and the EU. This is the only way to achieve peace, integration and cooperation, PM Borisov was quoted as saying by the BNR. (Focus News, Bulgaria, 18/12)
<http://www.focus-fen.net/index.php?id=n294908>

"For us [joining the EU] was the ultimate institutional confirmation that we were a regular European country," Poland's Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski says. (Manchester Wired, UK, 18/12)
<http://www.manchesterwired.co.uk/news.php/1470440-Germany-Poland-and-the-shifting-centre-of-European-union-power>

Every nation that has joined the Union, which has grown into the biggest, most successful single market the world has ever seen, has become more prosperous as a result. The attraction of EU membership has helped democracy and freedom to spread across the continent, from the ravaged defeated World War II fascist dictatorships of Italy and Germany, to countries like Spain, Portugal and Greece, where such regimes endured longer, and the nations of Central Europe that spent decades in the grip of Soviet communism. (Sabotage Times, UK, 18/12)
<http://www.sabotagetimes.com/life/why-the-european-union-deserved-the-nobel-peace-prize/>

Charts

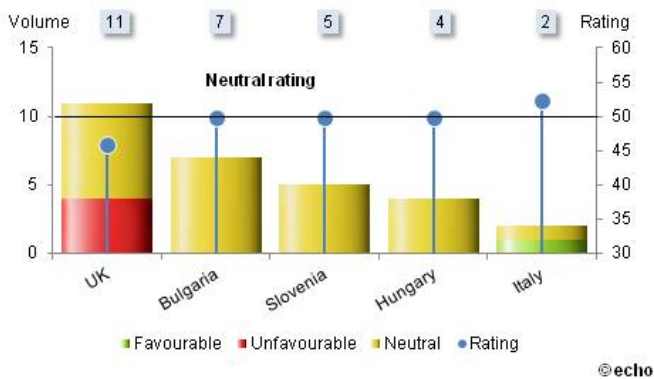
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ELARG: **Key Stakeholders & Sources**
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ELARG: Stakeholders & Sources	Number of mentions
Angela Merkel (Chancellor, Germany)	5
Karl Erjavec (Foreign Minister, Slovenia)	5
José Manuel Barroso (President, European Commission)	4
Zoran Milanović (Prime Minister, Croatia)	3
Ivo Josipović (President, Croatia)	3
Miroslav Mišković (Serbian businessman)	3
Aleksandar Vučić (Defence Minister, Serbia)	3
Krasimir Uzunov (President of FOCUS News Agency, Bulgaria)	3
France Arhar (Financial expert of Slovenia)	3
Zdravko Rogić (Financial expert of Croatia)	3

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