

NEW COMMISSIONER FOR ENLARGEMENT OLLI REHN VISITED SKOPJE ON 26 NOVEMBER

Only four days after taking up office as Commissioner for Enlargement, now covering also the countries of the Western Balkans, Dr Olli Rehn paid a short visit to Skopje on 26 November in order to be acquainted with the country's leadership and discuss the situation in the country.

During his visit, Dr Rehn held meetings with the President of the Republic, Branko Crvenkovski, with senior members of the Government as well as with leaders of the political parties.

Dr Rehn enquired about the political and economic situation in the country, the status of implementation of the European Partnership and of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, as well as about the status of preparation of replies to the European Commission's Questionnaire on the country's application for membership to the European Union.

He reiterated Commission's commitment to support the efforts of the country in its European Union aspirations and encouraged the authorities to move ahead with the implementation of the reforms needed to get the country closer to the European Union.



Prime Minister designate Buckovski shakeshands with Dr Rehn



At a meeting with President Crvenkovski



Deputy Prime Minister Sekerinska welcomes Dr Rehn



Commissioner Rehn and Foreign Affairs Minister Mitreva

On the occasion of the entering into force of the new Commission, on 22 November, Olli Rehn stated: "With the Stabilisation and Association process, the Western Balkan countries have been given a clear European perspective. This is reflected in the structure of the new European Commission where these countries belong to my responsibilities as Commissioner for Enlargement. Many specific challenges remain for the Western Balkans that have to be dealt with in the context of the Stabilisation and Association process. Progress towards accession will depend on the rate at which commitments made by the countries of the region are fulfilled. Each country will proceed at its own pace and on its own merits."



REGIONAL SEMINAR ON EUROPEAN AUDIOVISUAL POLICY IN SKOPJE

The second European Audiovisual Seminar for the Western Balkans took place in Skopje, on 29 and 30 November 2004, organised by the European Commission, in cooperation with the Council of Europe.

This second seminar in Skopje focused on the role of the broadcasting regulatory authorities within an effective and stable regulatory system. This question is clearly one of the EC priority issues in the area of media policy, as confirmed

overall purpose of the Seminar was to review the state of legislative and implementation progress concerning broadcasting regulatory bodies in each of the Western Balkan countries and to allow the exchange of experiences among regulatory authorities, representatives of the governments and parliaments and other interested parties. It also aimed at identifying local needs and concrete steps for the continuous international and EC support for the ongoing legislative

made by Ambassador Donato Chiarini, Head of Delegation of the European Commission to FYR Macedonia and Ms Hanne Juncker, Resident expert of the Council of Europe in the FYR Macedonia.

The seminar allowed the exchange of information and experiences among the authorities of the Western Balkan countries, and contributed to increase the understanding of the role of the broadcasting regulatory authorities within an effective and stable regulatory system, to disseminate good practices and to identify concrete ways of accelerating the pace of the necessary reforms in the field. The exchange of experiences among the different authorities allowed the reinforcement of the "networking effect" among the different players in the region.

All broadcasting regulatory bodies throughout the regions (including Slovenia) signed a cooperation protocol in the margin of the seminar, upon an initiative of the Broadcasting Council of FYR Macedonia.

On this occasion, Ambassador Donato Chiarini, Head of the EC Delegation in Skopje, said: "The Commission welcomes the signature of the cooperation protocol, which illustrates that the Western Balkan countries are increasingly taking ownership of the reform process towards European Integration. In this context, fully independent and well functioning broadcasting regulatory bodies have an essential role to play in developing free, independent and professional media in the Western Balkans".



Group photo of the participants

in the European Partnerships with the Western Balkan countries. The seminar built on the conclusions of the Seminar of Belgrade and the results of the Seminar organised by the Council of Europe in Warsaw in October 2003 on "Freedom and supervision: the role of broadcasting regulatory bodies" and the follow-up conference organized in Pržno in September 2004. The

reform and implementation.

Over 70 representatives from Governments, Parliaments, Regulatory Authorities, broadcasters and other organisations from all the Western Balkan countries as well as experts from international organisations and the Member States of the European Union attended the seminar.

Introductory speeches were

DELEGATION SUPPORTS 2004 CINEDAYS IN SKOPJE

This year for the third time, the Delegation supported the organisation of a European Film Week following the 2002 initiative of DG Education and Culture to organise CinEd@ys throughout the EU.

The opening of CinEd@ys took place at the Art Cinema Frosina, member of the Association EURIMAGE (network of European cinemas) since October this year, on 24 November and was attended by the Minister of Culture Blagoja Stefanovski and Ambassador Donato Chiarini, Head of EC Delegation, representatives of the Government, the international community as well as admirers of the film production.

This year for the first time, the organisers of CinEd@ys in Skopje - the Youth Cultural Centre -



included in the programme films produced by students at the Skopje Faculty of Drama Arts which were presented prior to each of the regular programme films.



FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT ON FYR MACEDONIA'S PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY PROGRAMMES

Following the initialling of the Protocol to the Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, on one part, and FYR Macedonia, on the other part, on a Framework Agreement stipulating the general principles of FYR Macedonia's participation in the Community programmes, Deputy Prime Minister Radmila Sekerinska and Ambassador Donato Chiarini, Head of EC Delegation, held a press conference in order to explain the possibilities to use the programmes of the Community.

The initialling follows the conclusion of discussions on the text of the Protocol to the Framework Agreement, which represents a joint clause on opening the ongoing Community programmes for FYR Macedonia and the other SAP countries. The solemn signing of the Protocol took place on 22 November 2004 in Brussels.

The participation in the Community Programmes is part of the strengthened integration mechanism, resulting from the conclusions of the European Council in Thessaloniki (June 2003), which supports the realisation of the clearly declared EU perspective of the FYR Macedonia. Such participation, regulated on the basis of the principles defined for former candidate countries, now new member states, is directed towards supporting the implementation of the *acquis communautaire*, and thus meeting of one of the criteria for EU membership.

The Community Programmes are financed by the EU Budget, which obliges the participant countries who are not full EU member states of the EU to transfer funds each year as a financial contribution for participating in specific Community Programme(s). In the

course of the initial facilitation of the access to the Programmes, the European Commission has assigned financial means amounting to 5% of the annual allocation to the national CARDS programme (around 2 MEUR), which will cover 75% of the obligation of FYR Macedonia regarding the financial contribution.

The actual accession of FYR Macedonia in the selected Community Programmes is foreseen at the end of the first quarter of 2005. Until then, the necessary legal framework has to be completed through concluding specific memoranda of understanding among the relevant national institutions and the Directorates General of the EC, responsible for management of specific programme(s).



Deputy Prime Minister Sekerinska addresses media representatives

CUSTOMS ADMINISTRATION RECEIVES DONATION OF ENFORCEMENT AND OTHER EQUIPMENT

On 4th November, at the Macedonian Customs Administration, the Minister of Finance, Mr Nikola Popovski, and the General Director of the Macedonian Customs Administration, Mr Ljubomir Mihajlovski, received from Ambassador Donato Chiarini, Head of the EC Delegation, and Mr John Platt, Head of the CAFAO-MAK Programme, the first tranche of a 1.3 M Euro donation of equipment, provided under the regional CARDS Programme.

EC CAFAO-MAK technical support has been given to the Macedonian Customs Administration since 2003, providing assistance to the MCA's modernization and EU accession programmes, predominantly in the area of Customs Enforcement, but also advising on Legislation, Procedures, Training, Human Resource Management, Planning and Restructuring.

The Macedonian Customs Administration equipment needs were jointly identified with CAFAO-MAK, and this first tranche includes, in addition to enforcement equipment, the provision of 5 minibuses to aide staff movement, and designer furniture for the MCA Co-ordination Unit Office (including Info-line team) in anticipation of its incorporation into the new MCA HQ building, on target for occupation around the end of 2004.

As part of this initiative, the MCA Enforcement Section Mobile Teams Unit has already had its 3 freight vans expertly fitted-out, by a Skopje company, to carry specialist search equipment, and now this equipment, including portable flood-lighting, high-power infra-red lamps, fibre-optic equipment, search mirrors, search ladders and both heavy and lightweight search tools were handed over to complete the package. Three 4x4 vehicles and a full range of protective safety and wet-weather clothing are also included for the Mobile Teams.

The Enforcement Section local Intelligence Unit received a full range of IT equipment including desktop and laptop computers, printers and scanners.

The Enforcement Section Investigation Unit, in anticipation of them operating with enhanced criminal powers, thereby empowering them to progress enquiries and investigations into customs crimes, particularly those perpetrated by organized groups, have now been issued with additional IT equipment, search tools, equipment to force entry into premises, handcuffs and personal protection clothing.

A second tranche of equipment, including both additional IT and X-ray equipment is expected in 2005.



SEMINAR "SHAPING THE FUTURE OF EUROPE"

Following the first and the second seminar "Shaping the future of Europe" held in December 2001 and April 2004, the Foundation Konrad Adenauer and the Delegation of the European Commission, kindly supported by IIZ-DVV organised the third simulation seminar in Struga, from 26th to 28th November 2004.

The simulation "Shaping the Future of Europe" deals with the formal process of the accession negotiations between the candidate countries, the current EU Member States and the EU institu-



Group photo of the participants

tions. The aim is to make clear both the institutional design of the EU with its specific decision making procedures and the different interests and positions referring to the ambitious project of the EU-Enlargement. The players take on an active role, e.g. as a member of the European Parliament, a member of the European Commission, minister of an EU Member State, a representative of a candidate country or representative of the media. They learn about the interactions of the EU-institutions and the decision-making processes as well as the challenges arising with the EU-Enlargement. Role-playing game allows a creative learning process controlled by the participants, and it is characterised by a continuous change between work by individuals, work in small groups and plenary sittings.

The final evaluation showed that the participants and the trainers were content with the turn out of the seminar. The seminar participants for sure have widen their knowledge about the EU, how their institutions work and what is more important, they gained a first hand experience in being diplomats and negotiators, which might be very much useful for the future leaders of this country.



Ambassador Donato Chiarini addresses the students at the Skopje Faculty of Journalism as part of the debate "The current phase of EU integration" which took place on 22 November. The debate was part of the European integration studies at the Faculty of Journalism under the Journalistic Laboratory Project supported by the Dutch NGO Press Now and OSCE

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