

On Tuesday May the 11th Macedonia assumed the presidency of the Council of Europe. We congratulate the country, its leadership and its citizens with this historical achievement!

We congratulate you because it shows how far you have come on the way of reform and modernization. We sincerely hope this presidency will be a great success and we call on the Council of Europe member states to support the initiatives you plan to bring forward.

Macedonia is also a candidate country for European Union membership. In order to be able to enter the Union, you are engaged in numerous reforms. We, as members of the European Parliament, support your efforts. We welcome the prospect of Macedonia's membership, for it will enrich and further diversify the Union. We would like to affirm that there is room for the values and traditions of Macedonia within the Union, as Article 4, paragraph 2 of the EU's Lisbon Treaty states that: 'the Union shall respect the equality of Member States before the Treaties as well as their national identities'.

The principle of subsidiarity is a guiding principle for European integration. It helps to decide when European regulation is needed and when it is not. Article 5, paragraph 2 of the Treaty on European Union states that 'the Union shall act only within the limits of the competences conferred upon it by the Member States in the Treaties to attain the objectives set out therein'. Paragraph 3 continues: 'in areas which do not fall within its exclusive competence, the Union shall act only if...the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States'. Subsequently the principle of proportionality shall ensure that 'Union action shall not exceed what is necessary to achieve the objectives of the Treaties.' Your national Parliament will have an important role when it comes to making sure that the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality are indeed applied.

As members of the European Parliament we look forward to the prospect of cooperation with Macedonia and with future Macedonian members of our Parliament.

On behalf of the ECR Group in the European Parliament,

With our best wishes,

Gidonat Kurian
Peter van Dal
Jan Dal
Phil [E. Zick]
Valdemar Tomasevski