

Report on FYROM's 2006 progress report

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The Council had an exchange of views on the Commission's Progress Reports covering the Western Balkans. It welcomed the progress achieved in the region and reaffirmed that the EU's policy towards the Western Balkans is based on a clear European perspective and a fair and rigorous conditionality as set out in the Stabilisation and Association Process and the Thessaloniki Agenda. In this context, the Council also recalled the relevant parts of the European Council conclusions of December 2005 and June 2006, including full cooperation with the ICTY. To further support this progress the Council called for a swift and effective implementation of the priorities identified in the European Partnerships, which will continue to be a key tool for guiding the countries' efforts in moving closer towards the EU.

As regards the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: the Council welcomed the continued progress made by the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia but regretted that the pace of reforms has slowed down in 2006. In particular, the country needs to intensify its efforts in implementing the reforms of the police and judiciary, the fight against organised crime and corruption. It needs to secure the independence and capacity of the public administration. It also has to sustain its efforts in implementing the Ohrid framework agreement and in complying with the obligations of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement. The Council welcomed the political dialogue recently resumed by the government and the opposition, and encouraged the parties to step up their cooperation in order to further implement reforms.