

How to influence the EU?

An Introduction to the current relations between the Republic of Macedonia and the European Union

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Preface

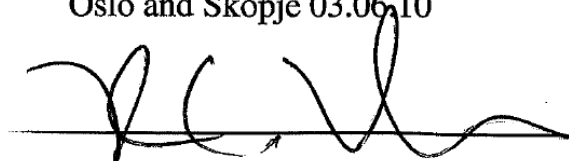
This report serves as an introduction and overview of the current relations between the Republic of Macedonia and the European Union (EU). The Republic of Macedonia's status as a candidate country provides several arenas for interaction with the EU. These interactions give Macedonia access to various channels of influence.

The objective of this introductory report has been to provide findings on the relations that already exist, to look at recommendations on how to improve the relations and in which fields new relations can be established. Norwegian experiences have been presented to establish examples of interaction with the EU, in the light of being a non-Member State.

The aim of this report is to prevail and openly present knowledge on how to cooperate with and influence the EU. In order to achieve this, the report provides a systematic introduction to the relations between the Republic of Macedonia and the EU. The report is also meant to be an introduction to new employees within the state administration, working with EU related issues.

The document is developed as an activity within the NORMAK project – Norwegian assistance to the Republic of Macedonia in the field of Public Administration Reform and European Integration. NORMAK is funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and is administrated by the Norwegian Agency for Public Management and eGovernment (Difi). Katerina Zafirova (NORMAK project assistant), Ellen Rønning-Arnesen (Advisor, Difi) and Sanja Kostovska Skaar (Advisor, Difi) have prepared the report.

Oslo and Skopje 03.06.10

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke at the end, positioned above a solid horizontal line.

Hans Christian Holte

Director

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Abbreviations

AP	Accession Partnership
CARDS	Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stability
EC	European Commission
DG	Directorate General
EEA	European Economic Area
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
ISPA	Instrument for Structural Policies for Pre-accession
NIPAC	National IPA Coordinator
NORMAK	Norwegian assistance to the Republic of Macedonia in the field of Public Administration Reform and European Integration
NPAA	National Program for Adoption of the Acquis Communautaire
PHARE	Assistance for Restructuring their Economies Programme
SAA	Stabilisation and Association Agreement
SAP	Stabilisation and Association Process
SAPARD	Special Accession Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development
SEA	Secretariat for European Affairs
SEE	South – East Europe
WG	Working Group

Executive Summary

According to the latest Progress Report for the Republic of Macedonia,¹ the European Commission has recognized the Macedonian efforts in addressing the priorities from the Accession Partnership and the fulfilling of the political criteria for membership. The Presidency conclusions have reflected the significant progress that has been made towards meeting these criteria and requirements. This has led to the recommendation on opening the negotiations between the European Union (EU) and the Republic of Macedonia, although the official date has not been determined yet.

This document presents the current relations between the Republic of Macedonia and the EU. Macedonia's status as a candidate country provides several arenas for interaction with the EU. These interactions give Macedonia access to various channels of influence. In order to position Macedonian interests on the European arena there is a need to facilitate these relations, as well as to establish new. A conscious approach to how to influence and cooperate at the current point in time will make future relations more efficient and effective.

The objective of this report has been to provide findings on the relations that already exist, and to look at recommendations on how to improve them, as well as to establish new. Norwegian experiences have been drawn on to establish examples of interaction with the EU, in the light of being a non-Member State. Norway has gained valuable experiences and knowledge on EU relations through its interactions with the EU through the European Economic Area Agreement² (EEA-Agreement) and the Schengen cooperation. The pre – accession period in the Republic of Macedonia has opened and implemented significant reform processes in different fields, such as in the public administration and in the economical, social, and civil sphere.

¹ 14.10.2009

² The EEA-Agreement gives Norway access to the EU's internal market with the same obligations as the Member States. The purpose of the agreement is to enlarge the EU's internal market to also comprise the EEA EFTA States, and it does so by creating a common "European Economic Area". See chapter 4 for further elaboration.

In the light of the legal and financial mechanisms and instruments, in addition to other diplomatic relations, presented in this report, the Republic of Macedonia has chances to promote the national interests and positions, as well as to open possibilities for influencing in the EU decision – making process for certain issues. This report concludes with the following recommendations:

- Strengthening of the communication and coordination on the national level is necessary, and could be reflected in concrete institutional support and stronger definition of roles and responsibilities. To establish relations with the EU Member States is equally important. The relevant national institutions, especially the Secretariat for European Affairs and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs are driving forces, and in the position to coordinate these issues to improve the relations with the institutions of the EU and the EU Member States, including the respective possible channels of influences.
- Defining the process of coordination. Regarding the forthcoming negotiations the strategic, political and procedural aspects of the coordination should be clearly defined.
- Emphasizing the role of the Mission of the Republic of Macedonia to the EU, which is the preferred channel of influence within the EU system as well as the Macedonian political focal point in Brussels.
- Strengthening of the Macedonian human resources by participating and being an active partner in different committees, programmes, meetings and other EU-initiatives. This is an important way to acquire knowledge on the EU institutions, the decision making procedures, on networking and in the process of exerting influence.

1 Introduction

1.1 Assignment

This report is developed as an activity within the NORMAK project – Norwegian assistance in the field of Public Administration Reform and European Integration.

The aim of this report is to prevail and openly present knowledge on how to cooperate with and influence the European Union (EU). In order to achieve this, this report provides a systematic introduction to the relations between the Republic of Macedonia and the EU. The target groups are civil servants in Macedonian central government working with EU related questions, the Government and public administration, and the Macedonian representatives in Brussels.

The report is also meant to be an introduction to new employees within the state administration, working with EU related issues. Civil servants are also invited to read and use this report, which gives a review of the current relations of the Republic of Macedonia with the EU.

1.2 Objectives and background

For the Republic of Macedonia, it is of great importance to prepare for both the negotiations and the membership. Even though the negotiations have not started yet, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia is strongly committed to meet the criteria for the EU accession.

Macedonia's status as a candidate country provides several arenas for interaction with the EU institutions. These interactions give Macedonia access to various channels of influence. To facilitate these relations, as well as to establish new, is salient for positioning itself on the European arena.

Norway has a mosaic of relations with the EU, and is an active partner in the European integration process. Despite Norway's non-member status, it manages

a close and complex relationship with the EU through the EEA Agreement³ and several bilateral agreements. Norway has cooperated with the EU institutions for several years, and possesses in-depth knowledge and experience that can be of value for Macedonia.

The report has focused on providing findings on the established relations, how to facilitate and improve these relations, as well as to establish new. This is outlined in light of Norwegian experiences with EU cooperation.

A conscious approach on how to influence and cooperate at the current stage will make future relations more efficient and effective. As knowhow and experiences on the cooperation within and bilaterally with the EU are growing amongst the Macedonian central administration, it is important to hold on to these experiences, as well as to make use of the already established knowledge.

Finally, this effort is undertaken in addition to the Macedonian preparations for the process of negotiation that is an extremely demanding and important milestone in the relations between the EU and the Republic of Macedonia.

The analyses included in this report give an overview on how the Republic of Macedonia can make use of its already established channels and relations. The analyses are not addressing the question of Macedonian's membership in the EU or the question of negotiation position and strategy. It is created on the available literature and selected interviews among stakeholders on national level. In the context of the Lisbon Treaty, there is a need for the Macedonian national authorities and actors to establish and sustain a variety of channels of "influence" in order to be in compliance with the EU multi-level governance system and to be in accordance with the processes on the European level.

The report has an introductory character in order to be of use to civil servants working with EU issues in the Macedonian government and public administration.

³ See chapter 4 for introduction and set up of the EEA Agreement.

1.3 Methodology

This report is created on the basis of available documents, reports and literature, and on interviews carried out on the national level with the involved stakeholders, both vertically and horizontally.

The documents⁴ have consisted of official documents published by the Macedonian Government and by the EU. Additionally, experiences and documents from the Norwegian public administration have been used.

The interviews were carried out in 9 line ministries, 2 bodies within the ministries, one independent body of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia and 7 other national institutions and agencies (annex 1). Mainly the interviews were conducted with high – level representatives from the ministries and other national institutions that are responsible for the EU issues and other international cooperation. Depending on the availability of the responsible staff in some institutions, there were representatives from the team working on EU issues.

Thirty qualitative interviews were conducted, and an interview guide was used in all institutions (annex 2). The interview guide was presented to some of the institutions before the interview took place, in order to prepare the person(s) on the issues to be discussed. Some of the institutions requested to submit written answers in order to make additional consultation within their institution. This opportunity was given to all the interviewed institutions. The interviews were conducted from December 2009 to February 2010.

The results will be presented in the following chapters, focusing on relations between Macedonia and the EU, how Macedonia can gain influence in the EU based on some Norwegian experiences in the field, Macedonian influence today, and the final chapter will present recommendations and possible opportunities for further influence.

⁴ The documents can be found in the reference list in annex 4.

1.4 Definitions

1.4.1 Influence

In this report, the terms influence and channels of influence are discussed. The terms are understood as the different ways the various actors in the Republic of Macedonia can affect and be involved in the development of EU policies. How and who can seek to upload preferences to the EU arena? To which extent this can be exerted depends on the input from the Macedonian side. Influence can be exerted through many channels, and the ones defined as most salient and articulated will be elaborated in this report. The report seeks to identify how the already established processes in the EU can be affected by Macedonian efforts, and which actions that must be taken to pursue the goals which are spelled out. Each actor plays a different role in the complex EU decision-making process. Traditionally national governments and parliaments are considered the legitimate actors when it comes the pursuing of influence on behalf of a country's interests. State institutions were previously considered the most important channels of influence, since they had the most advanced communication networks and were key interlocutors with the EU institutions⁵. Today the picture is broader, and lobbying from various interest groups, organizations and the civil society is emerging. This is important to take into consideration when channels of influence are discussed, as well as the opportunities for influence as such.

The report focuses on the traditional channels of formal influence when it comes to the actors and stakeholders. In chapter four, a broader picture is presented when the topic of influencing the EU in the decision making process is presented. Furthermore, the development and emerging European networks is described throughout the report in relation to the relevant institutions. Also, competencies necessary to exert influence is considered throughout the report. Herein the focus is on EU knowledge, understanding of the decision-making system, active participation, openness and dialogue, implementation of commitments and coordination of the prioritized fields of interest.

⁵ *Lobbying and channels of influence of Croatian interest groups in an enlarged European Union*, Vidacak Igor, Institute for International Relations, Zagreb, 2007, page 96

1.4.2 Understanding of Influence

In the ministries and other state administrative bodies of the Republic of Macedonia, there is not a uniform definition of the terms “influence” or “channels of influence”. Although, during the interviews, the different actors have expressed a common understanding related to which possibilities that are available for influence.

According to the findings from the interviews, the interviewed parties have identified the “channels of influence” as specific ways of approaching and achieving a certain impact in the different EU institutions. Mainly, the channels of influence were understood in relation to the issues that they were working on. Still, some of the interviewed parties were not aware of the different possibilities of influence they have available in their communication and cooperation processes with the EU institutions. Others again, had not developed specific strategies for approaching the EU institutions in order to create or to build specific channels of influences.

But, the Republic of Macedonia has established common Guidelines⁶ which regulates the manner of communication of the state administrative bodies with the European Commission services and other institutions and bodies of the European Union. These Guidelines are addressing the manners of communication with the institutions of the EU, and aims at achieving effective and efficient coordination with the Commission and other EU institutions.

1.4.3 Coordination

Coordination is crucial in the process of influence. In this report it is defined as a mode of governance, and it is considered a prerequisite to enable the most effective ways of using the given opportunities for influence and participation. Coordination focuses on bringing different opinions and interest together in order to reach a common goal. In this matter the common goal is spelled out by the government, and is EU membership as well as to make the established

⁶ “Guidelines on communication of the state administrative bodies with the European Commission Service and other institutions of the European Union”

relations function in the optimal way. Thus, to coordinate the institutions and actors working with EU related issues is utterly important.

The coordination of interests is thus important. This leads to a firm and clear perception of the Republic of Macedonia in the meeting with the EU and other Member States. To be unambiguous and coherent when spelling out the Macedonian interests will enhance the opportunities for influence. Additionally, the cooperation and dialogue between various actors, e.g. governmental actors and interest organizations/civil society, can add value to the coordination. This coordination through cooperation can foster a process of mutual learning by sharing experiences, knowledge and networks. Furthermore this can identify common interests and increase the number of channels available for influence.

In the light of this, coordination can be understood as a non-hierarchical way of governance, where actors adapt their behavior in the process of information exchange.⁷ This way of cooperation is important in the EU system, where deliberation is the most common way of policy making.

1.4.4 Lobbying

In this report lobbying is understood as the advocacy of interests with intention to influence decisions relating to the EU, and the Macedonian-EU relations. This advocacy could be made by individuals, legislators, interest groups etc.

Lobbying is considered an important effort when it comes to exerting influence in the EU polity. The importance of having interest groups present when it comes to facilitating policies, advocating positions, provide expertise and at some occasions scrutinize authorities is an acknowledged part of the EUs political culture and structure.

Lobbying is a familiar reality in today's politics, and it is recognized that public and private interest have a legitimate and important role to play in the policy making process. This is especially a reality in European policy making, where

⁷ *The Glossary of EU terminology*, PhD Tanja Karakamisheva, Veronika Efremova M.A., Skopje, September 2009

more than 20 000 lobbyists are operating on a daily basis⁸. The lobbying process has facilitated the openness of the Commission and the European Parliament, and the various interest groups have managed to exert influence along the policy lines from the agenda setting and policy formulation phase, to the initiating and ratification phase, as well as in the phase of interpretation, harmonization and implementation of the regulations in the nation states.

Thus, lobbying is understood as a way of influencing the policy making process in the EU. It becomes an important tool in the process of influencing the EU and it is mostly depending on coordination from the stakeholders. In this introduction to the Macedonian-EU relations, it should be considered a tool with increasing importance and with a great potential for Macedonian interests.

2 Relations between the Republic of Macedonia and the EU

The Republic of Macedonia is continuously developing the political and contractual relations with the European Union. The country's strategic priorities from the outset were fully fledged membership in the European Union and NATO.⁹ By 2005 the Republic of Macedonia had received the most valuable recognition for its efforts by being granted status as a candidate – country for EU membership.

2.1 Context and chronology

The European Council of December 2005 granted the status of candidate country to the Republic of Macedonia. The Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) between the Republic of Macedonia and the EU was signed in April 2001 and entered into force in April 2004. The SAA provides a framework for political dialogue and strengthens the regional cooperation, promotes expansion of markets and economic relations among the parties and establishes the grounds for technical and financial support. The Council

⁸ *Lobbying in the European Union* (DG Internal Policies of the Union, 2007:3)

⁹ “*Permanent Education for European Affairs: Establishment of Training Center for European Integration*”, Review of Papers, TEMPUS JEP_17 013-2002, Skopje, 2006

adopted the Accession Partnership for the country, including key priorities for reform, in February 2008.¹⁰

The forthcoming period is crucial for the relations between Republic of Macedonia and the EU. The Republic of Macedonia has expressed great preparedness and dedication by showing full capacity for facing and managing of the EU integration issues and advantages.

At the beginning of 2009, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia set up three key priorities regarding the EU integration:

1. Finishing the visa liberalisation process;
2. Fulfilling the benchmarks from the European Commission for starting of the negotiations for membership;
3. Accreditation of the national institutions for management of the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA).

During 2009 two of these processes were achieved; Republic of Macedonia received the recommendation for starting the negotiations and gained visa liberalisation. The main challenge that the Republic of Macedonia is facing in 2010 is the realization of the Commission's recommendation for starting the negotiations for membership, as well as to finish of the revision of the National Programme for Adoption of the Acquis Communautaire (NPAA) for 2010.

2.2 Agreements and Formal Integration Mechanisms

After the declaration of independence, the Republic of Macedonia started the establishment of an institutional framework related to the EU. Based on the directives adopted by the Council of the Ministries on 21 December 1995, the negotiations on the Cooperation Agreement and the Transportation Agreement between the Republic of Macedonia and the European Commission started. Negotiations were closed relatively shortly, resulting with ratification of the agreements on 20 June 1996.

¹⁰ *Commission of the European Communities, Commission Staff Working Document, Republic of Macedonia, 2009 Progress Report* accompanying the communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2009 – 2010 {COM2009 533} of 14.10.2009, page 4-6

During this period the European Commission started defining its regional approach policy. At the beginning of 1996, the Union had drafted the specific strategy for its relations with the third countries and defined the so-called *regional approach* with the South and Eastern European countries.

During the same period, the Macedonian efforts were put on the necessity for improving the contractual relations with the European Union. The Republic of Macedonia and the Commission developed a new concept and in May 1999 they concluded with a document which launched the “Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP) for SEE countries”.¹¹ This ended with the signing and entering into force of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, and finally after receiving the status as a candidate country, the Republic of Macedonia has systematically been preparing for the negotiation process.

Today, the established legal mechanisms are:

- **The Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA)** - the legal and institutional framework for regular dialogue with the European Commission;
- **The Accession Partnership** - a mechanism for following the progress of the Republic of Macedonia by the European Commission, which is presented through the regular annual Progress Reports; and the
- **The National Programme for Adoption of the Acquis Communautaire (NPAA)** - the key national document which presents the dynamic of the adoption of the national legislation with the European legislation, adoption by the national institutions of the European administrative structures and financial implication.

¹¹ “Stabilization and Association Process (SAP) for with SEE countries” has practically incorporated the same countries that were included in the European Union’s Regional Approach.

These mechanisms will remain the basic legal grounds until the beginning of the negotiation. They will be used during the screening phase within the negotiation process, as well as for following of the country progress during the negotiations.

There are also additional formal mechanisms which regulates the relations between the Republic of Macedonia and the EU. The most important agreements and regulations will be reviewed throughout the report.

2.2.1 The Stabilisation and Association Agreement

The Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) between the Republic of Macedonia and the EU was initiated on the margins of the Zagreb Summit, 24 November 2000. The SAA was signed on 9 April 2001 in Luxemburg, four years after signing of the Cooperation Agreement. Following its ratification by all signatories, it entered into force on 1 April 2004. The Republic of Macedonia was the first country that signed the SAA and the first country in which the SAA entered into force. Although the SAA entered into force in 2004, the parts regulating trade and trade issues entered into force on 1 June 2001 by a special Interim Agreement on Trade and Trade-related Issues.¹²

SAA¹³ provides a framework for political dialogue and strengthens the regional cooperation, promotes expansion of markets and economic relations among the parties and establishes the grounds for technical and financial support.

¹² “*Permanent Education for European Affairs: Establishment of Training Center for European Integration*”, Review of Papers, TEMPUS Jep_17 013-2002, Skopje, 2006

¹³ The institutional structure of the SAA is:

- Parliamentary Committee for Stabilisation and Association;
- Council for Stabilisation and Association – the highest form of dialogue where the most important questions are discussed within the SAA, as well as other bilateral and multilateral questions of common interest;
- SAA Committee – that is functioning on operational level and is realising the decisions and recommendations from the Council and is establishing Sub-committees that are working in the frame of certain areas that support the Council in realisation of his responsibilities; and
- Sub-committees or working bodies within the SAA Committee for certain areas:
 - Sub-committee on justice, freedom and security;
 - Sub-committee on innovations, information society and social policy;
 - Sub-committee on transport, environment, energy and regional development;
 - Sub-committee on internal market and competition;
 - Sub-committee on economic and financial issues and statistics;
 - Sub-committee on trade, industry, customs and taxation; and
 - Sub-committee on agriculture and fishery.

This agreement has been implemented over a five-year period, and ended in 2009. The structures of the SAA have provided regular political and economical dialogue between the Republic of Macedonia and the EU. This is achieved through common working bodies that are following the agreement and at the same time are strengthening the cooperation between the parties.

After receiving the status as a candidate country, the dialogue has become even stronger. The European Commission is following the implementation of the Agreement and the realisation of the recommendations from the Accession Partnership, as well as the progress regarding the realisation of the criteria for EU membership.

According to the Decision No 1/2005 of the SAA Committee, there were some changes in the structure of the Sub-committees in order to achieve the compliance of the Sub-committees with the new distribution of the competences of the European Commission. Additionally, in November 2009, the Commission has announced establishment of the new Special group for Public Administration.

The structure of the Sub-committees has provided consistence in the relations among the Directorate Generals of the European Commission and appropriate bodies of the Republic of Macedonia that significantly has contributed to the strengthening of the relations and integrative processes on sectoral level.

SEA has the crucial and coordinative role in the preparation of the meetings of the Committee and Sub-committees. The meetings have participants from SEA, the Macedonian Ministry for Foreign Affairs and from the Mission of the Republic of Macedonia to the EU. The Sub-committees also have representatives from the State Secretaries of the concrete ministries depending on the issue in question.

2.2.2 Accession Partnership

The main document of the EU within the Enlargement Strategy is the Accession Partnership, which is the second major pillar regulating the relations.

In February 2008, the Council of Ministers of the European Union adopted the 2008 Accession Partnership of the Republic of Macedonia. The Accession Partnership includes eight key priorities which are set up by the Commission. The Commission assesses these key priorities as benchmarks in the country's Progress Report. A recommendation on the start of accession negotiations will depend on the results achieved.¹⁴

In March 2009, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia adopted measures and activities for realisation of the main priorities of the Accession Partnership. The assessment of the priority accomplishments is continuously given in the country's Progress Report, which the European Commission is publishing annually. Subsequently, the Council of Ministers of the EU adopts conclusions on the Report. Key decisions on the progress of the accession process are adopted by the European Council, on its December Summit.¹⁵ The Republic of Macedonia defines its European Agenda through a National Programme for Adoption of Acquis Communautaire and other key documents.

2.2.3 The National Programme for Adoption of the Acquis Communautaire

The National Programme for Adoption of the Acquis Communautaire (NPAA) is the key document for the Macedonian EU integration process.

The NPAA:

- Establishes a detailed plan and timescale for approximation of the national legislation with the EU Acquis communautaire and determines

¹⁴ *Commission of the European Communities, Commission Staff Working Document, Republic of Macedonia, 2009 Progress Report* accompanying the communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2009 – 2010 {COM2009 533} of 14.10.2009, page 4-6

¹⁵ <http://sep.gov.mk/Default.aspx?ContentID=12>, (March, 2010)

the competent institutions and authorities for preparation and implementation thereof;

- Gives particular emphasis to the administrative structures for implementation of the legislation aiming at establishing new and reforming the existing institutions as well as for provision of adequately trained staff;
- Encompasses the budget resources and funds for foreign assistance necessary for implementation of the anticipated tasks as grounds for further strategic planning and planning of the Budget of the Republic of Macedonia; and
- Determines clearly the timescale for adoption of the EU Acquis.

The NPAA follows the structure of the Copenhagen and Madrid criteria, i.e. it covers the: political criteria, economic criteria, and abilities to assume the obligations of membership, administrative capacities, and preparations for the National Version of the Acquis Communautaire, public information and communication. With the establishment of these criteria, the Union determined a conditional approach to the further enlargement of the EU. This principle is a key element in the European Integration processes of the SEE countries, expressing that to achieve EU membership, there is a need for crucial reform processes to achieve the requirements.

Moreover, NPAA is an important source of information for the business- and economic sectors in their planning of future activities. It also ensures that the public is informed on the ongoing process. NPAA is therefore an important instrument for the transparency in the work of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia.

NPAA is a result of the mutual cooperation among all competent authorities in the Republic of Macedonia in the process coordinated by the Secretariat for European Affairs. It will also serve as a tool to formulate the negotiation positions of the Republic of Macedonia when starting the negotiations for EU membership.

This Programme, first adopted in 2006, is reviewed and updated annually. The activities are arising from the regular communications by the European Commission on the progress made by the Republic of Macedonia, as well as from the short-term and medium-term priorities of the Accession Partnership. For the purpose of fulfilling the economic criteria, the Republic of Macedonia drafts a Pre-accession Economic Programme on an annual basis.

2.2.4 Financial Assistance and the Instrument for Pre – accession Assistance

The EU financial assistance portfolio is mainly managed by the Delegation of the EU in Skopje. Assistance focuses on support to the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, strengthening of administrative capacity with particular emphasis on the rule of law sector, economic development, and the ability to assume the obligations of EU membership.

The main channel of financial assistance is provided through the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance¹⁶ (IPA). IPA includes the following 5 components¹⁷:

1. Transition Assistance and Institution Building
2. Cross Border Cooperation
3. Regional Development
4. Human Resources Development
5. Rural Development.

The EU aims to transfer the management of IPA Funds to the national authorities under the Decentralised Implementation System (DIS) once the national authorities have developed the necessary capacity to assume this responsibility. Further attention is needed to develop accountable administrations and institutions with the appropriate capacity.

Extensive EU financial support has been provided to develop Macedonia's civil society. This is amongst others done through different national and regional IPA programmes under the Civil Society Facility.¹⁸

¹⁶ Replaced PHARE, ISPA, SAPARD, CARDS in 2007

¹⁷ <http://sep.gov.mk/Default.aspx?ContentID=26>, (March, 2010)

In addition the country continues to benefit from regional and horizontal programmes. Cross border cooperation is used to promote dialogue between local and regional authorities of neighboring countries.

2.3 Institutional Relations

This chapter will present the main mechanisms regulating the institutional relations between the Republic of Macedonia and the EU. These formalised structures are many, and include several various actors on different levels. The Secretariat for European Affairs has the most important coordinating function and has a solid political, as well as administrative mandate and foundation. This chapter focuses on the role of the various institutions involved in carrying out the coordination mechanisms, and also comments on the relations between them.

2.3.1 Managing the accession process

To enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the preparations for membership, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia has set up an EU Integration management system.¹⁹ The main institutions involved are listed below:²⁰

- **The Government of the Republic of Macedonia** is the most central actor when it comes to shaping policy, strategy, priorities, and basic directions in the EU integration process.
- **The Deputy Prime Minister of the Government in charge of European Affairs** – manages and coordinates the operative part of integration process of the Secretariat for European Affairs, ensures coordination and conformation of the work of the state administrative authorities and other bodies and institutions in the preparation of the Republic of Macedonia relating to negotiations and membership in the European Union.

¹⁸ *Commission of the European Communities, Commission Staff Working Document, Republic of Macedonia, 2009 Progress Report* accompanying the communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2009 – 2010 {COM2009 533} of 14.10.2009, page 4-6

¹⁹ “*The Strategy bases of the Republic of Macedonia for acquiring associative EU member status*”, September 1997

²⁰ See annex 5 for the visualised figure on the management and coordination of the EU integration process.

- **The Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Sector for the European Union**–is in charge of the communication with the European institutions through the Mission of the Republic of Macedonia in Brussels by gathering valid and timely information that have impact on the integration process, as well as presenting uniform perspectives and positions in the European structures.
- **Working Committee for European Integration of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia**–is chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister of the Government in charge of European Affairs, and all state secretaries of the ministries are members. This operational and inter-ministerial body defines the methods and dynamics for implementation of strategic decisions, political guidelines and priorities of the Government and carries out monitoring on the realisation of the actual tasks.
- **The Sub-committee for the Approximation of Legislation to EU legislation** – is a central coordination body consisting of senior civil servants from each Ministry and the Secretariat of Legislation. The important functions of the body include preparing annual programmes for legislation approximation and coordinating the working groups and sub-groups for harmonisation with Acquis communautaire.
- **36 Working Groups for the preparation of the National Programme for Adoption of the Acquis Communautaire and preparation of the negotiation stands for EU negotiations** – are established by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia.²¹ The working groups are established in accordance with the chapters in Acquis communautaire, the political criteria, the economic criteria and the administrative capacities. They constitute the nuclei of the future teams of the Republic of Macedonia for negotiations with the EU. Their crucial functions are directed to the preparation of the respective chapters from the NPAA; preparation and participation in the process of the assessment of the compliance of national

²¹ Decision of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia on establishment of the Working Groups for preparation of the National Programme for Adoption of the Acquis Communautaire and preparation of the negotiation stands for EU negotiations, laid down on the Governmental Session held on 6.11.2009, Official Gazette of RM No. 137/2009

legislation with the of the Acquis Communautaire (Screening)²²; and preparation of the negotiation stands of Macedonia in the negotiation process with the EU. The Working Groups are set up with representatives from the ministries and other state administrative bodies, as well as representatives from the other public affairs institutions.

- *Units for EU integration within the ministries*—working on EU issues, communication and cooperation with the EU as well as being coordinators and contact point for the implementation various EU funds.

Furthermore, the Committee of Working Groups for Approximation of Legislation, the Secretariat for Legislation (evaluating the approximation of legislation), the General Secretariat within the Government (to observe Article 66 of the Rules of Procedure of the Government for approximation with the EU regulations), the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia (adopting the laws in the field of European integration), the Committee for European Affaires within the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia and the National Council for European Integration actively participate in the process of approximation of the national and EU legislation.²³

2.3.2 Coordination between national institutions

Communication with the EU institutions, on national and inter-institutional level, is coordinated by SEA, but all institutions contribute to the development of the inter-institutional relations. There are also several legal documents – frameworks and basis for the communication and coordination between the Macedonian state administrative bodies and EU Institutions²⁴.

²² Screening is a formal and technical operation performed by the European Commission. It is realised for preparation of the membership negotiations and represents an analytical presentation of the situation in the candidate country relating to the Acquis Chapters.

²³ <http://sep.gov.mk/Default.aspx?ContentID=12>, (March, 2010)

²⁴ “Institutional Platform and Principles for leading negotiations for accession of the Republic of Macedonia in the European Union” (adopted 2007).

“Guidelines on communication of the state administrative bodies with the European Commission services and other institutions of the European Union” (adopted October 2008) .

The “*Guidelines on communication of the state administrative bodies with the European Commission services and other institutions of the European Union*” are regulating the manner of communication of the state administrative bodies with the European Commission services and other institutions and bodies within the EU. Their aim is to achieve effective and efficient coordination with the Commission and other EU institutions. The basic objectives of the Guidelines is to improve the cooperation between the state administrative bodies, improve the information processes and the regular information flow to the Government on the European integration process, thus enabling the Government to adopt harmonized and uniform positions on key issues related to further integration.

The Guidelines also contain more detailed information on the cooperation between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the Secretariat for European Affairs, being the Government’s service in coordinating the European integration process.

All draft positions should be developed in coordination between SEA and the MFA, and further on be determined in the Working Committee for European Integration. SEA is then in charge of submitting the draft positions to the Government of the Republic of Macedonia for adoption. The official correspondence with the European Commission and other EU institutions shall be delivered through the MFA. SEA and the MFA are also mutually responsible for communicating with the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Enlargement on a regular basis.

“Decree on determining mutual relations between the bodies and the structures of decentralized management of the first four components under the EU Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA)” (adopted October 2008).

“Decree on determining mutual relations between the bodies and the structures of the fully decentralized management of the fifth component under the EU Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA)” (adopted October 2008).

2.3.3 The Secretariat of European Affairs

The Secretariat for European Affairs (SEA) is a separate expert service of the Government. The Secretariat as a professional service within the Government is headed by the Deputy Prime Minister of the Government in charge of the European Affairs. He also carries the role as National IPA Coordinator.

The Secretariat is responsible for coordinating the work of the state administration as well as the other bodies and institutions working with the preparation for Macedonian EU membership.

SEA is engaged in the communication and coordination with the EU institutions in two major areas:

1. Adoption of the Acquis Communautaire by revision of the National Programme for Adoption of the Acquis Communautaire (NPAA);
2. Management of the IPA funds.

The process of adoption and harmonisation of the national legislation to the EU follows the structure of the Copenhagen and Madrid criteria which are the:

- political criteria,
- economic criteria,
- abilities to assume the obligations of the membership,
- administrative capacity,
- preparation of the National Version of the Acquis Communautaire,
- public information and communication.

Additionally, the NPAA will serve to formulate the Macedonian negotiation positions. This Programme is reviewed and updated annually with the activities arising from the regular communications by the European Commission on the progress made by the Republic of Macedonia. It is also based on the short-term and medium-term priorities of the Accession Partnership.

SEA is also the leading institution for the communication and coordination of the Working Groups for the relevant chapters for negotiations.

The cooperation regarding the preparation of IPA and NPAA is done between the relevant ministry, the Ministry of Finance and SEA. There is a “*Decree on Determining Mutual Relations between the Bodies and the Structures of Decentralized Management of the first Four Components under the EU Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) of the European Union*” (“Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia” No. 132/2008). This decree defines the information flows and procedures. Also, there are adopted Manuals of Procedures for IPA.

2.3.4 Ministries

There are different levels of cooperation between the Republic of Macedonia and the EU institutions, which depends on the level of cooperation that is appropriate for the interaction. On the national level, the communication with the EU institutions is coordinated by SEA, as described above. Concerning the programming and implementation of the IPA projects, ministries are first and foremost communicating with the Ministry of Finance, which again communicates with the EU institutions, playing the role as an inter-mediator.

All ministries have sector or units for European integration. They have established strong communication and cooperation channels with SEA and also contribute to the development of the inter-institutional relations. Additionally, these structures are the foundation for the communication and coordination of the IPA funds. Also, they are part of the chain in the programming phase between beneficiary institutions and the National IPA Coordination (NIPAC) Office.

Macedonian ministries are also members of European networks which provide them with information and knowledge to enhance the coordination and communications process in the national system. Being a candidate country the communication with such networks is only on a cooperation basis, but will become formalised in relation to the change of status towards the EU. On some issues, the ministries are in the position of establishing direct channels of communication and coordination with the relevant EU institutions, as was the case when working with visa liberalization. All in all, the contribution and

participation of the various ministries in the work of the Sub-committees is considered most the effective when it comes to the interaction with the EU-institutions, much due to the hands-on character of this work.

2.3.5 The Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia

The political dialogue between the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia (the Assembly) and the European Parliament (EP) started in the early 1990s through parliamentary visits and meetings. In 1994 the EP constituted a Delegation for relations with South-Eastern Europe. The delegation was responsible for inter parliamentary relations with five countries in the region including the Republic of Macedonia.²⁵

After entering into force of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, the Republic of Macedonia has established direct bilateral relations with the EP, through the establishment of the Republic of Macedonia-EU Joint Parliamentary Committee.²⁶

The Joint Parliamentary Committee provides the Macedonian Assembly with direct links to the appropriate EU institution, being the EP. Delegations from the Macedonian Assembly are attending meetings and events within the EP. They hold two meetings per year, one in Skopje and one in Brussels. There are written acts, procedures and other documents to regulate the cooperation.

The Assembly has established well developed contacts and communication with the Delegation of the European Union (DEU) in Macedonia, which provides them with documents, hearings, minutes and other relevant information.

The Macedonian Assembly also utilises other forums where they can meet parliamentarians representing the EU, such as the Council of Europe. During

²⁵ <http://www.sobranie.mk/?ItemID=B55A29A7E4A01A47AC4C84A30EAE56B3> (March, 2010)

²⁶ It was set up in accordance with Article 114 of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement.

these meetings and events Macedonian representatives have opportunities to establish informal contacts and communication with the representatives of the EU, to discuss and present the Macedonian priorities and to use these events for lobbying.

Their communication with the Macedonian Mission in Brussels is conducted on a regular basis, with great emphasis on the importance of their contribution to the communication and cooperation with the EU institutions.

The Assembly is also a beneficiary institution of the IPA Component I for Transitional Assistance and Institutional Building.

2.3.6 The Mission of the Republic of Macedonia in Brussels

The Mission of the Republic of Macedonia in Brussels plays an important role in the EU integration process. It is responsible for the collection of information, analysis and follow up on all events within the EU institutions, as well as within the Missions of other countries represented in Brussels, above all the EU member-states and the countries included in the Stabilisation and Association process.

The role of the Mission is especially important in this period when preparing for the negotiations, and also for other policy level questions that need to be discussed with the EU.

The Mission provides an opportunity to communicate the views and positions of the Macedonian Government concerning key issues regarding the EU integration process directly to its counterparts. Thus, the Mission of the Republic of Macedonia is one of the most important channels for gathering information. By being an important and direct facilitator in promoting views and positions regarding the European integration process, the Mission is a crucial channel of influence.²⁷

²⁷ *National Strategy for European Integration of the Republic of Macedonia, Government of the Republic of Macedonia, Skopje, September 2004*

2.3.7 The Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Macedonia

The Delegation of the European Union (DEU) was officially opened in March 2000. Its main focus is to facilitate the development of political, economic and trade relations between the European Union and the Republic of Macedonia, and promote the values of the EU. Since 2001, the main framework of this relationship is the Stabilisation and Association process.²⁸

The role of the DEU in the Republic of Macedonia is to follow, support and mediate the process of cooperation and coordination between the institutions of the Republic of Macedonia and the European Union. Under the new Lisbon Treaty²⁹ all EU delegations shall be placed under the authority of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and they are acting in close cooperation with Member States' diplomatic and consular missions. This institution now represents the EU as a whole and provides all the necessary information and support from the EU to the Republic of Macedonia.

The DEU is reporting to the EU institutions in Brussels about the progress of the Macedonian institutions and process in the field of EU integration, through regular monthly reports.

Representatives from the DEU are as a main rule participating in all meetings and discussions between the Republic of Macedonia and the EU. It is also organising other regular meetings on different topics depending on the needs.

2.4 Additional relations

The Macedonian civil society is also represented in the relations between the EU and the Republic of Macedonia. These actors are active in the Republic of Macedonia and/or in Brussels.

²⁸ Source: <http://www.delmkd.ec.europa.eu/en/about-us/role.htm>, 2009

²⁹ Entered into force in December 2009.

The Mission of the Republic of Macedonia in Brussels has significant role as communication channel for these purposes. It is both working on the representation of Macedonian interests in Brussels, as well as handing over information to the Macedonian society.

The local and regional level in the Macedonian public administration does not have a direct representative position in Brussels. Their involvement in the EU integration processes is mainly focused on use of the EU funding opportunities. Positive efforts and progress has been done through the appointment of administrative representatives on local level within the municipalities that are engaged in working on EU issues and cross – border cooperation.

The Unit for cooperation with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), organized under the Sector for Policy Analysis and Coordination, within the General Secretariat of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, has a leader role in coordination of the implementation of the Strategy for Cooperation of the Government and the Civil Sector. This Unit creates mechanisms for promoting the liaison between the Government and the civil sector; mediating the inter-ministerial cooperation as well as of the other state authorities and the civil sector, and monitoring and upgrading the cooperation with the civil sector in the country. According to the Strategy for Cooperation with the Civil Sector this Unit also is addressing the involvement of the civil sector in the process of integration in the European Union, as well as maintaining the inter-institutional cooperation and the inter-departmental cooperation. Generally, NGOs are using the possibilities for EU funding and has an active communication with the EU institutions and different networks.

There are also established civil “platforms” from the Republic of Macedonia, which are operating in Skopje and in Brussels. The platforms are set up to promote Macedonian interests, and are providing services related to consultancy, lobbying and monitoring, as well as support of Macedonian governmental, non-governmental and business stakeholders. The services are offered to Macedonian organisations, persons, companies or governmental institutions. They mainly arrange events, which are aiming at bringing together

actors with Macedonian background and corresponding interests, and encourage networking and cooperation. Representatives from the EU are also invited to maximise the output. The events highlight specific Macedonian challenges, opportunities, politics and cultural issues and associate them with EU issues.

Another platform which provides the civil society with opportunities to interact with the EU is the EU - Republic of Macedonia Civil Society Joint Consultative Committee.

“Invest in Macedonia” is also an important effort established by the Macedonian government. This project is supporting foreign investment in the Republic of Macedonia, and is an important channel for the Macedonian business community when it comes to interaction with the European market. Also, relations with the various national Chambers of Commerce, Macedonian businesses could access and establish communication with the EU business community. The Republic of Macedonia has also undertaken some significant steps regarding wider lobbying for economic interests, wider promotional campaigning of the country and establishing economic promoters in the EU Member States. The efforts all aim at promoting Macedonia in these countries, to establish and develop contacts of interests.

2.4.1 EU Community Programmes

European Community programmes are an integrated set of actions adopted to promote co-operation between the EU Member States, EU candidate states, and some third countries in different specific fields related to Community policies.

The Republic of Macedonia has expressed a continuous interest in participating in the EU Programmes. The attempts have been directed towards acquiring information and defining the steps for the accession to the Programmes. The general principles for Macedonian participation were spelled out in a Framework Agreement agreed upon in 2004. Based on the output from the consultation process held in 2006 between the Macedonian institutions and the

European Commission, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia has identified 13 prioritised Community Programmes. Macedonia is either participating in these, or has started the negotiation process to gain access to these Community Programmes.

The Government of the Republic of Macedonia is determined to continue the process of increasing the number of active Community Programmes and open these opportunities for its citizens, institutions, businesses and interest groups.

Thus far, the Republic of Macedonia has signed Memorandums of understanding for participation in the following Community Programmes:

- Seventh Research Framework Programme (2007 – 2013)
- Entrepreneurship and Innovation Framework Programme, first sub-programme from the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP)
- PROGRESS (2007 – 2013)
- Culture (2007 – 2013)
- Europe for Citizens (2007 – 2013)
- Customs 2013 (2008 – 2013)
- Fiscalis 2013 (2008 – 2013)

2.4.2 EU Agencies

The Republic of Macedonia does not participate officially as a full member in any Community Agency. Alas, it participates in various forms in the work of the Community Agencies namely as an observer or as a partner country. Technical and financial assistance is established by the EU to contribute to develop the necessary skills when participating in a Community Agency.

3 Influencing the EU's decision-making Process

There are many ways to influence the EU-system. The doors are open for governments, citizens as well as organizations of various kinds to give their opinions or inform the EU's institutions about issues of importance to them.

Coordination of national policies and efforts towards the EU is a challenging, but crucial task if the goal is to influence the decision-making process in the EU. Considering the candidate status of Macedonia, the channels are many, but it is important to know how, when and where to concentrate the efforts.

This part of the report will elaborate on the decision-making procedures in the EU and how influence can be exerted in the different phases from a Macedonian position.

3.1 Formal procedures

Firstly, it is important to remember that Macedonia has approx. 2.05 million³⁰ inhabitants while the EU has more than 507 million inhabitants, which is over a hundred times more. When a Macedonian representative seeks to influence one hundred EU citizens, it is necessary to have expectations at a reasonable level. Secondly, it is necessary to ask what the Macedonian representatives seek to influence. The EU is normally not prepared to change a decision they have just made. It may only be appropriate for the EU to reconsider a decision if new, previously unknown, essential information is brought forward. And even in this case it may prove difficult, if the decision was made after a long, complicated decision making process involving many compromises.

If one wants to influence a decision, there is a need to know precisely what and why there is an aspiration to do so. It is not sufficient to disapprove of a proposal made by the European Commission. There is a need to clarify exactly which part of the proposal that is *disliked*, *why that part is disliked*, what the *proposed alternative is* and *why the alternative is a better solution for all*

³⁰ Population 31.12.07: <http://www.stat.gov.mk/Publikacii/MacedoniaInFigures2008.pdf>

parties (not only for one specific country). These alternatives and the argumentation must have been clarified before approaching the EU. There is also a need to possess knowledge about the basic elements of how to conduct international negotiations. Before someone seeks to influence the EU, there should be established a minimum of knowledge about EU institutions.

When the four above-mentioned arguments are agreed upon, it is settled what and why a Macedonian representative has undertaken its position.

While influence is achieved in different ways in each of the phases of the decision-making process, it is important to be aware of where (at what stage) in the process a proposal or an idea is.

Eight phases can illustrate the road from an idea to an agreed legislative act³¹:

Phase 1: An idea occurs

An idea often occurs through a discussion in a Commission expert group, where experts from the Member States participate, or in internal discussions in the Commission.

Unless there are Macedonian experts participating in the expert group in question, the existence of a new proposal is not likely to be known by Macedonian authorities at this stage. It could happen if there are Macedonians (or cooperation partners) in Brussels who continuously follow the policy area and already have good contacts in the Commission and among the experts who cooperate with the Commission. If so, it would be valuable to take the initiative to, or take actively part in, informal talks about the idea with key people in the field. If the representatives are sufficiently active at this stage, it may open a way to be incorporated into expert discussions in the subsequent phases. The normal pattern, however, will be that it is hard to be familiar with what happens

³¹ This presentation is based on Norwegian experiences and is also used as guidelines for government officials preparing for interaction with the EU-system.

in this phase. At best it is in the next phase (phase 2) interested parties will be familiar with the matter.

Phase 2: The idea is accepted and the official process in the Commission is started

The European Commission is an open institution, where it is generally easy to establish contact, but the strength of the arguments is utterly important. The easiest way to establish contact is possibly through the Macedonian Delegation in Brussels, which is an officially acknowledged institution. To use this channel is considered necessary if the contact is made on behalf of the Macedonian government. It is also possible to establish contact with the members of the expert groups instead of focusing on the employees in the Commission. This contact is usually easier to establish, as several networks exist and the contact will appear to be more informal, which may be an advantage if the Macedonian authorities do not wish to invest too much prestige in the question at this stage.

Phase 3: Preparatory work is started in the Commission; the proposal is most likely discussed in related expert groups with competencies in the field.

Informal contact is important. Related committees are also used to elaborate on a matter, and could be useful to interact with. Discussions of the matter with people in other committees, as well as in the committee with specific responsibility for the proposal, are thus equally important.

Phase 4: A Green Paper is launched, initiates a consultation period/hearing

A Green Paper outlines the current problems and the main strategies in the future work on the case. The Paper is a consultation document, and the Commission invites all parties to the consultation process. To be heard at this stage is significant, while all input is gathered and presented to the public after a predefined deadline. Furthermore it is important to attend the consultation

meeting where the results and feedback are presented. This is a suitable arena to establish contacts with representatives which have sharing interests.

Phase 5: Preparation of a legislative (directive or regulation) or budget proposal, which is presented for the Council and the EP simultaneously

The opportunity to lobby when the legislative proposal is being shaped is present. It is thus important to plan who to meet in the Council and the EP, as well as to nourish the relations with various contacts in the Commission.

Phase 6: EP and Council start their work on the proposal (politicized period)

At this stage it is necessary to keep track of the political climate on the issue, who has which opinion? Diplomatic contacts in capitals or the national delegations can be valuable sources of information. In addition there is a need to establish an overview of which political groups and parties in the EP that goes in the same direction. The assigned rapporteur in the EP is also a valuable source to contact, or members of the policy-specialised committee that handles the proposal. Hearings in the EP must be conducted in public, so this is also a source of information.

Phase 7: If the Commission's proposal is not accepted during first reading it has to go through a second reading in the EP, which invites to the same channels of influence as during the first reading

Phase 8: If agreement is not reached the proposal goes to a conciliation committee, which is composed of representatives from the Commission, Council and EP. At this stage the act is either adopted or refused (limited period of time to reach agreement)

At this stage there is little room for influence, especially for non Member States, unless there are extraordinary circumstances where Macedonian views are considered to be of major importance.

4 Norwegian Experiences

This part of the report presents Norwegian experiences in the field of influence. Norway has been interacting with the EU through the European Economic Area Agreement³² (EEA-Agreement) and the Schengen cooperation for more than 15 years, and has gained valuable experiences and knowledge on this topic.

4.1 Background

Norway is not a Member State of the EU, and the relationship with the Union is therefore based on other forms of contact and co-operation. This enables Norway to maintain a very high level of economic integration, and political co-operation, with the EU and its Member States.

The EEA Agreement is the single most important agreement regulating the relationship between the EU and the European Free Trade Association³³ (EFTA) States which takes part in the agreement. The EEA EFTA States are Norway, Iceland and Lichtenstein. The purpose of the agreement is to enlarge the EU's internal market to also comprise the EEA EFTA States.

Through the EEA Agreement Norway has taken on the obligation to implement all EU legislation relevant to the functioning of the internal market. The EEA Joint Committee³⁴ takes the decision on whether new Community legislation is of EEA-relevance, with joint participation by the EU Commission and the EEA EFTA Member States. Thereafter, it is up to the national parliaments and legislators to ensure the national implementation. The EEA Agreement also

³² The EEA Agreement gives Norway access to the EU's internal market with the same obligations as the Member States. The purpose of the agreement is to enlarge the EU's internal market to also comprise the EEA EFTA States, and it does so by creating a common "European Economic Area". See chapter 4.3 for further elaboration.

³³ EFTA was established in 1960 and is an intergovernmental organisation set up for the promotion of free trade and economic integration to the benefit of its four Member States; Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

³⁴ The EEA Joint Committee is responsible for the day-to-day management of the EEA Agreement. It provides the forum in which decisions are taken by consensus to incorporate Community legislation into the EEA Agreement (<http://www.efta.int/eea/eea-institutions/eea-joint-committee.aspx>, 26.04.10, 15:00).

ensures the EEA EFTA States some access to the preparatory work on new EU legislation on expert level.

Norway has also signed up to the Schengen Agreement, and is thus participating in the co-operation on common passport and border control, as well as several other issues within the EU policy area of Freedom, Security and Justice.

Norway is also participating in a whole range of EU programmes and initiatives, for example within the fields of research, education and culture.

4.2 Channels of Influence

Norway has committed itself to make use of the opportunities laid down in the EEA agreement in a systematic way to be able to influence the decision-making processes in the EU. The public administration has two main challenges related to influence under the EEA Agreement: to keep itself informed on initiatives for new EU-legislation, and to communicate Norwegian positions to the EU. Coordination of national positions at an early stage is thus essential to be kept informed and to provide the opportunity to exert influence. Thorough preparations and effective Norwegian coordination is considered necessary to make use of the opportunities laid down in the EEA Agreement. There is still room for enhancement of the Norwegian efforts, especially in connection with the dialogue with various stakeholders and the Commission in the early phases of the preparations of new legislation.

The EEA Agreement provides Norway with the opportunity to participate in the early stages of preparations for the new (EEA relevant) legislation, that is, in the formulation of proposals for new regulations initiated by the Commission. In addition Norway can access the expert- and comitology³⁵ committees to ensure that the EFTA states' interests are taken in to

³⁵ The implementing committees chaired by the Commission, bring together representatives from all Member States (and EEA EFTA) countries and are established to supervise the Commission in its implementation of EU-law. Organised in three primary types: advisory-, management- and regulatory committees (Wallace et al 2005).

consideration at an early stage in the legislative process, as well as in the implementing phase. These opportunities are considered the outmost important channels of influence for the Norwegian government. The difference between these two committee structures is important. The comitology committees are concerned with the implementation and regulations related to the EU legislation. The expert committees are working with drafts to EU legislation, and are thus involved at an earlier stage in the policy-making process.

The responsibility to communicate the Norwegian interests lies within the relevant ministry. Experts who participate in the different committees are considered as independent, but in reality they are often seen as spokesmen for Norwegian interests³⁶. Alas, the Norwegian experts are only allowed access to the committees in the preparatory phase. To be able to exert influence, the experts have to have highly developed skills and knowledge of the field in which they are working and be able to contribute in a constructive and active way. Experience, continuity, and willingness to compromise are considered as necessary skills to have a say in the committees.

Norway, as an EFTA state, does not have the same status as a Member State, but the potential of influencing the decision-making is present. Thus the ministries and the government in office, have to coordinate and give consistent directions to those working for the promotion of Norwegian (and European interests). To provide this, a national strategy is developed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs based on the priorities of interest towards the EU. To make sure that the various interests' of the ministries are taken into consideration, the Norwegian Coordination Committee plays an important role. This committee is based on exchange of experiences, and is functioning as a formalized information channel to ensure intra ministerial coordination. After concluding the EEA Agreement, there were also established EEA special committees which are case specific. These committees also have a coordinating function to provide the necessary contact between the ministries.

³⁶ Office of the Auditor General of Norway, report 2005:2

In addition, the Norwegian Delegation to the EU is an important coordinating actor. The delegation represents the Norwegian government in all matters that affects the relations between the EU and Norway. All ministries have a counselor for its area of responsibility working at the delegation, and are amongst others responsible for communicating the political development in the EU to the home ministry.

Norwegian authorities have a special focus on early involvement as part of its new European policy. Working with the aim of influencing the decision-making process at an early stage is considered the most important effort Norwegian stakeholders can make.

Thus, the EEA gives Norway a “double chance” to promote its interests: as part of the EU decision-making process – as an external lobby – and within the EEA machinery.

Membership in the EEA also provides tools without equivalent for non-EU countries, such as possibilities to participate in EU committees, programmes and agencies, as well as a presence in Commission’s staff. Strategic and effective use of these opportunities is crucial for Norway to compensate its absence from key EU institutions, such as the Parliament and the Council of Ministers.

4.2.1 EU Community Programmes

Norway participates in a series of programmes funded and managed by the EU, in exchange of co-funding in cash and/or in kind. This allows Norwegian actors to access EU-sponsored activities on the same ground as other EU actors. Norway has access to the programmes through the EEA-Agreement (Article 78, 79 and 81)³⁷, and the cooperation in the different fields are outlined in a separate protocol (Protocol 31). This explains how cooperation outside the framework of the four freedoms is conducted.

³⁷ Handbook in working with the EU/EEA (2009)

For each programme there is established a program committee which assists the Commission on i.e. the content and activities of the programmes. Norway can participate, but not vote in these committees. The committees seldom vote, so the difference between Norway and the Member States are not big practice.

Participation in the programmes is of great importance for Norway, especially in the field of knowledge sharing and development of methodology, as well as in building networks. Participation in the programmes is also considered important to take part in the policy development within the EU in field of the specific programme.

In June 2009 Norway participated in 19 of the programmes, and by 2011 Norway will take part in 24 of EUs Community Programmes. Norway pays an annual grant to participate in the programmes (and Agencies). This grant is negotiated in relation to the different programming periods and is based on a distribution key according to GDP. So far the Norwegian government considers the output of the participation as successful, while the funding, especially for the biggest program (Research Framework Programme), is attributable to Norwegian institutions and actors by participation in the programmes.

4.2.2 EU Agencies

Norway participates in several EU Agencies. The number of Agencies has multiplied over the last decade, and several of them play an increasingly central role in the management of the EU single market³⁸, in managing the existing EU-policies and assisting in the formulation of new policies for the EU. The presence of Norwegian representatives is therefore strategic to maintain a level-playing field between Norway and the EU.

There are 35 Agencies in the EU today, and their multiplication is a challenge in terms of coordination at all levels. The internal market, the need for more administrative capacity and the reluctance in several Member States in

³⁸ Econ (2009): *Norway and the EU: beyond the EEA?*

delegating more power to the Commission contributes to the growing number of Agencies.

The EEA/EFTA-states participate in 17 of the Agencies and are additionally seeking membership in five newly established entities. Norway is not automatically a member of an Agency and has to negotiate participation for every new it seeks to become a member of. The legal base for Norway's participation depends on the policy field in question. The EEA-Agreement, the Schengen-Agreement and several bilateral agreements lies down the foundation for the present involvement. Norway does not have the right to vote in these Agencies, but they are considered as utterly important for the relations between Norway and the EU.

4.2.3 Additional relations and actors

A variety of actors are contributing to the shaping of the Norwegian European policy by seeking to exert influence in different fields. The Norwegian government prioritises to have as broad contact as possible with the EU. The actors involved are all potential facilitators of Norwegian interests, e.g. by their membership and participation in European-wide organisations and networks. These forums provide important channels for uploading preferences and articulating interests.

The Norwegian actors playing a role in the relationship between Norway and the EU/EEA, can be divided in four main groups³⁹. Firstly, Norwegian actors representing the Norwegian public interests in Norway and Brussels are a groups which include Norwegian actors working on EU affairs, either from "home or directly from Brussels. This could be The Norwegian Mission in Brussels, the national administration, the Norwegian Parliament or local and regional authorities.

³⁹ Econ report, 2009:16

Secondly, Norwegian individuals employed at the EU institutions, also play a facilitating role. This group is mainly consisting of National Experts employed by the EU institutions through a temporary secondment from Norwegian institutions.

Thirdly, business and interest groups with a Norwegian identity pursuing their own agendas, is a groups of high salience. This group includes organisations advocating their own agendas, such as social partners, NGOs, research organisations and private companies and individuals. Many have established representation offices in Brussels and have in-depth knowledge of the EU and its public relations. They are especially seeking knowledge and information through lobbying, networks and European-level federations (e.g. Business Europe or European Trade Union Confederation).

Finally, institutions employing Norwegian individuals and facilitating the Norway-EU relationship, is a relevant group. This could be the EFTA institutions, such as EFTA Surveillance Authority (ESA) or the EFTA Secretariat, or the Commission's Delegation to Norway and Iceland in Oslo. These institutions play a direct role in fostering the relationship between Norway and the EU.

This does not cover all relations between Norway and the EU, but it gives a representative picture of the mosaic of established relations, both formal and informal. Other channels and actors are also involved, such as media, political parties, trade unions, regional offices and academia.

5 Macedonian experiences

Macedonian relations with the European Union are mainly focusing on strengthening the administrative capacities to prepare the Macedonian authorities to meet the obligations for EU membership. There is an EU dimension in more or less all development programmes and strategic goals implemented by the Government and the public administration. Thus, the process of EU integration is reflected in almost every part of the Macedonian society.

As described in chapter two, SEA has the responsibility for coordination of the central administration regarding the preparation of the Republic of Macedonia for EU membership. There are two main areas in which SEA is the lead coordinator in the process of communication and coordination with the EU institutions:

- 1) Adoption of the Acquis Communautaire by revision of the national Programme for Adoption of the Acquis Communautaire (NPAA); and
- 2) Implementing and managing the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance – IPA funds.

Within the state administrative bodies (and other relevant national institutions) the practice is to organize the employees responsible for EU issues in one unit. Within the ministries there is usually a Sector for EU Integration and/or a Sector for International Cooperation.

Where there are not established sectors for EU or other international affairs, the institutions organise themselves in Working Groups, headed by the appointed IPA/SPO⁴⁰ Coordinator in terms of managing the European funds within the respective institutions.

⁴⁰ Senior Programme Officer under IPA component 1 (Transnational Assistance and Institution Building)

Communication of the state administrative bodies with the EU institutions is regulated by Guidelines⁴¹. These guidelines are regulating the manner of communication of the state administrative bodies with the European commission services and other institutions and bodies of the European Union.

The interviews carried out have shown that one of the advantages with the current organisation of tasks is that one can find a concentration of sources and information on EU issues. On the other hand, there could be a situation of over-concentration of tasks at one place, meaning that there are too many issues to be handled by one department. All in all, it appears from the interviews that the representatives from the institutions are finding themselves successfully in managing their tasks in terms of the communication and coordination with both the national coordinating bodies and the EU institutions.

This report has so far described and contextualised the place and the role of different national actors/stakeholders that are involved in these processes, as well as guidelines regulating the manner of communication with the EU.

The following chapter will address the current set up of the national structures that are engaged in the working with EU issues. The findings are based on interviews with the involved stakeholders. The findings are related to Ministries, agencies within the ministries, other independent agencies and the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia.

5.1 Ministries

The ministries play an important part in the EU integration process. The main tasks are to prepare the relevant Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) and contribute to the National Program for Adoption of the Acquis Communautaire – NPAA. These processes involve close dialogue with the Ministry of Finance and SEA. The sector/unit or working group for EU issues carries this responsibility and the interviews shows that there are well-established channels for communication and cooperation with SEA. These

⁴¹ Described in chapter 2.3.2

dialogues are headed by a Senior Programme Officer (SPO) or an IPA Coordinator. They also manage the communication between beneficiary institution and the NIPAC Office. This organisation set-up is also the basis for other parts of the EU integration process.

The ministries have also established contacts with the respective Directorate General in within the EU Commission for IPA matters. This provides an opportunity for direct communication. Not the all ministries have the option of communicating in this way. It depends on the needs and current priorities that the ministries are working on. But, for some ministries, e.g. the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, the communication and coordination with the relevant Directorate General is very important.

Direct links were also established during the negotiations on the visa-liberalization process by the Ministry of Interior (Unit for negotiation within the Sector for EU).

Furthermore, ministries also take advantage of the opportunity to attend meetings organized by the European Commission on technical/expert level. On these meetings, Macedonian representatives have opportunities for direct influence and lobbying for the national interest among the EU institutions and EU representatives. The interviews also tell that the opportunity to attend informal high level meetings is present. This is used by high level representatives from the Macedonian ministries. The information about these kinds of meetings is circulated through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Macedonian Mission in Brussels.

The ministries have access to EU institutions through their participation in different EU networks. These networks are used by the ministries as platforms for establishing communication with the EU institutions, developing bilateral and multilateral cooperation, and to establish a wider platform for lobbying on certain national interests.

The interviewed from the Ministries are recognizing the crucial role of the Macedonian representatives in Brussels, and see them as more than necessary in

the crucial period for preparations for the negotiation, as well as for other policy areas.

5.1.1 Agencies within the Ministries

Throughout the interviews, the agencies within the ministries have expressed a great interest to be further included in the processes of cooperation with EU institutions. Bodies and agencies within the ministries are not directly involved in the cooperation with the EU, except through their participation in the work of the Sub-committees.

Nevertheless, some agencies have established EU relations. E.g. The Bureau of Metrology actively participates in negotiations with the EU. The Bureau of Metrology is involved in the integration process through the SAA, article 73, which is related to standardisation, metrology, accreditation and conformity assessment. The Bureau is a body within the Ministry of Economy, and it has laid down significant efforts to enable them self to take the necessary measures in order to gradually achieve conformity with Community practice, technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures.

Other agencies, e.g. the Institute for Standardisation and the Institute for Accreditation are key actors for implementing the required reforms and establishing a satisfactory infrastructure to provide adequate support to the business community.

These three agencies signed a Memorandum of Cooperation in 2009 to regulate their relations and mutual responsibilities. Communication from these agencies (applications for IPA funding etc.) is going through the Ministry of Economy and SEA.

Additionally, some agencies are developing the bilateral and regional European cooperation by signing various documents and memorandums.

The agencies that were asked consider the horizontal cooperation between the bodies within the ministries and other ministries as good and fruitful. But

mostly, these bodies are conducting their communication and cooperation with other similar institutions on a regional or wider European level in parallel to the development of EU relations. Networks have also shown to be a frequent way to organise common interests. As a crucial link to the EU, these networks have indirect access to some of the many European funds.

To summarise, there are already several agencies which are seizing the opportunities of cooperation and interaction with the EU. They either have an intensive relationship with SEA, they have direct connections to “their” DG in Brussels, or they contribute on an expert level to the policy makers who represent the Republic of Macedonia towards the EU. In addition they have access to the Sub-committees established under the SAA. The participation in EU Programmes allows for further cooperation within the framework of predefined rules and procedures for non-Member States. A final way to nourish the relations is through the DEU. This could include a variety of issues, from technical support, participation on different meetings, to high level meetings, and diplomatic exchange of information.

These bodies are dedicated to their highly developed expertise in certain areas, and are functioning on an operational level by providing research, practical information and institutional support to their ministries. Therefore, it could be useful to establish more awareness within these bodies on how they contribute to the aggregated result of Macedonian policies towards the EU. It could also benefit Macedonian institutions when it comes to funding, if greater efforts are made in the field of information about existing and potential opportunities.

5.2 Other Agencies

This chapter includes the findings among national agencies of various kinds, e.g. the Secretariat for Legislation, the Agency for Civil Servants, the Agency for Youth and Sports, the Agency for Foreign Investments, and it seeks to clarify their role in the communication with the EU, and the national coordinating institutions. Mainly their role in the processes of EU integration is informative and consultative. This includes participation and support to the

Macedonian authorities during technical meetings in Brussels, and depending on the needs, to providing support and advocacy.

Some of these agencies are still developing and defining their role in the system, and some are not considered as directly involved in the process of communication and coordination with the EU. But, the role and contribution can still be utterly important in the process of legal harmonisation, approximation of the national legislation with EU legislation and requirements, in the process of providing technical support and in uploading Macedonian public interests, and in the administration of other relevant programmes.

It varies whether the agency's function have a visible character when it comes to being a channel of influence. On the one hand, some agencies explain that they are focused on specific topics, like tourism, and they work basically on bilateral level, and do not seek to approach the relevant EU institutions directly. On the opposite, the Agency for foreign investments seeks to be hands on in the relations to the EU.

Anyhow, they have some of the same working methods, which focus on communication, support and promotion of Macedonian interests, as well as to contribute with knowledge and to the transfer of experience. The agencies are using EU institutions for information gathering, to enable creation of analyses and as sources for good practice. In the light of this, there is a great interest to formalise the relations with certain EU institutions. These relations is not formalised on the Macedonian side either, and there are not any written procedures that regulates this flow of information.

5.3 The Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia

The Joint Parliamentary Committee, representing the Macedonian Assembly and the EP, provides direct links between the two parliaments. In an EU context this is a crucial connection, due to the historical development of the EP. Since the late 70s, the EP has gained more and more power in the decision-making procedures in the EU. To the Macedonian Assembly, it is considered salient to keep the cooperation on an active and productive level.

According to the announcements, when the negotiation process will start for the Republic of Macedonia, the Macedonian Assembly will have its own representative in the European Parliament, which is regular procedure with candidate countries engaging in membership negotiations with the EU.

This procedure will strengthen the position of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia in relation to the EU, and make it more influential.

The Assembly is satisfied with today's inter-institutional cooperation. They have regular contact on EU matters with ministries and other national entities, which provides them with necessary information and communications.

6 Opportunities and future challenges

Through the interviews with the institutions presented in this report, some recommendations and areas of focus have been highlighted and sorted according to the institution in question. These recommendations express the identified needs and recommended steps that could be conducted in order to improve the communication and coordination of the Macedonian central administration with the EU institutions. Most of the recommendations are identified and suggested by the interviewed parties themselves.

6.1 Ministries

There are several areas in which the ministries have established communication and coordination with the European Commission Services and other institutions of the EU.

The challenge within the ministries mainly relate to the administrative capacity building. The recommendations regarding the administrative capacity building is directed towards the civil servants and how they best can familiarise themselves with the EU and its institutions, working methods and decision-making system.

Opportunities and recommended initiatives:

- trainings of civil servants in EU affairs
- providing more hands on approach in communication and cooperation through expert to expert communication, availability of documentation and information, and access to the established EU networks
- providing technical capacities on the national level, both human resources and equipment
- providing onsite training and establishing communication with EU employees engaged in technical matters (by working with them on specific topics on a daily basis for a limited period of time)
- develop negotiation capacities and providing sustainability of human resources for negotiation, building the negotiation teams for each chapter through negotiation trainings (e.g. by introducing motivation incentives)
- trainings that could improve the informal communication between the Macedonian civil servants and the EU

Related to this, an important recommendation is addressing the implementation of the reform processes in the Macedonian public administration, which is especially focusing on developing and sustaining the professionalism in the state administration.

With regards to coordination, there is a need of strengthened coordination and better communication between the relevant stakeholder on the Macedonian and EU side respectively. E.g. by increasing the number of technical meetings with the relevant Directorate Generals in Brussels, the opportunity could be open for identifying channels with a stronger opportunity for influence of the relevant EU institutions. Also, establishing regular meetings between the task managers, appointed in each of the ministries, could be established.

When considering strengthening the bilateral cooperation with other EU member states, their experiences and lessons learnt in this field could be presented on a frequent basis. A clear definition of the responsibilities among

the relevant actors is a prerequisite to establish such networks and channels of communication. There is also an opportunity to further develop the software information system within the Macedonian public administration, in order to enhance the horizontal coordination between the relevant institutions.

6.1.1 Agencies within the ministries

The bodies organized as entities within the ministries have expressed great interest and preparedness for further inclusion in the processes of cooperation with the European Commission Services and the other institutions of EU. In addition to improving the communication and cooperation with the EU institutions, it is recommended to provide support of engagement of professionals/experts that can provide expertise in application writing and in the drafting of documents necessary for participating in European projects and programmes. This could be organized as for ex. an independent project unit.

A goal for the horizontal cooperation between the bodies within the respective ministries is to initiate and facilitate when enhancing the functionality of the Quality Infrastructure, embedded in the NPAA (focusing on introducing better flow of information).

Some of these bodies play an important role as facilitators and contributors to the aggregated EU policy in Macedonia. It is important that these bodies are aware of the importance of their place and role in the public administration and the political chain.

6.2 Other Agencies and bodies

Some of the independent institutions have their own approach to the engagement in the work with cooperation with the EU institutions. This approach mainly focuses on their contribution in the preparation of the NPAA and by participation and membership in relevant European networks. The recommendations for these bodies are directed towards strengthening the administrative capacities through e.g. technical support (trainings, seminars and exchange of experiences with and by the EU), as well as to develop mechanisms for direct communication between Macedonian bodies (ex.

Agency of youth and sport – Sector for youth), the European Commission Services and other EU institutions in specific fields.

The national agencies, which provide support to the Government in its policy implementation, mainly have an informative and consultative role in the processes of EU integration. The recommendations for these institutions are focusing on strengthening their role and establishing direct contacts and communication with the relevant EU institutions in order to foster future cooperation. There is also a great interest in formalizing the relations with relevant EU institutions where the current cooperation is on an indirect level.

6.2.1 National institutions

National institutions are governmental institutions established by specific law, and some are still in the developing phase when it comes to cooperating with the European Commission Services and other EU institutions. For this institutional level, the recommended field efforts are focusing on technical assistance. This means that there is a need to increase the knowledge of the various working groups, commissions and institutions which are the main potential cooperation partners within the EU, set up negotiation trainings and to establish future EU cooperation groups on a national level.

It could also be useful to develop a review of the EU institutions compared to the domestic ones, as well presenting as comparative table of the existing levels of communication. This in turn, can improve the communication and cooperation with the EU by coordinating the national topics which needs to be improved prior to a negotiation period.

6.2.2 Independent Institutes

National institutes are mainly using their pan-European networks to communicate, coordinate and further establish contacts with the EU institutions. Their efforts are tending towards fulfilling the membership obligations, reach the planned agreements and make use of the benefits from these memberships.

In order to meet the preconditions set out to be able to achieve full membership in specific European networks, there are still actions that need to be taken in the field of communication and coordination. Their full membership depends on fulfilling the preconditions, and additionally, on commitment by the state and the national strategic policies and priorities. These institutes are relatively new, very expert oriented, and have achieved a certain level of growth that needs to be continued and further supported.

6.3 The Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia

The Assembly has already established direct links with the European Parliament. In order to develop its European ties, it will be important to meet the future challenges by focusing on the dialogue with the Mission of the Republic of Macedonia in Brussels.

Additionally, there are several opportunities available when the negotiation process will start. At this point the Assembly will have its own representative in the European Parliament (usual procedure with candidate countries that are leading the negotiations with EU), and the preparations for this will be crucial in the time to come. By having a delegated representative in the EP, the role of the Macedonian Assembly will be strengthened and it will potentially become more influential. Thus, the inter-institutional cooperation must be reinforced, and the possibilities for joint actions should be kept open.

7 Forthcoming focus areas

To conclude this introductory resume of the Republic of Macedonia's relations with the EU, some main focus areas will be pointed out. The following list is meant to draw attention to some future challenges and areas which should be in focus to optimize the relations and possibilities for exerting influence on the European arena. The recommendations point out that there is a need to:

- Provide appropriate capacity building activities, such as:

- trainings for the civil servants on EU practices in the field of communication and coordination with the EU institutions and other related EU issues
 - trainings with civil servants from EU countries
 - on-site training
 - developing the negotiation capacities, which in turn will provide sustainability of human resources for negotiation, as well as to establish incentives for continuity in the public administration
- Improve coordination and communication among the relevant stakeholders, e.g. by:
- increasing the number of technical meetings with the relevant Directorate Generals in Brussels;
 - developing technical tools for communication between the Macedonian stakeholders;
 - strengthening the bilateral cooperation with EU countries regarding their experiences and lessons learnt in this field;
- Strengthen the communication with the Mission of the Republic of Macedonia to the EU;
- Continue the focus on the Public Administration Reform;
- Continue the implementation of the institutional agreements with the EU.

Reference sheet for Difi – Agency for public Management and eGovernment

Title of report:	How to influence the EU? An Introduction to the current relations between the Republic of Macedonia and the European Union
DIFI's report number:	2010:9
Authors(s):	Katerina Zafirova, Sanja Kostovska Skaar, Ellen Rønning-Arnesen
External partners:	Secretariat for European Affairs
Project number:	106106
Name of project:	NORMAK- Influencing the EU
Head of project:	Ellen Rønning-Arnesen
Project commissioned by:	Agency for Public Management and eGovernment
Abstract:	<p>The document presents the current relations between the Republic of Macedonia and the EU. Macedonia's status as a candidate country provides several arenas for interaction with the EU. These interactions give Macedonia access to various channels of influence. In order to position Macedonian interests on the European arena there is a need to facilitate these relations, as well as to establish new.</p> <p>The objective of this report has been to provide findings on the relations that already exist, and to look at recommendations on how to improve them, as well as to establish new. Norwegian experiences have been drawn on to establish examples of interaction with the EU, in the light of being a non-Member State.</p> <p>The report concludes with recommendations on efforts which can facilitate the Republic of Macedonia's chances to promote the national interests and positions, as well as to open possibilities for influencing in the EU decision – making process for certain issues.</p>
Key words:	European Union, Republic of Macedonia, IPA, candidate country, influence, Norway, EU experiences, EU relations, recommendations for improving EU relations, government, public administration, organization of EU issues, coordination, NPAA, SAA
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Annex 1

Interview questionnaire

1. How do you see your place and role in the communication and coordination of the Republic of Macedonia with the European Union, including the experience and participation in the cooperation and influences processes in Macedonia? How do you see the roles of other relevant stakeholders, their contribution and influences? In this respect, do you have clear perception for further acting in this area?
2. How can you define the coordination of the relevant actors related to the communication, cooperation and coordination with the European Union? Are there any kinds of established channels for flow of information, flow of procedures, etc.?
3. What are the main legal and institutional frames in Macedonia related to the relations with European Union? Concretely, how do they are manifest on national level, bilateral level, and wider? How they can be recognized and how do they interfere the relations?
4. What are the crucial coordination topics and political-administrative issues that need to be improved in order to support the process of negotiation with the European Union?
5. Please explain how are functioning the inter-institutional relations in managing development between government levels?
6. What are the main problems related to cooperation with other government levels?
7. Can you address some concrete recommendations or measures that can improve the communication and cooperation with the European Union?
8. Can you address some concrete recommendations or measures that can improve the negotiations with the European Union?
9. What are the main horizontal coordination challenges in Macedonia related to the cooperation with EU?
10. What is the level of satisfaction with the realised coordination between responsible ministries in the process of EU integration?
11. What is the level of satisfaction with the realised coordination and negotiation with EU?
12. What are the crucial coordination topics (e.g. overlapping responsibilities) and political-administrative issues on national level that need to be improved in order to support the EU integration and negotiation process?

Annex 2

List of the interviewed institutions

- Secretariat for European Affairs – SEA
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- The General Secretariat of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia
- Agency of Civil Servants
- Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy
- Ministry of Transport and Communications
- Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
- Ministry of Internal Affairs
- Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Culture
- Ministry of Justice
- Customs Administration of RM
- Institute for Accreditation
- Institute for Standardisation
- Bureau for Metrology
- Assembly of the RM
- Agency for Foreign Investments of RM
- Agency for Youth and Sport

Annex 3

Chronology of the relations with the European Union

- *October 1992*: The Republic of Macedonia appointed its representative in Brussels
- *December, 1995*: The Republic of Macedonia and EU established diplomatic relations when EU opened negotiations with the Republic of Macedonia aiming at signing the Agreement of wide ranging cooperation in the fields of the trade, financial operations and transport
- *February, 1996*: Establishment of the Mission of RM in Brussels on embassy level
- *March, 1996*: The Republic of Macedonia became a full partner in the PHARE Programme
- *1997*: Regional Approach. The EU Council of Ministers establishes political and economic conditionality for the development of bilateral relations. Signature on several agreements (Co-operation Agreement and financial protocol to promote global co-operation; Agreement on Trade in Textile Products; Agreement in the field of Transport)
- *March, 1998*: The first meeting of the Common Cooperation Council was held in Skopje. The Council was established for the purpose of monitoring realisation of the Cooperation Agreement, achievements and development of the structural reforms as well as providing suggestions and instructions relating to certain specific issues
- *January 2000*: The European Commission Directives proposed to the EU Council were adopted, concerning the elevation of the cooperation level between the Republic of Macedonia and EU as well as commencing the official negotiations for prospective EU membership
- *June, 2000*: The Feira European Council states that all the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP) countries are “potential candidates” for EU membership
- *November, 2000*: The Zagreb Summit, launches the SAP for five countries of South-Eastern Europe, including the Republic of Macedonia
- *April, 2001*: The Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) was signed

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- *June, 2001*: Interim Agreement enters into force, covering the trade, and trade-related parts of the SAA
 - *June, 2003*: The European Council adopts the “Thessaloniki Agenda for Western Balkans”, thus verifying the European perspective of the countries from the region. This document has defined the accession instruments in the stabilisation and association process
 - *March, 2004*: Application for EU membership, followed by the Council’s request on the Commission’s opinion on the application in May
 - *April, 2004*: Entry into force of the SAA
 - *September, 2004*: The Government of the Republic of Macedonia adopted the National Strategy for European Integration
 - *February, 2005*: The Macedonian Government submitted to the European Commission the Answers to the European Commission Questionnaire
 - *November, 2005*: Opinion by the Commission on the membership application, the European Council decides to grant candidate status in December 2005
 - *October, 2007*: Financial Agreement for 2007 National Programme within the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) and the Framework Agreement were signed between the Republic of Macedonia and the European Commission on cooperation for financial assistance. The Republic of Macedonia was the first country in the region whose projects were approved by the EC and the first country in the region to sign the Financial Agreement thus enabling use of IPA funds⁴²
 - *January, 2008*: Agreement on Visa Facilitation and Readmission with the EU entered into force
 - *February, 2008*: Council adopts the Accession Partnership, thus updating the European Partnership from 2006

⁴² Source: <http://sep.gov.mk/Default.aspx?ContentID=12> and http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/candidate-countries/the_former_yugoslav_republic_of_macedonia/index_en.htm (visited 19.02.2010, 10 am.)

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- *March, 2008*: European Commission adopts a Communication on the Western Balkans which indicates benchmarks for moving to the next stage in the accession process
 - *March, 2009*: European Parliament adopted a Resolution on the 2008 Progress Report for the Republic of Macedonia calling for the start of negotiations for membership in the EU
 - *July, 2009*: European Commission proposes to grant the Republic of Macedonia visa liberalisation

Annex 4

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Annex 5

Management and coordination of the EU integration process

