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## Press release

# **Bulgarian presidency of EU Council: European Free Alliance (EFA) asks for respect of European treaties in Bulgaria**

## **EFA, European political party, pushes for dialogue on Macedonians in Bulgaria**

*In the wake of the Bulgarian presidency of the EU Council, the respect of EU treaties and rights on Bulgarian territory must also be put into perspective. A delegation of the European Free Alliance (EFA), a European political party (EUPP), has come to visit Bulgaria to investigate the situation of the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria.*

EFA was founded on the conviction that Europe's greatest treasure is the diversity of its peoples. In Bulgaria, diversity does not seem to be respected. EFA and their member party Omo Ilinden Pirin have repeatedly denounced the situation of Macedonians in Bulgaria to no avail.

With the EU Presidency in the hands of Bulgaria, it is time for the Bulgarian government to show that it stands for the three pillars of the EU: democracy, rule of law, and human rights. 10 years after their access to EU membership, Bulgaria is still in breach of EU rulings on minorities.

Minority rights are human rights - and the basis of democracy. EU States must recognise the diversity of the Peoples of Europe.

One of these peoples is the Macedonian people. EFA demands a dialogue on the subject. Not recognising the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria can not be an answer. EFA demands the Bulgarian authorities respect diversity and equality. We ask Bulgaria to abide by the Treaties and to comply with EHRC rulings.

A dialogue would be a good first step and would show that minority policies are a guarantee towards peace and stability. Good neighbourhood relations are also needed in order to protect minorities in the Balkans.

The issue of Macedonians in Bulgaria is not a question of number in their population - the respect of their identity and culture also falls within a wider context of minority rights in Europe. There are 350 national minorities in Europe, with approximately 50 million people belonging to national minority or a minority language community. On February 7<sup>th</sup>, the European Parliament voted in favour of a resolution on fighting discrimination of EU minorities. At the same time, a citizens' initiative entitled



the 'Minority Safepack' is currently ongoing, which aims to improve EU legislation on EU minorities. It has already collected 600.000 signatures.

Europe is now at a crossroads. Claims from nations like Scotland, Catalonia, Corsica or the Basque Country among others show that the EU must confront itself with the right to self-determination.

*The European Free Alliance (EFA) has 47 member parties and is represented by 11 elected Members at the European Parliament. EFA stands for democracy, solidarity, social justice – and human rights. Our core principal is the right for all peoples to decide – the right to self-determination, which is a fundamental principle recognized by international law. It is present in many regional governments, and even in Belgium in the Federal Government. EFA is also present in the Catalan Parliament, with its member Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC), and in the Scottish Government, with the Scottish National Party (SNP).*

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