



FYR Macedonia



Last update:	8 June 2011
Author:	
Population:	2,072,086 (July 2010 est.)
Prime minister:	Nikola Gruevski (VMRO-DPMNE)
President:	Gjorge Ivanov (VMRO-DPMNE)
Governemental type:	Parliamentary democracy
Ruling coalition:	VMRO-DPMNE, BDI/DUI and several small parties
Last election:	Parliamentary elections June 2011
Next election:	-
Sister parties:	Social Democratic Union of Macedonia, SDSM (observer)

For a long time the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) is considered a relative success story in the region: no major conflicts, fairly successful state-building process and no territory issues. In addition, after years of showing dedication to implementing the Ohrid Agreement – the peace deal signed by the Macedonian government and ethnic Albanian representatives in 2001 – and carrying through reforms, the country received the status of EU candidate in December 2005. The promise of EU and NATO membership in 2008 the country fulfilled the criteria for entering NATO are important tools in uniting Macedonians and Albanians living in the country. However, a long-standing name dispute with Greece, despite UN mediation, has been blocking the negotiations, which stagnates the EU integration process. Therefore by holding peaceful, fair and free presidential and municipal elections in 2009 and general elections in June 2011 Macedonia has passed an important test.

ELECTIONS AND POLITICAL SITUATION

The Assembly, or the Sobranija, is the only chamber of Parliament and comprises 123 members. The Assembly members are elected by proportional representation for a four-year term in office. In general elections, Macedonia is divided into six constituencies electing 20 MP's each. 3 seats are elected by representatives of the Macedonian citizens living abroad: 1 from Europe, 1 from North America, and 1 from Asia and Australia.

Parliamentary elections 2008

On 12 April 2008, the Macedonian parliament called for early elections on 1 June after legislators decided to dissolve the parliament in a bid to end months of political stagnation in the country. The ruling coalition, which came to power after elections in 2006, had been in turmoil for months over the country's reform path before Greece dealt the final blow by blocking an invitation for Macedonia to join NATO during the alliance's Bucharest summit on 2 April 2008. Most parliamentarians agreed with prime minister Nikola Gruevski of the VMRO-DPMNE, who said that "Macedonia needs a new mandate for faster reforms." Some opposition lawmakers, though, alleged that the VMRO-DPMNE mainly called for early elections in order to increase its own success during the next ballot. The limited preparation time for the elections, combined with the ruling party's moderately nationalist platform, would be favourable in a time of crisis over the name-dispute with Greece.

On 11 May, the campaign for the 1 June parliamentary elections officially kicked off. There were high expectations of the elections, both within Macedonia and internationally. In general, fair conduct of the elections was seen as a



way for Macedonia to show its readiness for further Euro–Atlantic integration, despite the obvious obstacle of the Greek–Macedonian name–dispute that continues to linger. However, the campaign period took a violent turn, especially in the areas dominated by ethnic Albanians in the northwest of the country. Ethnic Albanians make up about a quarter of Macedonia’s 2.1 million inhabitants. Tensions between Macedonia’s two ethnic Albanian parties, the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI) and the Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA) have been high since the 2006 elections, when Gruevski picked the DPA as a coalition partner, despite it won fewer votes than the DUI. Several attacks took place against the offices of both DPA and DUI, including an attack during which eight shots were fired at the office of the DUI in Tetovo.

Both the European Commission and the American Embassy condemned the campaign–related incidents that took place in Macedonia. The OSCE observation mission furthermore concluded that media had been biased in favour of the ruling VMRO–DPMNE. Due to the violence and reports about fraud, 22 polling stations (ca. 1 percent of the total) had to be closed. Conduct of the ballots was assessed negatively in 165 other polling stations. Repeat elections for these 187 polling stations were called for 15 June. These were assessed more positively by international election observers, with the OSCE stating that “[s]ignificant improvements in security for the re–run elections enabled most people to freely cast their vote.” In total 2 electoral blocks and 15 parties competed in the elections. The ruling VMRO–DPMNE’s “For a Better Macedonia” coalition won the elections, gaining 63 out of 120 seats.

Results of the elections

Party / Coalition	% of votes	Seats in parliament
For a Better Macedonia (VMRO–DPMNE, Socialist Party of Macedonia, Democratic Union, Democratic Renewal of Macedonia, Democratic Party of Turks, Democratic Party of Serbs, Union of Roma in Macedonia)	48.80%	63
SUN – Coalition for Europe (Social Democratic Union of Macedonia, New Social Democratic Party, Liberal Democratic Party, Liberal	23.65%	27



Party of Macedonia)		
Democratic Union for Integration (DUI)	12.77%	18
Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA)	8.48%	11
Party for European Future	1.47%	1

Election turnout: 57%

New government

Despite its win of 63 out of 120 seats, giving the party coalition a majority in parliament, the “For a Better Macedonia” coalition led by prime minister Gruevski announced its intention to rule with the biggest ethnic Albanian party, the Democratic Union for Integration. The Democratic Party of Albanians will thus remain in opposition. According to the press service of the VMRO–DPMNE, the parties have agreed their priorities will be attaining NATO membership and EU candidate status, currently blocked by the name dispute with Greece.

2009 presidential and municipal elections

The speaker of the Macedonian parliament called the presidential and municipal election on 10 January, only half a year after the 2008 parliamentary elections which were not in accordance with democratic standards. Therefore, these elections were an important test for Macedonia in restoring democratic credibility and showing the European Union its readiness and ability to continue the EU integration process.

The official campaign began on the 2nd of March with strong and highly visible political activity in whole Macedonia. In this campaign the presidential elections overshadowed the municipal elections as the public debate and campaign mainly focused on the presidential candidates. In line with previous election campaigns, this campaign was characterized by negative campaigning in which the presidential candidates, political parties and their leaders continuously insulted each other.

The first round of the presidential and municipal elections was held on the 22nd of March. President candidate of the ruling VMRO–DPMNE, professor Gjorge Ivanov, won the first round by getting 33.95 per cent of the votes, whilst the candidate of the Social Democrats (SDSM) professor Ljubomir Frckovski got 19.81 per cent of the votes. As none of the candidates got the majority of the votes a second round of voting was needed to decide who will be the next president of Macedonia. Furthermore, in the first round 33 mayoral candidates were elected. VMRO–DPMNE got the majority of the votes in 23 municipalities, SDSM and ethnic–Albanian Democratic Union for Integration (DUI) four and the Democratic Party of Turks and the Movement for National Unity of Turks both won in one municipality. In 43 municipalities none of the mayoral candidates got the majority which, again, means a second round of voting is needed.

As many analysts expected and many polls predicted candidate of the conservative ruling party VMRO–DPMNE Gjorge Ivanov was elected the new president of Macedonia. Ivanov got 59.44 per cent of the votes while his opponent Ljubomir Frckovski of the SDSM got 34.69 per cent. The turnout threshold of 40 per cent was met as 42.69 per cent of the registered voter turned out. This threshold has been lowered from 50 to 40 per cent just recently ahead of the elections. The rather big win of VMRO–DPMNE was also reflected on the local level as the party won in 55 municipalities and the city of Skopje. DUI won in nine municipalities, SDSM in eight and Democratic Party of Turks and the Movement for National Unity of Turks both in one. In the table underneath full results of the elections can be seen.



Election result of 2009 presidential election in FYR Macedonia:

Presidential candidate	% of votes First round, 22 March (turnout 56.88%)	% of votes Second round 5 March (turnout 42,63%)
Gjorge Ivanov (VMRO-DPMNE)	33.93	59.37
Ljubomir Frckovski (SDSM)	19.89	34.66
Ljube Boskoski (independent)	14.41	--
Agron Buxhaku (DUI)	7.22	--
Imer Sulmani (Nova Demokratija)	14.48	--
Nano Ruzin (LDP)	3.93	--
Mirusche Hoxha (DPA)	2.97	--

Election result of 2009 municipal election in FYR Macedonia:

Party	Number of municipalities the party had received a majority of votes
VMRO-DPMNE	55
Democratic Union for Integration (DUI)	13
SDSM	6
Democratic Party of Albanians	1
Turks Movement for National Unity of Turks	1
Roma Union of Macedonia	1
Party of New Democracy	1
SDSM in coalition with smaller parties	2
Independent candidates for mayor	3
Total	83

Early Parliamentary elections 2011

The parliamentary election in Macedonia was supposed to be held in mid-2012, after the ruling coalition won over two thirds of the parliamentary seats in the 2008 early election. However, a bitter dispute between the ruling coalition and the opposition was triggered in November 2010 and on 28 January 2011 the opposition SDSM decided to quit the Parliament. They criticized the lack of democratic capacity of the government and demanded early



elections. As a consequence, early elections were held on 5 June Macedonians voted for 123 legislators in six electoral districts. More than 1.7 million people were eligible to vote. The June 5 early elections were the seventh general elections since Macedonia became independent in the 1990s and followed six years in government of Nikola Gruevski's VMRO-DPMNE party.

Results

Despite the violence and tensions in the run-up to the elections, the voting passed peacefully. The elections were monitored by about 3,500 local and 330 international observers, including representatives from OSCE and ODIHR. After polls closed, Nikola Gruevski's centre-right VMRO-DPMNE party claimed victory in all six electoral districts over the Social Democrats. The VMRO-DPMNE has won 437,665 votes or 39 percent out of total votes. However, the main opposition Social Democrats, led by Branko Crvenkovski, made a strong showing, winning 367,876 votes, or 32.78 percent.

The poor showing of several smaller parties was unexpected. In the country's Albanian bloc, the junior ruling Democratic Union for Integration, DUI, of Ali Ahmeti remained the strongest party. According to the State Commission, the party won 114,870 votes or 10.24 percent. Its rival the Democratic Party of Albanians, DPA, won only 66,055 votes or 5.90 per cent. The VMRO People's Party and the United for Macedonia party were expected to snatch a significant portion of the right-wing electorate from the ruling VMRO-DPMNE, but this did not turn out to be the case.

Party/Coalition	% of votes	Seats in Parliament
VMRO-DPMNE	38,98%	56
Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM)	32,78%	42
Democratic Union for Integration (DUI)	10,24%	15



Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA)	5,90%	8
National Democratic Revival (NDR)	2,67%	2
VMRO - Peoples Party (VMRO -NP)	2,51%	0
Part for New Democracy	1,78%	0
United For Macedonia (OM)	1,52%	0
Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)	1,47%	0

Roberto Battelli, the head of the OSCE /ODIHR monitoring team said that the day of elections was “overwhelmingly positive.” “The voting was conducted in a peaceful atmosphere and the subsequent counting of votes was assessed as positive in 9 out of 10 observed counting’s.” By holding peaceful, fair and free elections Macedonia has passed an important test and showed that it meets the democratic standards of the European Union.

Talks on forming a government are expected to begin shortly. While the VMRO–DPMNE could form a majority



government with the DUI, in a replay of the current coalition, it is possible that the DUI and the DPA could gather in coalition with the Social Democrats and form a government, though this scenario is less likely. Sixty-two MPs are needed to form a majority government.

Run-up to the elections

The campaign period was marked by multiple incidents and tensions between the various political parties. An investigation by journalists raised suspicions of a large scale government scheme to secure votes for the ruling party in the run-up to the early general elections.

Journalists from the national A1 TV, the country's most popular television station, aired audio recordings of telephone conversations that they say prove the ruling VMRO-DPMNE party plot. The recordings showed that public administration employees were forced to provide lists of voters who they could guarantee would cast their ballot for the ruling party. In exchange the civil servants were guaranteed that they can keep their post or that their family or close associates will be employed. In a press statement, VMRO-DPMNE called the aired recording an "outrageous montage" that aimed to discredit them.

Women and Minority representation

The first real changes in women representation in Parliament were reached after the 2002 elections. The percentage of female deputies rose from 7.5 percent (1998) to 17.5 percent. After the 2008 parliamentary elections, this share went further up to 32,5 percent. The rise in women participation was facilitated by the successful lobbying campaign of different women rights NGO's to secure a constitutional amendment obligating parties to include at least 30 percent women candidates in their election lists.

After the reforms necessitated by the Ohrid Agreement, minority representation has increased. From the 2006 until the 2008 parliamentary elections, the DPA was the main vehicle for Albanian representation in government, despite being the smaller of the two ethnic Albanian parties. This led to resentment with the DUI, and considerable tensions between supporters of the two parties which reached a high level during the 2008 elections, which were marred by violent incidents in the predominantly ethnic Albanian areas. After the 2008 elections, prime minister Nikola Gruevski announced that the ruling "For a better Macedonia" coalition would from now on govern in a coalition with the biggest ethnic Albanian party, which is the DUI with 18 seats. Several minority lists of smaller minorities were also part of the "For a better Macedonia" coalition, including lists of Macedonian Serbs and Turks.

IMPORTANT POLITICAL ISSUES

The Republic of Macedonia was the first republic to secede from former Yugoslavia – and the only one to do so without causing armed conflict. The country was left with a rich ethnic diversity, and many issues, which cast doubt on the very existence of the tiny republic. The population consists of 64.2 percent Macedonians, 25.2 percent Albanians, 4 percent Turkish and 2.7 percent Roma, according to the last census of 2002.

Implementing the Ohrid Agreement

Since international recognition in 1991 the political dialogue has been dominated by the question of minority rights for its ethnic-Albanians. In the 1990s Albanians in the FYROM – standing at around 25 percent of the total population – faced reduced constitutional status and entrenched institutional discrimination in public institutions at all levels. The failure of the initially promising 1998 compromise between the Macedonian and Albanian nationalist political parties further eroded the confidence of Albanians in the Macedonian state. These tensions were exacerbated by the withdrawal of UN monitors in 1999 and the spill over from the ethnic clashes in Kosovo that led to violent clashes initiated by the NLA. This was brought to an end by the signing of the Western-backed Ohrid Framework Agreement in 2001.

It is reiterated again and again by leading figures in Macedonian public life that the implementation of this Agreement is the axis upon which politics will turn, for better or for worse. The FYROM political leadership has been



quite successful in implementing the Agreement's terms. In March 2002 the then VRMO–DPMNE–led government of unity granted amnesty to all members of the NLA exempted from the accusation of grievous crimes by the UN Tribunal for ex–Yugoslavia in The Hague. Secondly, the change of the preamble of the Constitution from a “national state of Macedonians” to “citizens of the Republic of Macedonia” has been ratified, as has the inclusion of a guarantee of human rights, civil liberties and peaceful coexistence. Thirdly, a law has been implemented, that equal status is granted to the Albanian language where the proportion of ethnic Albanians exceeds in a given municipality 20 percent. Clauses relating to the increase of ethnic–Albanian representation in public institutions, in particular the police force, from 5 percent to 25 percent are also being incrementally implemented.

Sources of anxiety

One source of anxiety out of the remit of the Ohrid Framework concerns disarmament. A key clause of the Agreement was the disarming of the NLA rebels. After initial progress by NATO a further significant step was taken in this direction in 2003. Yet, by focussing on the rebels, even if the Ohrid Agreement's terms are fulfilled, the wider problem of Macedonia's highly militarised society will persist. It is believed there are between 150,00 – 250,000 small and medium sized weapons active amongst the state's 2m population. Moreover, the deep entrenchment of this problem with organised crime, highly evolved in the FYROM, adds a more sinister dimension to the task of disarming the population.

Another pertinent source of tension is the fact that the Ohrid Framework has come under criticism over its neglect of the sensitive socio–economic consequences of its terms in the context of Macedonian politics. The competing international demands of both the Ohrid's backers to increase the proportion of ethnic Albanians in the public administration and those of the IMF and World bank to reduce the number of state employees threatens to create a situation in which waves of Macedonians, including security forces, will lose their jobs as a “reward” for their Albanian counterparts. The fact that these Albanian rights were won in part via the ethnic violence of the NLA, plus the additional pressure of economic–based social unrest, plays into the hands of the dispossessed elite in control of the nationalist faction of the VMRO–DPMNE.

Thus, the fear of further ethnic conflict continues to cast a shadow over public life.

Economic situation

Having a small, open economy makes Macedonia vulnerable to economic developments in Europe and dependent on regional integration and progress toward EU membership for continued economic growth. At independence in September 1991, Macedonia was the least developed of the Yugoslav republics, producing a mere 5% of the total federal output of goods and services. The economy remains fragile nowadays and unemployment levels remain high at 31.7 percent in 2010. It is further estimated that 28.7 percent of the population is living below the poverty line (2010 est.). In the wake of the global economic crisis, Macedonia has experienced decreased foreign direct investment, lowered credit, and a large trade deficit. However, as a result of conservative fiscal policies and a sound financial system, in 2010 the country received slightly improved credit ratings. GDP growth was modest (1,3 %), but positive, in 2010.

Corruption

According to many reports, corruption in the FYROM remains an important problem. Transparency International gave the FYROM in 2010 a ranking of 62nd out of 163 countries surveyed in its corruption perception index. The previous SDSM–led coalition started a comprehensive purge of public administration and financial institutions. Legislation was passed that obligates officials to declare property and plans to limit or abandon the immunity of state officials in all branches of government in cases of serious allegations of corruption. The government has established an independent State Commission of Combating Corruption under the Anticorruption law. Together with the Office of Public Prosecutor this body has brought charges against several members and associates of previous



governments. However, Crvenkovski's public acknowledgments of endemic corruption rings hollow from a former PM whose government lost the 1998 elections primarily because of allegations of corruption.

In 2006, Macedonia came under increased pressure to demonstrate progress in tackling corruption in order to increase the likelihood of EU-accession in the future. The country has adopted a legal framework for anticorruption efforts, but implementation is lagging behind, according to the Group of States Against Corruption (GRECO). GRECO has laid out a set of 14 recommendations, including a provision on additional training for the judiciary, the attorney's office and the police. GRECO also urges better control over the process of registering firms, in order to close loopholes that allow tax evasion.

European Union

In April 2001 a Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) was signed between the EU and the Macedonia, providing the country a status of potential member of the EU. Macedonia was the first country of the Western Balkans to sign such an agreement. In March 2004 the country submitted an application for membership and was granted the candidate status in December 2005. On 18 February 2008 the Council adopted the Accession Partnership for the country, thus updating the previous European Partnership of January 2006. A visa facilitation agreement and readmission agreement with the EU has been in force since 1 January 2008. In March 2009 the European Parliament expressed support for Macedonia's EU candidacy and asked the EU Commission to grant the country a date for the start of accession talks by the end of 2009. Until now however no date has been set to start the accession talks.

In the 2009 progress report on Macedonia, the European Commission states that "the political dialogue has improved: the governing coalition is stable, the political climate is more cooperative and the parliament is more effective." Also the key Accession Partnership priorities regarding the reform of the police, the judiciary, public administration and corruption have been substantially addressed. The implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement remains an essential element of democracy and rule of law in the country. There has been progress on implementing the law on languages, on decentralisation and equitable representation. However, further efforts in a constructive spirit are needed to fulfil the objectives of the Agreement. Regarding regional issues and international obligations, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has generally good relations with countries but "maintaining good neighbourly relations, including a negotiated and mutually acceptable solution to the name issue, remains essential."

The Greek-Macedonian name dispute has been blocking the move towards accession talks. Furthermore, a boycott of the national parliament by the opposition parties adversely affected the country's EU agenda. Macedonia's opposition Social Democrats quitted parliament in late January 2011, accusing the government of quashing democratic freedoms, hampering economic recovery and deliberately keeping the country at arm's length from the EU and NATO. MEPs expressed regret that "the Council has not taken a decision on the opening of accession negotiations as recommended by the Commission for a second year in a row" and are "concerned by the current political situation and by the risk that these developments could adversely affect the country's EU agenda".

NATO

The NATO presence in FYROM began in 1999. Several operations followed. Since 2003 no peacekeeping mission has been felt necessary. From 2003 till 2006 the EU was engaged with its Proxima police mission, supporting, monitoring and providing membership for police reforms in the FYROM. The FYROM has striven to build up its own, independent, strategic alliance system. In particular, it has supported the US efforts in Iraq.

In November 2001 NATO heads of state declared the FYROM a potential member. At the Istanbul Summit in June 2004 it was agreed that if the FYROM meets its obligations, it should be invited to join NATO at the Summit in 2006 and become full-fledged member in 2007. However, in April 2008 during the NATO Summit in Bucharest, Macedonia was again not invited to join the alliance, as Greece blocked the proposal due to the ongoing name dispute between the two countries. The accession of Macedonia to NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) is still pending.



Relations with Greece and other neighbours

One of Macedonia's neighbours, Greece, still disputes the constitutional name of the republic of Macedonia. Greece harbours its own province of Macedonia and fears the constitutional name of the state (Republic of Macedonia) implies a claim on the Greek territory. This fear led to the compromise that Macedonia, after gaining independence from Yugoslavia, was called the Former Yugoslavian Republic Of Macedonia (FYROM). Much to the dislike of the Greek government, the US did recognise the constitutional name of the country in 2004.

Even though business and trade ties with Greece are developing, relations remain difficult. In November 2006 Greek Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis said the Greek parliament would block Macedonia's ambitions to join the EU and NATO. In 2008, Greece did indeed block Macedonia's NATO membership over the still ongoing name dispute. Greece has furthermore refused the Macedonian air carrier to land on its territory because it carries the Macedonian state symbol, which led president Crvenkovski to cancel his trip to Athens. Although statements on a looming end to the crisis are made frequently, a solution has not yet been found.

Another neighbouring country with a region called Macedonia within its borders is Bulgaria. Nevertheless, Bulgaria was the first country in the world to recognise the existence of a Macedonian state. It does not, however, recognise a Macedonian nation or a separate Macedonian language. It is historically Bulgarian. The other two neighbours, Serbia and Kosovo, have complex relationships with the country as well. Serbia does not recognise the autonomy of the Macedonian Orthodox Church.

As of May 2011 negotiations aimed at resolving the dispute between Macedonia and Greece are ongoing.

SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTIES

Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM)

Leader: Branko Crvenkovski

The social democratic SDSM was formed as a successor to the League of Communists in the FYROM soon after independence in 1991. From September 1992 to 1998 and from 2002 to 2006 the SDSM was the largest party in the Macedonian parliament and the main party in the government, and has shown a moderate and reconciliatory attitude towards ethnic minorities in Macedonia. Since the legislative elections of July 2006, the SDSM – embedded in the Together for Macedonia Coalition – is in opposition.

The SDSM's support-base is historically Macedonian and particularly strong in rural areas. The leadership of the "catch all" pre-electoral coalition – with members from Vlachs, Roma, Serbs, Bosniaks and Turks – provided the party with a unique, although limited and by no means permanent, cross-ethnicity appeal. The importance of this was demonstrated in the election victory of the coalition, which benefited from a solid base of Albanian support where the opposite VMRO-DPMNE could not.

The July 2006 legislative elections constituted a disappointment for the SDSM. The "Together for Macedonia Coalition" only garnered 32 seats in the 120-seat parliament and lost its governing position to the VMRO-DPMNE. The country's meagre economic results over the last four years can be seen as the main reason for the SDSM failure to stay in power. Besides that, the SDSM has some issues with its image as a social democratic party. It had suffered from the party's cooperation with the Liberal Democratic Party in the "Together for Macedonia Coalition" and the painful reform measures that were needed in order to meet requirements for the EU negotiations.

After the disappointing election results of 2006, Vlado Buckovski confirmed that he would not seek another term of party leadership. On the 5 November 2006 party congress, Radmila Sekerinska, former deputy Prime Minister and Minister of European Integration, was elected new party leader of the SDSM. On 1 August 2007, former party-leader Vlado Buckovski was charged by the country's financial police with embezzling around 3 million euros. The offence took place in 2001, when Buckovski was still Defense minister of Croatia. According to the allegation, he abused his office in a deal to procure spare parts for tanks. In May 2009, after finishing the 5-year-term of President of the Republic of Macedonia, Branko Crvenkovski returned to the SDUM and was re-elected leader of the party. He reorganized the party profoundly. On 21 April Crvenkovski announced that the Social Democrats had chosen



Radmila Sekerinska as the party's candidate for prime minister if they win the elections on the 5th of June. SDSM is a full member of the Socialist International and a PES associate member.
www.sdsm.org.mk

New Social Democratic Party (NSDP)
Leader: Tito Petkovski

Prominent SDSM member and MP Tito Petkovski founded the New Social Democratic Party (NSDP) in November 2005. The main reason for this was that according to Petkovski, the SDSM strayed from its Social Democratic ideology. In the 2008 elections, the New Social Democratic Party joined the left-oriented SUN-coalition for Europe. It does not hold the status of member of the Socialist International.
www.nsdp.org.mk

OTHER PARTIES

Democratic Party for Macedonian national unity – Internal Macedonian revolutionary organisation (VMRO-DPMNE)
Leader: Nikola Gruevski

The present-day Christian Democrat and anti-Communist VMRO-DPMNE lies in the historical lineage of the 1893 Macedonian patriotic revolutionaries, whose sole aim was "liberating the Macedonian people from Ottoman yoke". The party was founded on June 17, 1990 in Skopje and describes itself as a Christian Democratic party which supports the admission of Macedonia to NATO and the European Union. It is ethnically based, claiming that "the party's goals and objectives express the tradition of the Macedonian people on whose political struggle and concepts it is based."

After boycotting the 1994 Assembly elections, the VMRO-DPMNE came to power itself in November 1998 on the basis of a program of economic reform. Mr Georgievski was appointed Prime Minister and the party formed a coalition government with the Democratic Alternative (DA) and Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA). Also in this period the VMRO-DPMNE led a "government of national unity" that negotiated the ethnic crisis of 2001 by signing the Ohrid agreement. However, enduring ethnic tension and the failure/disinclination to shake off its grass roots hard-line Macedonian nationalism ultimately cost the party re-election in 2002.

It was during the negotiations for the Ohrid Agreement that the seeds of an inner-conflict were sown that, after the dismal 2002 parliamentary elections and subsequent defeat at the 2004 Presidential elections, have plunged the VMRO-DPMNE into turmoil. Two competing factions emerged which tore the party apart. The supporters of present VMRO-DPMNE leader Nikolali Gruevski formed the first faction. He was a former finance minister at the time, untainted by charges of corruption and was received by party moderates as the Great White Hope. Mr Gruevski's tenure has seen the VMRO-DPMNE follow a generic pro-Europe, pro-"civil society" platform at the expense of its characteristic political nationalism.

Radical nationalist supporters of the previous VMRO-DPMNE leader Lubjo Georgievski dominated the second faction. This group strongly opposes the terms of the Ohrid Agreement, which Georgievski denounced in 2002 as an international conspiracy against ethnic Macedonians. Georgievski for a long time still managed to wield substantial influence because he took sole control over the party's finances before being forced out of the party headship in May 2004. In June 2004 his fraction split off from the VMRO - DPMNE to become the VMRO- People's Party.

The VMRO-DPMNE has overcome its internal struggles and became Macedonia's largest party after the 2006



elections. It managed to expand its support base during its years in power, and won 63 out of 120 seats in the 2008 elections, granting the party's election block an outright majority in parliament. Party leader Nikolai Gruevski after the 2006 elections became Prime Minister, and remained so after the 2008 elections. In 2009, the party had another two major successes. While the VMRO-DPMNE-led coalition "For a better Macedonia" won in 56 out of 84 municipalities, the party's proposed presidential candidate Gjorge Ivanov also won the presidential election.

www.vmro-dpmne.org.mk

Democratic Union for Integration (DUI / BDI)

Leader: Ali Ahmeti

The Democratic Union for Integration (DUI, or Bashkimi Demokratik per Integrim, BDI) of was formed 3 months before the elections in June 2002. It is the successor to the Albanian NLA – National Liberation Army, which fought the FYROM security forces in 2001 in the battles preceding the Ohrid Agreement. Although once on the black list of the American State Department for terrorism, it appears that Ali Ahmeti is sincere in his newfound commitment to the democratic process.

In 2004 the party reaffirmed its commitment to Albanian integration in a confident multiethnic Macedonia, decentralisation of power, eradication of corruption and organised crime, and for a stable FYROM integrated into Euro-Atlantic structures. Before the 2006 elections, DUI formed an electoral coalition with the Party for Democratic Prosperity (PDP) and the Democratic League of Bosniaks. This election bloc won 17 seats in parliament and DUI again became the biggest party for Albanians in Macedonia. However, the party was not invited to join the government. In protest, the party boycotted the first sessions of the parliament and staged several road blockades in the summer of 2006.

Resentment over being left out of the coalition in favour of the smaller Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA) also led to tensions between the two ethnic Albanian parties in Macedonia, which ultimately culminated into election violence during the 2008 parliamentary elections. In these elections, the DUI won 18 seats, again becoming the biggest ethnic Albanian party of the country. It will now become part of the new ruling coalition.

www.bdi.org.mk

Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA)

Leader: Menduh Thaci

The Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA, or Partia Demokratiane Shqipërisë, PDSH) was founded in 1995 when the youth generation of PDP politicians, led by Arben Xhaferi, who had arrived from Kosovo, broke away to form a separate party. Xhaferi's goals included recognition of Albanians as a constituent nation, rights to language and education, proportional representation in existing institutions and the demand for a separate university in Tetovo on the border with Kosovo.

In 1998 the DPA carried its popular, radical agenda into government after forming a surprise partnership with the rightist bloc dominated by VMRO-DPMNE and in 2002 along with its former government partner went into opposition to the SDSM and DUI. Prior to the 2006 elections the DPA campaigned alone and vowed to revenge on DUI. The party collected 11 parliamentary seats and, although smaller than DUI, formed again a coalition with VMRO-DPMNE. This led to resentment with the DUI and considerable tensions between the two ethnic Albanian parties in the country, which ultimately culminated in the violent incidents marring the 2008 parliamentary vote. After this vote, the VMRO-DPMNE decided to govern with the biggest ethnic Albanian party, the DUI, and the DPA returned to opposition.

<http://www.pdsh.org>



Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)
Leader: Jovan Manasievski

The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) was launched in 1997 as a merger between the Liberal Party and the Democratic Party. The first leader of the LDP was Petar Goshev from the Democrats, who was also the last president of the League of Communists in Macedonia. After the local elections in 2000, the social liberal LDP for the first time entered the SDSM lead coalition "Together for Macedonia". The party participated within the same pre-elections coalition during the latest 2006 elections.

The LDP is an affiliate member of the European Liberal Democrat and Reformist Party (ELDR) and a full member of the Liberal International.

www.ldp.org.mk

Liberal Party of Macedonia (LPM)
Leader: Ivon Velickovski

The Liberal Party was founded in 1990 under the nomenclature "Alliance of Reform Forces in Macedonia", i.e., a name and a symbol identical with the Alliance of Reform Forces of Yugoslavia, led by the then Prime Minister of Federal Yugoslavia, Ante Markovic. The LP participated in the 1992–1998 governing coalition, although contributed to its disintegration when it left in 1996 because of mounting evidence of corruption. It then merged with the Democratic Party in 1997 to form the Liberal Democratic Party.

The current incarnation of the LPM was formed in 2000 when traditional Liberal leaders Stojan Andov, Pajkovski and Danevski left the Liberal Democratic Party. Politicians such as these support a programme emphasising the economic development and market reforms of the country.

The LPM currently is a part of the VMRO–DPMNE–lead 'For a better Macedonia' bloc, which is currently in government, and holds 1 ministerial post.

<http://www.lp.org.mk/>

Socialist Party of Macedonia (SPM)
Leader: Ljubislav Ivanov

The SPM was founded as a successor to the Socialist Alliance of the Working People that fell-apart in 1990. The party defines itself as a socialist party inspired by the tradition of the European Left-wing movement of the last century. In the FYROM political constellation the SPM has been a traditional pre-electoral coalition partner with the SDSM. This relationship broke down in September 2002 over the issue of the Ohrid Agreement. The SPM's political agenda consists of a programme of furthering equality, introducing workers self-management and democratisation. In terms of foreign policy it supports the annulling of the Ohrid agreement because it considered it harmful for the ethnic working-class Macedonians, from whom it draws upon for support.

In the 2008 legislative elections the party maintained its number of seats at 3 and currently is the second largest party in the coalition government led by the conservative party VMRO–DPMNE.

www.spm.com.mk

NEW PARTIES



National Democratic Revival (NDR)
Leader: Rufi Osmani

The National Democratic Revival (NDR) is an ethnic Albanian party that was formed in March 2011. Its leader is Rufi Osmani, mayor of Gostivar and political activist since the 1990s. The NDR argues that the Albanian rights in the country are rapidly deteriorating, and urges for the speedy integration of the country into NATO and the EU. Addressing the name dispute with Greece, which holds back Macedonia's membership bids for these two organisations, Osmani has suggested using the so-called Croatia-Slovenia model of international arbitration, which helped the two countries resolve their longstanding border dispute.

Dostoinstvo Party
Leader: Stojance Angelov

Dostoinstvo (Dignity) is a new political party led by the former police general Stojance Angelov, formed in March 2011 by the members of the former homonymic NGO, uniting ethnic Macedonian veterans from the conflict of 2001.

BIOGRAPHIES

Gjorge Ivanov
President of Macedonia

Gjorge Ivanov, born on 2 May 1960 in Valandovo, is the current President of the Republic of Macedonia. Ivanov finished primary and secondary school in his hometown Valandovo. At the age of 27 he moved to the Macedonian capital Skopje, which has since been his permanent residence. His professional career started in 1988, when he became an editor at Macedonian Radio and Television, the national broadcasting station. He later taught political theory and political philosophy at the Law Faculty in Skopje. In 1999, he became a visiting professor for the Southeast European programme at the University of Athens in Greece.

Ivanov became politically active since the Yugoslav era, when he pushed for political pluralism and a market economy. He is the founder and honorary president of the Macedonian Political Science Association and one of the founding members of the Institute for Democracy Societas Civilis, a leading analytical centre in Macedonia. On 25 January 2009, the strongest party in the Macedonian parliament, the conservative VMRO-DPMNE, appointed Ivanov as the party's presidential candidate for the 2009 Macedonian presidential election, which they won. On 16 April 2009, Ivanov received the presidential certificate from the State Election Commission. The main vision, which Ivanov promotes as president, is the Macedonian model of a multi-ethnic society and a Pax Europaea, a united Europe living in peace and respecting the diversity and identity of the nations of Europe.

Ivanov is married to Maja Ivanova. Together they have a son called Ivan.

Nikola Gruevski
Prime Minister of Macedonia

Nikola Gruevski was born on 31 August 1970 in Skopje and is Prime Minister of Macedonia since 27 August 2006. He is the leader of VMRO-DPMNE since May 2003. After Gruevski completed primary and secondary education in Skopje, he went on to study at the St. Clement of Ohrid University of Bitola. After having graduated from the Faculty of Economics in 1994, he worked in the banking sector. In 1996 he also acquired qualifications for the international capital market from the London Securities



Institute. On 12 December 2006, he obtained a Master's degree from the Faculty of Economics at St. Cyril and Methodius University of Skopje. Gruevski founded the Brokerage Association of the Republic of Macedonia in 1998 as its president. Gruevski was Minister of Finance in the VMRO–DPMNE government led by Ljubčo Georgievski until September 2002. He was sworn in as the 7th Prime Minister of the Republic of Macedonia on 27 August, 2006 in Skopje.

Gruevski is married to Borkica Gruevska with whom he has two daughters: Anastasija and Sofija.

Branko Crvenkovski
Former President of Macedonia

Branko Crvenkovski, born on 12 October 1962 in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, is a former president of the Republic of Macedonia. Currently, he is president of the largest opposition party Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM)

Branko Crvenkovski graduated from the School of Electrical Engineering from the University of St. Cyril and Methodius in Computer Science and Automation in Skopje in 1986. He was elected member of the Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia at the first multi-party elections in Yugoslavia in 1990 after serving for several years as head of department at the Semos company in Skopje. Crvenkovski has been at the head of the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia since April 1991. He served as Prime Minister from 1992 to 1998 and from 2002 until 2004. Crvenkovski did not run for a second term in the presidential elections in March 2009. Instead, he returned to his party and was elected to be the head of the party on 24 May 2009. Crvenkovski is married and has two children.