

MONTENEGRINGS TO GET VISA EASIER

- ☒ As part of the negotiations with the European Commission, the Montenegrin government initiated an agreement which will allow Montenegrin citizens to obtain Schengen visas through a simplified procedure. The new agreement provides for a shorter waiting period, fewer documents and guarantees, issuing more multiple-entry visas and no-fee visas for certain groups. Students, sportsmen, researchers, diplomats and businessmen will benefit from the new agreement, which is expected to enter into force by the end of 2007. Earlier this year Montenegro also initiated the Stabilization and Association Agreement, after two-years of negotiations between the Montenegrin government and the European Commission. The SAA commits Montenegro to reforms in public administration and judiciary, strengthening the rule of law, fight against corruption and organized crime and application of EU standards regarding many economic and political issues. [*Vijesti*, 2.4; *Makfax*, 15.3]

OPENING OF ANOTHER CHAPTER FOR TURKEY

- ☒ Turkey opened the Enterprise and Industrial Policy chapter in the accession negotiations with the European Commission. This is the second out of thirty-five chapters that each candidate state needs to close as part of the EU accession process. So far Turkey closed only the Science and research chapter. The opening of the second chapter is a positive step since the negotiation process between

EU and Turkey reached a deadlock last December due to dispute regarding Cyprus. The EU also criticized Turkey over the controversial Art. 301 which was recently used for prosecuting writers and journalists, under the pretext of "insulting Turkishness". [*Balkan Times* 3.4]

SERBIA TO CHAIR THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

- ☒ In the next six-months (May –Nov 2007) Serbia will hold the Chairmanship of the Council of Europe. President of the Council of Europe, Terry Davies, visited Belgrade to meet and inform the Serbian government officials of the duties and responsibilities of chairmanship. Mr. Davies expressed satisfaction from Serbia's progress in democratization and achieving the obligations undertaken with the membership in the Council of Europe. In the meantime, Serbia still struggles with constituting the parliament and negotiations about the government after the 2007 elections. [*B92* 3.4, *Council of Europe*]

MACEDONIAN PROGRESS IN ADOPTING EU LEGISLATION

- ☒ The Macedonian government accepted a new National Strategy for adopting EU legislation. The new National Strategy is created in accordance to the remarks from the European Commission's Annual Report on the progress of Macedonia within the SAA process, the short- and long-term priorities of the European Partnership and the Government Program for work. The new strategy was

promoted as part of the Macedonian government's efforts to address key areas that require harmonization and to strengthen the institutional capacity necessary for this. Representatives of the Macedonian Parliamentary Committee for European Affairs also met a delegation from the Croatian Parliament to discuss the prospects of EU accession of the two states. Both sides agreed that reform efforts must continue despite recent slowdown in EU enlargement initiatives. The meeting concluded with a mutual agreement that Croatia and Macedonia will be the next members of the EU. [*Utrinski Vesnik* 3.4; *Dnevnik* 3.4]

CONTROVERSIAL CHANGES IN MACEDONIAN CIVIL ADMINISTRATION

- ☒ About forty civil servants, more than two-thirds of the staff of the Secretariat for European Affairs, were degraded and reallocated to different posts. Despite vocal protests and opposition critiques, Ms. Gabriela Konevska-Trajkovska, the Vice PM in charge of European Affairs, justified her decision with an incorrect procedure applied when these employees were promoted by the previous government. Earlier this year, the European Commission criticized the Macedonian government for unsolicited changes and political appointments of the public administration – in the customs and the police. Public administration reform is one of the key areas Macedonia needs to improve before it is ready for EU accession negotiations. [*Utrinski Vesnik*, 4.4; 5.4]