

STABILITY PACT MOVES TO THE BALKANS

- ☒ The headquarters of the Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe will soon move from Brussels to one of the capitals of Southeastern Europe. Zagreb and Sarajevo are mentioned as the most likely candidates for the next home of the Stability Pact. Also, a regional politician will succeed Mr. Erhard Busek as SP coordinator, and the organization will change its name to the Regional Council for Cooperation. Thus, the responsibility for coordinating and improving regional cooperation rests entirely with the states from the region. The Stability Pact for SEE was established after the 1999 Koln summit of the EU, and its main objectives included conflict-prevention, regional cooperation and administration of donor aid for the region. [*Stability Pact; Makfax*]

TURKEY'S PROGRESS WITH EU ACCESSION

- ☒ At a meeting with the German Chancellor Angela Merkel, the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan asked for a clear road map, timeline and date for accession, mentioning 2014/15 as a realistic entry date for Turkey. Chancellor Merkel underlined the need for closer ties between the EU and Turkey, yet stated that the outcome of the negotiations with Turkey is still open. At a recent press-conference, Turkey's Foreign Minister, Abdullah Gul, and Turkey's main negotiator with the EU, Ali Babacan, also stated that Turkey remains determined in pursuing EU accession and is

determined to continue with the necessary reforms. After freezing the negotiations with Turkey in December 2006, the European Commission recently re-opened negotiations with Turkey in the area of Enterprise and Industrial Policy. [*SeeNet 18.4*]

SEE PRESIDENTIAL SUMMIT ON ENERGY ISSUES

- ☒ Presidents of most states from the SEE region met in Ohrid at the Presidential Summit for Southeastern Europe to discuss issues related to new sources of energy. The objective of the summit is to harmonize regional policy on energy and new sources of energy with EU standards in the field. The summit in Ohrid is the third such meeting of SEE political leaders devoted to discussing energy issues (the previous meetings being at Duress and Karadjordjevo). EU policy regarding energy and alternative sources of energy is very high on the agenda of the current German presidency, and the issue has also gained importance in Southeastern Europe. [*Makfax 19.4*]

POLITICAL DIALOGUE IN MACEDONIA

- ☒ EU Enlargement Commissioner, Mr. Olli Rehn, stressed the importance of maintaining political dialogue in Macedonia at a meeting with Macedonia's Vice Prime Minister Ms. Gabriela Koneska-Trajkovska. Commissioner Rehn hailed the Macedonian government's efforts to improve political dialogue, yet asked for tangible results from such efforts. Despite such statements the political situation in Macedonia remains

unchanged. The Democratic Union for Integration (DUI) withdrew its members from Parliament and the last round of negotiation with the ruling VMRO-DPMNE party regarding greater cooperation with the government did not yield any success. The issue of political dialogue also influences Macedonian aspirations for EU and NATO membership. Commissioner Rehn stressed that respect of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, which provides for dialogue between the ethnic communities in Macedonia, is the crucial political criterion for EU accession. NATO representatives attending a session of the National Committee for NATO integration prompted Macedonian officials to enhance political dialogue as a means to receiving greater support for membership. [*Utrinski Vesnik 17.4 18.4; SeeEuropeNet 19.4*]

SEECP SUPPORTS EU ENLARGEMENT TO SEE

- ☒ At a conference of the South East Europe Cooperation Process (SEECP), presidents of parliaments of the SEE states expressed support for EU enlargement towards Southeastern Europe. The final declaration of the conference stressed the vital role that the prospect of EU membership plays in promoting stability, democracy and regional cooperation. The Vice President of the European Parliament, Mr. Angel Miguel Martinez and Mr. Klaus-Peter Willsch, representative of the German Bundestag, saluted the efforts for greater cooperation between SEE states and expressed support for their aspirations toward EU membership. [*Jutarnji 18.4*]