

# Thessaloniki Declaration

*Concluding Paper, EPP/EDU/ND Conference  
"Democracy, Stability, Cooperation in Southeast Europe"  
Thessaloniki 25/26 February 2000*

The representatives of the Thessaloniki Conference organised by the European People's Party, the European Democrat Union and Nea Demokratia with the theme: "Democracy, Stability, Cooperation in South East Europe; a challenge for the 21st century" held in Thessaloniki, 25-26 February 2000 want to express the following:

1. The EPP/EDU are stressing their traditions of activities in the region of South East Europe. Besides having strong bilateral relations, the EPP/EDU organised a first conference in Banja Luka in 1996, a second one in Thessaloniki in July 1999, a third in Banja Luka in December 1999 and this fourth one in Thessaloniki. During the annual meeting of the parliaments from the countries involved in the Stability Pact, that the EPP proposed to organise, the democratic parties should meet together in a special meeting. The EPP/EDU proposes to organise a two-day seminar on the history of South East Europe in order to facilitate reconciliation.

2. Parties of the EPP and EDU have the following party orientation:

- based on democracy, respect for the constitution and rule of law
- respect for human rights and minorities
- freedom of press and media
- social market economy
- respect for private property
- secure the safety of the people by acting on crime and corruption

3. It is of great importance that all the countries in South East Europe cooperate together and set a political agenda to overcome the difficulties in the region. We consider that our political family can also play an important role. Moreover, the EPP/EDU want to underline the importance of the Stability Pact, since it is the first time that Europe tries to prevent a crisis from happening, and support that the Reconstruction Centre for the whole Stability Pact region, should work from the office in Thessaloniki. For all countries in the region agriculture is very important. Therefore we need a stronger de-mining programme. Moreover, the countries should aim to find bilateral free trade agreements for which monetary stability is needed. A perspective on EU integration is very important.

4. The EPP/EDU call upon all parties involved to respect and implement the Dayton Agreement and the Kosovo Agreement. A South East Europe without stable borders is very vulnerable. With the new government in Croatia the EPP/EDU hopes that the Dayton agreement will function better especially in reference to the refugees problem, and asks also Bosnia-Herzegovina - especially the authorities in the Republika Srpska - to do the same.

5. In this important time of upcoming elections in the region and in Serbia, the participants of the Thessaloniki conference stress the importance of giving support to the democratic parties and the selective lifting of the embargo and aiming for the integration of the

Serbian people into Europe.

6. The EPP/EDU expresses concern about the elections in Albania and underlines the right of equality and balance for both sides, ruling and opposition parties in the election law and in the representation of electoral structures is a right that is born by the democratic system and must not be violated from any side. We support the work of the OSCE for achieving a consensus among political forces for this issue.

7. The EPP/EDU welcomes very much the offer made by Nea Demokratia to host a small secretariat in Thessaloniki in cooperation with the Institute of Democracy Konstantinos Karamanlis. The aim of the secretariat is to strengthen networking and joined activities of the EPP/EDU foundations concerning activities in South East Europe.

8. The foundations of the EPP/EDU have been active in this region for years. They propose to increase their ongoing activities, such as:

- training and educating of politicians, youngsters and local councillors on democracy, civil society, economic development, political culture etc. The EPP/ED group in the European Parliament proposes to extend its VIP and stagiaire programme to non-candidate countries from South East Europe.
- giving political and technical support: strengthening party structures, assisting during preparation for elections, developing new policies and strategies in different areas, media training etc.
- improving bilateral party cooperation between an EPP/EDU party and a party from the region.
- providing the parties in the region with more information on EPP/EDU activities and link them to the EPP/EDU websites and the EPP/EDU sister party foundations website.