

Declaration by EFA's Linguistic and Minority Right's Working Group on the Upcoming Committee of Ministers Meeting Concerning the Macedonian Minority in Bulgaria

The Linguistic and Minority Rights Working Group of the European Free Alliance (EFA) expresses its deep regret over the recent decision to reduce international oversight of Bulgaria regarding its ongoing violations of the rights of Macedonians in Bulgaria. On 1 October 2025, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) at its plenary session, decided to close its post-monitoring dialogue with Bulgaria, and to instead review its progress in the framework of periodic reviews.

The assessment presented by the rapporteurs to the Assembly on Bulgaria's non-fulfilment of its accession commitments addressed minority rights, including the situation of the Macedonian minority, and made specific reference to the non-implementation of judgments in *UMO Ilinden and Others v. Bulgaria*. However, it failed to provide substantive comment or due consideration to these issues in its overall assessment and recommendation to end post-monitoring for Bulgaria.

The Working Group expresses serious concern at the decision to consider the Bulgarian Government's request to close the monitoring of the United Macedonian Organisation Ilinden and Others group v. Bulgaria (Application No. 59491/00) at the upcoming 2 December 2025 meeting of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

Despite repeated findings of violation of Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights, no Macedonian organisation has yet been successfully registered in Bulgaria. The recent refusals of applications from Macedonian organisations such as OMO "Ilinden" and Human Rights Committee "Tolerance" clearly demonstrate that Bulgaria has failed to implement the decisions of the court.

The Working Group stresses that any closure of monitoring at this stage would be premature and contrary to the obligations arising under Article 46 of the Convention, undermining the authority of the Court and the credibility of the Council of Europe's human rights protection system.

Accordingly, the Working Group calls upon the Committee of Ministers to:

- Reject the Bulgarian government's request to close the monitoring of the OMO "Ilinden" group of cases;
- Maintain enhanced monitoring until tangible, verifiable compliance has been achieved; and
- Urge Bulgaria to take concrete steps to implement the decisions of the court and ensure the unhindered registration of Macedonian organisations in Bulgaria.

The Working Group *reaffirms* its support to the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria and its commitment to justice, equality, and minority rights across Europe.