

Resolution on the European integration process of Serbia

2010/2980(RSP) - 19/01/2011 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Following the debate which took place during the sitting of 18 January 2011, the European Parliament adopted by 612 votes to 38, with 28 abstentions, a resolution tabled on behalf of the Committee on Foreign Affairs on the European integration process of Serbia.

It reaffirms that Serbia's future lies in the EU, and commends Serbia on the progress achieved in the reform process, welcoming the decision to open the ratification procedure of the [Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Serbia](#) taken by the Council on 14 June 2010 and the fact that 11 Member States have already ratified the Agreement. The others are asked to do so swiftly.

Liberalisation of the visa regime: Parliament welcomes this and calls for further initiatives to facilitate people-to-people contacts and mobility of persons in the Western Balkan region. However, it calls on the Serbian authorities to adopt adequate measures and make full efforts in order to limit possibilities to abuse the visa-free regime, in particular to ensure that Serbian citizens are properly informed about their rights and obligations stemming from the visa-free regime.

Kosovo: Members welcome the Serbian Government's willingness to engage in renewed dialogue with Kosovo within an EU framework and call for the talks to start without delay. They underline that the dialogue, in order to be successful, will require commitment and readiness to compromise from both sides in view of their common European future and their common interest in establishing long-term peace and stability in the region and improving people's wellbeing. The ability to facilitate this process constitutes a test for the EU's credibility and political vision for the whole region. The Serbian Government is urged to dismantle Serbian parallel structures in Kosovo that undermine the decentralisation process and prevent the full integration of the Serbian community into the Kosovo institutions. Parliament also calls on the Serbian authorities to adopt a constructive attitude towards the forthcoming general elections in Kosovo, and considers the participation of Kosovo Serbs in the electoral process an indispensable element aimed at preventing the Kosovo Serbian community from being marginalised.

ICTY: Members recall that full cooperation with ICTY is a fundamental condition for Serbia to progress on the path to EU membership. Whilst noting that Serbia continues to respond adequately to ICTY requests for assistance they point out the most recent assessment by the ICTY Chief Prosecutor that Serbia's efforts to apprehend the two remaining fugitives continue to be problematic. They urge a re-evaluation of the current approach, in line with the ICTY recommendations, and emphasise that Serbia can only gain candidate status and/or open accession negotiations with the EU if the ICTY Office of the Prosecutor assesses that it has offered full cooperation.

Reforms and the fight against corruption: Parliament calls for further energetic efforts in order to ensure the independence and impartiality of judges and for complete transparency in the administration of justice. It calls for further financial and administrative resources to be assigned to the courts in order to improve their functioning and to eliminate the backlog of cases. Members welcome the progress in the fight against corruption, but underline that corruption is still prevalent in the country and call for more efforts to eradicate it. They welcome the progress in the reform of public administration and stress that more efforts should be put into the creation of an independent civil service, and to this end call for the introduction of a merit-based career system. Parliament goes on to draw attention to the cases of improper police conduct, including instances in which authority was exceeded and violence by police officers towards citizens, and also points to the necessity of further reform in the security sector.

It goes on to stress the importance of a properly functioning parliament as a vital institution in the democratic system and also recalls the utmost importance of strong and independent media for democracy, calling for steps to be taken to ensure their independence from political pressures and other influence. Members welcome the establishment of a majority of the national minority councils, allowing them to take decisions in the fields of education, culture, use of minority languages and public information. They note, however, that many Roma still live in extreme poverty, and suffer discrimination on the labour market, only 5% of them holding a permanent job.

Refugees and IDPs: Parliament points out that Serbia is the country with the highest number of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Europe. It underlines their difficult situation concerning housing and poverty and calls on the Serbian authorities to revise the national strategy on refugees. It calls on the Commission to use its political leverage over the EU candidate and potential candidate countries in the region in order to ensure that obstacles hindering the return of refugees are removed. Members recall, moreover, that up to 150 000 returnees are anticipated as a result of readmission agreements with EU countries and that their successful reintegration will require thorough preparations, particularly by local authorities. Parliament stresses the important role played by civil society organisations in this process.

Lastly, the resolution stresses the important role played by Serbia as regards the stability of the whole Western Balkans and in particular the stability and cohesion of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It calls on the Serbian authorities to actively support all necessary constitutional changes that would enable BiH state institutions to carry out challenging reforms in the European integration process, and calls on Belgrade in particular to support the consolidation, streamlining and strengthening of Bosnian state institutions