Resolution on the 2013 progress report on Albania

2013/2879(RSP) - 12/12/2013 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution tabled by the Committee on Foreign Affairs on the 2013 Progress Report on Albania. It welcomed the analysis and recommendations of the 2013 Progress Report on Albania and **called on the Council to acknowledge the progress made by granting Albania candidate status without undue delay.** Members commend all political forces for the overall orderly conduct of the **recent parliamentary elections** and the smooth transition of power. They welcome the adoption of **key legislative reforms**, such as the revision of the parliamentary Rules of Procedure, the adoption of the Civil Service Law and the amendments to the High Court Law. They encourage Albania to show a track record in the effective implementation of these reforms.

Parliament encouraged the Government to pursue the integration reforms in a consistent manner, involving all political forces and civil society, since preparations for EU integration should have **broad political and public support**. It called on Albania to continue delivering results under the key priorities of the Commission's 2010 Opinion, in particular as regards respect for the rule of law and the **fight against corruption and organised crime**. These remain **areas of serious concern**, where progress was essential for advancing in the EU integration process.

Political criteria: Members called for further efforts on the part of both the Government and the Parliament to strengthen the independence, accountability, impartiality and efficiency of the judicial system, guaranteeing the **depoliticisation of the judiciary** by establishing a merit-based and transparent process for appointing judges and prosecutors. They also stressed the need for a merit-based and professional public administration and called for the adoption of the necessary secondary legislation.

Parliament also noted that **corruption and impunity for crimes** continued to be widespread in Albanian society, and that state institutions dealing with the fight against corruption remained vulnerable to political pressure and influence. It insisted on the need to implement the anti-corruption legislation in force in a consistent manner.

Furthermore, Members reiterated the need to resolutely enforce reforms and regional cooperation in the fight against organised crime as well as to develop a solid track record of investigations, prosecutions and convictions at all levels. They urged the Government to work towards developing a track record of financial investigations focusing on cases of inexplicable wealth and the connection of such wealth with criminal activities and organised crime.

Parliament went on to call for **rights of minorities** to be further advanced, especially those of the Roma minority and the LGBTI community. It noted that the living conditions of the Roma in Albania were appalling and needed to be swiftly improved, in particular as regards Roma people's access to registration, housing and education and the inclusion of Roma children in the educational system – from pre-school level to higher education.

Members also called for:

- additional efforts to fully guarantee the independence of the media;
- zero tolerance of violence against women and for the elimination of any gender bias in legislation and its implementation;

- further efforts to ensure the effective implementation of the strategy and action plan on property rights as this was one of the cornerstones of economic development, being concerned about the limited progress made on property registration and restitution.

Socio-economic reforms: Parliament expressed concern about the **lack of progress in the field of social policy and employment**, and also about the fact that child labour remained an important challenge. It called for a strengthening of labour rights and trade unions and also the rights of children's rights, with investment in early learning. In this respect, Members stressed the fact that corruption within the judiciary continues to specifically hamper anti-trafficking law enforcement and victim protection efforts.

Regional cooperation: Parliament welcomed the stabilising role of Albania in the Western Balkans, and the new Government's rejection of nationalistic discourse and its intention to develop a 'zero problems with neighbours' policy.