

Resolution on the European integration process of Kosovo

2013/2881(RSP) - 16/01/2014 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted 485 votes to 94 with 40 abstentions a resolution tabled by the Committee on Foreign Affairs on the European integration process of Kosovo.

It welcomed the conclusion of the First Agreement on the Principles of Normalisation of 19 April 2013 between the Prime Ministers of Serbia and Kosovo, as well as the agreement on the implementation plan, and the allocation of additional EU funding under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). The agreement marked an important step and reinforces the responsibility of both sides to implement the agreement in good faith, continue the normalisation of relations, and bring forward the reforms needed on the path towards European integration. Parliament emphasised the need for complete transparency in communicating the outcome of the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue and for parliaments and civil societies to be involved in the implementation process.

Recalling that 23 of the EU's 28 Member States recognise Kosovo's independence, Members encouraged the remaining five Member States to proceed with the recognition of Kosovo.

They welcomed the launch of negotiations between the EU and Kosovo on the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) on 28 October 2013, but regretted that, due to internal division in the Council, the negotiating mandate differed from the ones of previous SAAs. They also welcomed Kosovo's first ever country-wide local elections in November and December 2013, as a crucial test in the process of normalising relations between Belgrade and Pristina, and as having marked a huge step forward for democracy in Kosovo and for citizens' confidence in the democratic processes underpinning the normalisation process. Members welcomed the overall orderly conduct of the elections, as assessed in the preliminary statements of the EU Election Observation Mission (EOM) and the visible voter turnout in Serbian-dominated municipalities to the south of the Ibar river as a crucial step towards the formation of the Association of Serbian Municipalities. Parliament strongly condemned the violence and persistent intimidation that occurred in north Mitrovica and Zvean municipalities.

Noting the Kosovan Government's interest in taking over the functions of EULEX, Members underlined that any transfer of responsibilities must be gradual, based on real progress on the ground and involve Kosovan civil society and the democratic institutions of the Republic of Kosovo. Accordingly, they called on the Kosovan Government to agree to extend the EULEX Kosovo mandate beyond June 2014. Parliament also noted the widespread dissatisfaction among both Kosovan Serbs and Albanians with EULEX's performance, and called for increased efficiency, transparency and accountability from EULEX including regular reports to the European Parliament and the Parliament of Kosovo.

Members called on all EU Member States to do their utmost to facilitate economic, people-to-people contacts, and social and political relations between their citizens and those of Kosovo, and stressed the importance of visa liberalisation for Kosovan citizens and encouraged Kosovan authorities to step up efforts to meet the priorities established in the Visa Action Plan.

Parliament also noted that further efforts are needed to meet the challenges of the European reform agenda in view of the SAA, particularly in priority areas such as the rule of law, the judiciary, public administration, electoral reform, and human and fundamental rights, especially minority and cultural rights. It stressed that more must be done to give effect to the constitutional principle of non-discrimination.

It went on to state that decisions needed to be adopted to enable Kosovo to participate in EU programmes and to allow Kosovo to cooperate with the EU agencies such as Europol.

The resolution called on the Kosovo authorities to do more in fighting corruption and organised crime, stating concern about the lack of tangible progress in these areas. Corruption and organised crime were widespread in the region and represented an obstacle to Kosovo's democratic, social and economic development. Members felt that a regional strategy and enhanced cooperation between all the countries in the region were essential for tackling these issues more effectively, in particular as regards improvements to border surveillance and efforts to tackle the trafficking and exploitation of women and minors.