Resolution on the 2014 progress report on Serbia

2014/2949(RSP) - 11/03/2015 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution tabled by its Committee on Foreign Affairs on the 2014 Progress Report on Serbia.

Parliament recalled that the European Council of 28 June 2013 decided to open accession negotiations with Serbia.

European integration of Serbia: Parliament welcomed the commitment shown by the new Serbian Government to the European integration process. It called on Serbia to improve the planning, coordination and monitoring of implementation of new legislation and policies.

Bilateral relations: Members welcomed the First Agreement on the Principles of Normalisation of Relations reached between Serbia and Kosovo. They called on the Serbian and Kosovo authorities to step up cooperation to clamp down and dismantle criminal networks.

Russia-Serbia relations: Parliament called on Serbia to make stronger efforts in aligning its foreign and security policy to that of the EU, including policy on Russia. **It regretted that Serbia did not align itself, when invited, with the Council decisions introducing restrictive measures against Russia**, keeping in mind, however, the traditionally strong economic, social and cultural ties that exist between the two countries.

ICTY and good neighbourly relations: Members encouraged Serbia to further cooperate with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), to strengthen domestic war crimes trials and continue to strengthen its efforts regarding regional cooperation to end impunity and bring justice to the victims of war crimes and their families. They asked Serbia to intensify its cooperation with neighbouring countries and to strengthen its efforts in the search for missing persons. They also encouraged Serbia to work even more closely with neighbouring countries and to initiate further steps for trans-border cooperation, in order to improve, inter alia, the economic development of border regions and areas **populated by minorities**.

Social reforms and the fight against discrimination: Parliament asked Serbia to strengthen the rights of workers and asked that new measures be taken in order to strengthen social dialogue and consultative role of social partners in law-making.

Members reiterated the importance of promoting, protecting and implementing human rights and fundamental freedoms at all levels of Serbian society, calling for respect for women, persons with disabilities, LGBT persons, and all minorities, national, ethnic or sexual.

Reform of the judiciary and fight against corruption: Parliament stressed the vital importance of an **independent judiciary**, and highlighted the need for the reform of the judiciary to be completed so as to ensure the full independence and impartiality of judges and prosecutors.

It condemned the pressure exerted by media or political parties on independent anti-corruption bodies. It noted that corruption and organised crime were widespread in the region and also represented an obstacle to Serbia’s democratic, social and economic development.

Freedom of expression: Members expressed concern about the pressure being put on and threats being made against journalists, which also lead to **increased self-censorship**. They urged the Serbian authorities to take action in order to bring the perpetrators to justice.

Minorities: Parliament called on Serbia to ensure consistent implementation across the country of legislation on protection of minorities, including in relation to education, use of languages, and access to the media and religious services in minority languages, and adequate representation of national minorities in public administration, local and regional bodies, as well as in the national parliament. It encouraged the Serbian authorities to take further measures to **improve the situation of the Roma**, particularly when it came to education, housing and employment.

Reforms: Parliament welcomed the new public administration reform strategy, the creation of a dedicated Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, and the increased focus on policy planning and coordination. It called for further measures with respect to reforms in the business environment, the penal code and matters relating to abuse of responsibility.

Energy reforms: lastly, Parliament asked the Commission to support the Serbian Government in its efforts to reduce the country's dependence on energy imports.