Resolution on the 2015 report on Serbia

2015/2892(RSP) - 15/12/2015

Taking note of the communication from the Commission of 10 November 2015 on the EU Enlargement Strategy and the reports on Turkey, Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, the Council reaffirmed that **enlargement remains a key policy of the European Union** and an investment in the peace, democracy, prosperity, security and stability of our continent.

In this context, it reiterated the **EU's unequivocal commitment to the European perspective of the Western Balkans.**

It commended Turkey and the Western Balkans, at present in particular Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, for their efforts in addressing the refugee and migration crisis, which has seriously affected the region.

The Council welcomed the major steps Serbia has taken in the past year which led to the opening of the first chapters of the EU accession negotiations at the Accession Conference on 14 December 2015. It took positive note of Serbia's submission of its Action Plans for chapters 23 - Judiciary and fundamental rights, and 24 - Justice, freedom and security, which should provide clear guidance for future reforms and for developing a solid track record in these areas. The Council recalled that progress under these chapters will need to be made in parallel with progress in negotiations overall.

Towards reforms: the Council encouraged Serbia to take this positive momentum forward and to intensify legislative reforms and their effective implementation in the key areas of judicial reform, fight against corruption and organised crime, and freedom of expression and the media.

Particular attention needs to be paid to the full respect of fundamental rights, including **protection of the most vulnerable groups, particularly the Roma,** as well as to the effective implementation of legislation on the protection of minorities, the non-discriminatory treatment of national minorities throughout Serbia, and tackling discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. Further progress is also required in the areas of **independence of democratic institutions,** public administration, as well as in developing a functioning market economy and improving the business environment.

The Council urged Serbia to swiftly implement its part of these agreements and to **engage constructively with Kosovo.** It would continue to monitor closely Serbia's continued engagement towards visible and sustainable progress in the normalisation of relations with Kosovo, including the implementation in good faith of all agreements reached so far. It recalled that progress in the process of normalisation of relations with Kosovo under chapter 35 needs to be made in parallel with progress in Serbia's accession negotiations, in line with the negotiating framework.

Regional cooperation: lastly, the Council considered that Serbia should continue strengthening good neighbourly relations. It called on Serbia to progressively align with the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy in line with the negotiating framework.