

Resolution on the 2015 report on Kosovo

2015/2893(RSP) - 04/02/2016 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 403 votes to 130 with 104 abstentions, a resolution tabled by the Committee on Foreign Affairs on the 2015 Report on Kosovo.

Parliament noted that the EU has reiterated its willingness to assist in the economic and political development of Kosovo through a **clear European perspective**, in line with the European perspective of the region. It welcomed the signing of the EU-Kosovo Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) on 27 October 2015, as the first contractual relationship, and the swift ratification by the Kosovo Assembly on 2 November 2015.

Members called on the Government of Kosovo to focus on implementing the comprehensive reforms necessary to meet its obligations under the SAA. They underlined that the SAA is aimed at promoting European standards in areas such as competition, procurement, intellectual property and consumer protection, and at establishing a free trade area as a tangible step towards the economic integration of Kosovo into the EU;

Relations with Serbia: Parliament welcomed the progress made in 2015 in reaching agreements in the framework of the process of normalisation of relations between Kosovo and Serbia. It supported the continued mediation efforts of the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) with a view to the normalisation of relations between Serbia and Kosovo, which has yet to be fully achieved. It urged the VP/HR to identify shortfalls and to demand that the parties fulfil their commitments.

The resolution took note of the Constitutional Court's decision on the **implementation of the Association of Serb Municipalities**. It called for the complete and committed implementation of the agreements reached. Members considered full respect for the rules of democracy, political dialogue and unhindered parliamentary business to be essential for the implementation of all aspects of Kosovo's reform agenda. They strongly condemned violent obstructions in the Assembly, calls for the prevention of further violent protests in the Assembly, and stressed that in the Assembly elected Members of Parliament should meet and discuss issues with full respect for the institution. The Assembly needed to become more efficient and to comply with its own rules of procedure under all circumstances and the government should respect these rules.

Recognition of Kosovo: Parliament took note that five Member States have not formally recognised Kosovo, and is of the opinion that further recognitions would help to strengthen stability in the region.

Migration policy: Parliament was pleased to note the work undertaken by the Kosovo authorities to end the trend of irregular migration, which peaked at the beginning of 2015. Citizens must be **encouraged to stay** in Kosovo and build a future in their country. Visa liberalisation measures were also recommended.

Human rights: Parliament welcomed the adoption of the package of human rights laws which strengthen the institutional set-up for oversight of the protection of, and respect for, human rights. It noted with concern that the authorities' political will to genuinely engage with civil society is still very weak.

It called on the authorities to implement in good faith the legal framework for cooperation with civil society and reinforce protection for LGBTI and minority communities. Members also remained concerned about the underrepresentation of women in decision-making positions and the extremely limited progress made in the area of freedom of expression and of the media. Further efforts are needed to protect and

guarantee in practice the rights of all ethnic minorities in Kosovo, including the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities as well as the Gorani community.

Parliament reiterated its concern at the lack of any significant progress in fighting high-level corruption and organised crime, and against the roots of violent extremism in Kosovo. It noted that, approximately 300 Kosovo nationals have joined the ranks of the jihadists in Syria and Iraq and that many of them have already returned to Kosovo

It welcomed the measures taken by the government to provide for prison sentences for nationals who have engaged in terrorist undertakings.

Accession to UNESCO: Members deplored the rejection of Kosovo's application for UNESCO membership, due to active obstruction by Serbia. They welcomed the adoption of the law protecting the historical heritage of Prizren and called for its full implementation. In this connection, they called on the interested parties, including the Kosovo authorities, the Serbian Government, the Serbian community in Kosovo and the Serbian Orthodox Church, to find a system for the promotion, protection and conservation of Kosovo's cultural and religious heritage.

Civil service: Parliament reiterated its call on Kosovo to complete the legislative framework for the civil service and to implement fully the strategic framework for public administration and the action plan. The authorities were asked to stop the politicisation of public administration, to promote merit-based professionalism in all public institutions, to ensure sound financial management of public institutions, and to ensure the transparency of the Assembly's oversight of budget implementation. Members also stressed the importance of increasing project funding for Kosovo NGOs that aim to step up efforts to protect and promote the rights of marginalised groups and ethnic minorities.

Labour market: Parliament stressed the need to provide Kosovo's young people with prospects for the future, and called on Kosovo to focus on closing the skills gap in the labour market. The Commission was asked to provide further assistance to young entrepreneurs as part of Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) funding, to improve the flexibility and competitiveness of Kosovo's economy to speed up the restructuring of public enterprises, to improve its bankruptcy and insolvency procedures and to reduce its reliance on customs duties. Members stressed that labour market reforms, complemented by education reforms, are crucial in view of the high unemployment and low labour participation rates.

Energy and transport: Parliament expressed its concern at Kosovo's current precarious energy situation, pointing out that the current level of electricity losses and related commercial damage are very high on account of grids wearing out. It called for major reforms to improve energy efficiency and security of supply.