Resolution on the 2015 report on Montenegro

2015/2894(RSP) - 10/03/2016 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution tabled by its Committee on Foreign Affairs on the 2015 report on Montenegro.

Members recall that further progress has been made in the accession negotiations with Montenegro and it is the most advanced enlargement country in the negotiation process. Although they welcome the progress in the enlargement negotiations with Montenegro, they stress that this progress must be accompanied by the strict implementation of relevant action plans and strategies.

Democratic control: Members urge more parliamentary scrutiny over the accession process. They welcomes the adoption of the 2015 action plan for strengthening parliamentary oversight, but emphasise the need to reinforce the capacities of the Montenegrin parliament and to improve its access to accession-related information. In parallel, they urge all political forces, in government and opposition alike, to re-engage in sustainable dialogue and constructive cooperation within the Montenegrin parliament. They recall that dialogue and compromise are cornerstones of any democratic decision-making process and consider it essential for a well-functioning democracy that any form of protest be conducted peacefully and in line with the relevant laws. Parliament calls on the government to fully implement the new electoral legislation prior to any new elections.

Fighting corruption: Parliament encourages further depoliticisation of the public administration to ensure the citizens' right to good administration free of corruption. Although, it welcomes the progress made in this field, Members remain concerned about undue influence on judicial independence in this country. In this regard, Parliament welcomes the establishment of the Special Prosecutor's Office, whose tasks include combating corruption offences. It calls for its independence and capacity to conduct administrative investigations to be ensured.

Asylum seekers: Parliament calls for the improvement of legislative and administrative capacity in the field of asylum and migration, and urges the Commission to provide support to this end. It commends the government of Montenegro for the steps it has taken and encourages Montenegro to continue its efforts in this field, especially with regard to children, including by further facilitating birth registration and subsequent or re-registration in civil registers.

Islamic terrorism: Members encourage further measures against trafficking in human beings to complement the relevant legal and institutional aspects. They note that the Montenegrin police have intensified checks throughout the country with a view to preventing possible terrorist attacks and recruitment of Montenegrin nationals to jihadist organisations. They encourage the competent authorities to strengthen regional and international cooperation, including by exchanging information and best practices in a move to prevent radicalisation and respond to terrorist activities.

Freedom of expression: Parliament remains concerned about the freedom of the media in Montenegro, which is ranked 114th in terms of press freedom by the annual ranking of Reporters Without Borders. It encourages progress to be made in freedom of expression and decisions to be aligned with European Court of Human Rights case law on freedom of expression. It expresses concern, however, at the shortcomings in the investigation of previous cases of violence and intimidation against journalists and urges the competent authorities to resolve the pending cases of violence and threats against journalists, including the murder of Duško Jovanovi in 2004.

Minorities: Members call on the competent authorities to encourage better representation of ethnic minorities in public sector employment, including in the police and the judiciary. In particular, Parliament urges them to adopt a new law on minorities and a law on the legal status of religious communities in line with European standards and after due consultations with all stakeholders, to make further efforts to protect the multi-ethnic identity of Boka Kotorska (Bay of Kotor).

Members call, once again, for additional measures to facilitate the access of Roma, Egyptian minorities and Ashkali to health care, housing and employment. Likewise, measures need to be taken to encourage the integration of the LGBTI community in Montenegrin society.

Violence against women: Members remain concerned about domestic and sexual violence against women and girls and call for stronger measures to be taken in this area. They stress the importance of increasing women's representation in politics during the next elections, as well as access to the labour market for women.

Improved economic situation: Parliament, while commending the macroeconomic stability and favourable developments in the Montenegrin economy, notes also that Montenegro does not always enforce legislation regarding contracts, which leads to legal uncertainty. It calls on the country to implement economic reforms that will create jobs and growth, to address the country's large current-account and general budget deficits, to ensure the sustainability of public finances, and to implement policies that will help diversify the economy.

In parallel, Parliament reiterates its concern that in some parts of the country many people are living in relative poverty and that youth and long-term unemployment are at persistently high levels.

Environment: Members call for further efforts to preserve the biodiversity of the Saline in Ulcinj, in particular, as the most important breeding and wintering site for birds on the eastern Adriatic coast. It encourages the sustainable development of the coastline, and the protection of the natural environment and biodiversity in line with European standards.

Regional cooperation: Parliament welcomes the border agreements with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, and urges Montenegro to build on this and speed up work to deal with unresolved border issues with Croatia and Serbia. Should it prove impossible to reach a solution by mutual agreement, it calls for disputes to be settled in the Hague International Court of Justice, in accordance with the rules and principles of international law. In addition, Parliament renews its call on the authorities to help resolve the succession issues related to the legacy of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), including the military and naval legacy. It also encourages Montenegro to continue to address, in a constructive and neighbourly spirit, outstanding bilateral issues with its neighbours as early as possible in the accession process.