

2018 Commission report on Montenegro

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The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted an own-initiative report by Charles TANNOCK (ECR, UK) on the 2018 Commission report on Montenegro.

Members welcomed the continued engagement of Montenegro in the EU integration process and the Commission's assessment in its [Communication](#) of 6 February 2018 on the Western Balkans that, with strong political will, real and decisive reforms and the settlement of disputes with its neighbours, Montenegro could potentially be **ready for membership by 2025**.

Democratisation: Members welcomed the fact that most opposition parties have returned to parliament after a long parliamentary boycott. They invited all other political parties to return to parliament and to make more concerted efforts to bring about **genuine political dialogue** in order to ensure that it has the means to fully play its role of legislator and oversight, thereby restoring a functioning democratic process.

Members called for the implementation of legislation on the public and political participation of women and minorities, in particular Roma, and called on political leaders to focus as a matter of priority on the persistent challenges in tackling problems relating to the rule of law, freedom of the media, corruption, money laundering, organised crime and the resulting violence.

Rule of law: Members considered that the **prevention of corruption**, including through appropriate sanctions, should be encouraged and remaining obstacles removed in order to make the institutions responsible for corruption fully independent. They invited Montenegro to:

- improve trust in the **anti-corruption** agency and improve its reputation;
- improve the **transparency of public administration** and the exchange of information for a more citizen-friendly, professional and de-politicised public administration;
- strengthen the independence, transparency, accountability, professionalism and efficiency of **judicial institutions** through the establishment of safeguards against political interference, the application of codes of conduct and disciplinary measures;
- take forward judicial proceedings concerning the allegations of the attempted October 2016 coup by ensuring full judicial cooperation with third countries;
- adopt more robust preventative action, including the use of non-conviction-based asset forfeiture;
- step up efforts to ensure the effective protection of **property rights**.

Border management and migration: the report encouraged Montenegro to work more closely with the European Border and Coast Guard Agency to improve border management in line with European standards, combat irregular migration and disrupt migrant smuggling networks. It calls for intensified efforts to prevent and **dismantle organised criminal networks related to trafficking in human beings** and drug or tobacco trafficking. Particular attention should be paid to the prevention of forced and organised prostitution and child begging.

Media: concerned about the situation regarding freedom of expression and freedom of the media, Members called for the implementation of new measures guaranteeing the **independence of the media and journalists** as well as the introduction of safeguards against unwarranted political and commercial influences and ensuring full transparency in state advertising in the media.

Civil society and human rights: the report strongly condemned recent acts of intimidation against Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and called for increased attention to be paid to the development and implementation of legislation in areas related to civil society space.

Members called for effective implementation of **fundamental rights policies**, particularly in the field of gender equality, the right of people with disabilities to be included in society, children's rights and the rights of Roma people.

They called for necessary measures to prevent forced child marriages and to ensure free legal aid to women victims of gender-based violence. They also called for respect for the multi-ethnic identity of Kotor Bay and for additional efforts to protect it.

Economy, social policy, employment and education: Members welcomed Montenegro's progress on macroeconomic stability and fiscal consolidation, and called for budgetary transparency and the creation of a good employment and business environment. They also called for accelerating the roll-out of broadband access for businesses and households and reducing the currently high long-term youth unemployment rate and amongst women.

Environment, energy and transport: recalling that, in accordance with Article 1 of its Constitution, Montenegro is an ecological state, Members welcomed the positive development of the continued alignment of Montenegro's national legislation on environment and climate change with the acquis. They welcomed the possibility of opening Chapter 27 of the acquis again this year under the negotiations with Montenegro but called on the authorities to better **protect the most valuable areas**, including biodiversity, and to review in particular hotel and hydropower projects.

Members welcomed Montenegro's intention to set up the European Union's Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) over the next three years and the adoption of secondary legislation on fuel economy and emissions from new cars.

Regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations: Members welcomed Montenegro's continued efforts to ensure constructive regional cooperation and good bilateral relations with its neighbours. They welcomed the ratification of the State border agreement between Montenegro and Kosovo and called for the speedy conclusion of agreements to settle outstanding border disputes with other neighbouring countries.

Members called on Montenegro to step up its efforts to prioritise and **punish war crimes** and clarify the fate of missing persons. They also called for increased cooperation between Montenegro and the European Union in the fight against cybercrime and cyber defence.