2018 Commission report on Albania

2018/2147(INI) - 29/11/2018 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 459 votes to 112 with 62 abstentions a resolution on the 2018 Commission Report on Albania.

Parliament fully supported the Commission's recommendation to open accession negotiations with Albania in recognition of the reform efforts made by Albania, and **called on the Council to open accession talks** without delay since doing so would provide further incentives for the reform process and enhance its scrutiny. It noted that Albania has continued to make **steady progress** towards meeting the political criteria and the five key priorities for the opening of accession negotiations.

Members underlined the fact that **judicial reform** is a major demand by Albania's citizens and a prerequisite for re-establishing trust in the rule of law, public institutions and political representatives. They welcomed the progress made in justice reform aimed at increasing the independence, accountability, professionalism and efficiency of judicial institutions, but regretted that the administration of justice continues to be **slow and inefficient**, and stated that the vetting process should be accelerated.

Parliament also commended the significant improvements made in the legal and institutional framework and welcomed the progress made in the fight against **organised crime**, but called for **additional efforts to reduce the corruption** affecting the daily life of Albania's citizens. It also called for tangible results in the specific area of countering cultivation and trafficking of drugs. Whilst welcoming the fact that the Albanian police force is becoming more active in the fight against organised crime, Members pointed to the need to complete the establishment of the National Bureau of Investigation, the Special Tribunal and the Special Prosecution Against Corruption and Organised Crime. Parliament called for increased attention to be given to political and **public-private corruption**, and stressed that a convincing track record can only be attained through proactive investigations, prosecutions and final convictions in all cases and especially high-level cases of corruption. Members noted that corruption, rule-of-law deficiencies and cumbersome regulatory procedures continue to **deter investment** in Albania.

Parliament went on to urge the Albanian authorities to effectively ensure the enforcement of property rights, an important factor in guaranteeing the rule of law and an attractive business environment.

In addition, Albania was called upon to:

- ensure better information about **primary health care and sexual and reproductive health services** for women living in rural and remote areas and Roma and Egyptian women and ensure that such services are accessible, affordable and of quality;
- further improve the education, employment rates and living conditions for Roma, Egyptians and other ethnic minorities;

- effectively combat hate speech and the exclusion and discrimination of minorities, including **LGBTI persons**;
- enhance cooperation with **civil society organisations**, ensuring effective public participation throughout the decision-making process;
- take measures to improve the **financial transparency** of state advertising;
- foster cooperation with trade unions and take measures to address the **high unemployment rate**, especially among young people, and to further improve the quality **of education**;
- take further measures to disrupt financial flows aimed at **financing terrorism** and to address online radicalisation;

- align itself with the EU common position on the integrity of the **Rome Statute** of the International Criminal Court and to renounce its bilateral immunity agreement with the United States.

Parliament called on the Commission to ensure **strict conditionality** of Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) funds and to assess, as part of its country reports, the effectiveness of IPA support for Albania, especially on the key priorities and relevant projects.

Lastly, Parliament noted the tensions following an incident involving the loss of life of Konstantinos Katsifas, a member of the Greek National Minority and dual (Albanian and Greek) citizen, who was shot dead by the Albanian Special Police Forces (RENEA) during a World War II commemoration of fallen Greek soldiers in Bularat on 28 October 2018. It called for restraint on all sides and expected the Albanian authorities to investigate and clarify the circumstances which led to the loss of life.