

2018 Commission report on Montenegro

2018/2144(INI) - 29/11/2018 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 484 votes to 80 with 63 abstentions a resolution on the 2018 Commission report on Montenegro.

Members welcomed the Commission's assessment in its [Communication](#) of 6 February 2018 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**. They underlined, however, that the implementation and application of reforms remain a key indicator of successful integration. Montenegro was asked to ensure the timely implementation of interim benchmarks for chapters 23 and 24. Parliament called on the Commission and the Council to ensure adequate provision in the next multiannual financial framework (MFF) to cater for Montenegro's possible accession to the European Union.

Democratisation: the resolution welcomed the fact that most opposition parties have returned to parliament after a long parliamentary boycott and invited all other political parties to do the same 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 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: Parliament considered that the **prevention of corruption**, together with appropriate sanctions, should be encouraged and remaining obstacles removed in order to make the institutions responsible for corruption fully independent. It expressed concern about the increasing instances of violence and assassinations linked to organised crime, calling for more robust preventative action, including the use of non-conviction-based asset forfeiture. Montenegro's track record on high-level corruption cases, whilst improving, must be further strengthened, particularly in money laundering and human trafficking. In addition, particular attention should be paid to the prevention of forced and organised prostitution and child begging.

Parliament invited Montenegro to:

- 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;
- step up efforts to ensure the effective protection of **property rights**.

Border management and migration: Parliament 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 **dismantle organised criminal networks related to trafficking in human beings** and drug or tobacco trafficking.

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: Parliament 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 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: Parliament 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** and to review in particular hotel and hydropower projects.

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the European Investment Bank (EIB) were asked to review its support for hydropower plant projects, and to withdraw funding for all projects which are undertaken in protected areas or lack sound ex-ante environmental impact assessments. In addition, Parliament stressed the need for timely and accurate information on the impact of the highway construction on the river Tara to be made available to a wide public, as well as for the cessation of all activities of waste dumping and riverbed alteration.

Regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations: Parliament 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.

It called on Montenegro to step up its efforts to prioritise and **punish war crimes** and clarify the fate of missing persons, stressing that, despite adopting four documents on war crime investigation strategy, the state prosecution service has not opened new inquiries, started new proceedings, or brought new charges. Parliament underlined its support for the initiative to establish the Regional Commission for the Establishment of Facts about War Crimes and Other Serious Violations of Human Rights Committed in the Former Yugoslavia.