Report on the 2019-2020 Commission Reports on Kosovo

2019/2172(INI) - 03/03/2021 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted an own-initiative report by Viola VON CRAMON-TAUBADEL (Greens/EFA, DE) on the 2019-2020 Commission reports on Kosovo.

Commitment to enlargement

The report welcomed Kosovo's continued commitment to advance on its European path and the support of the Kosovar population for European integration. It regretted, however, the limited progress in implementing the first phase of the European reform programme, while acknowledging the government's commitment to a comprehensive reform process as foreseen by the second phase of the programme. It called on the Kosovar authorities to show greater political will and strengthen administrative capacity in order to step up the implementation of EU-related reforms.

Members welcomed the peaceful and orderly conduct of the early parliamentary elections on 6 October 2019 but regretted that Kosovo continues to struggle with political instability after the elections. They also regretted that in 2020 the Council had still not managed to adopt visa liberalisation for Kosovo.

EU Member States were called upon to show continued commitment to enlargement and to pursue a more effective communication policy towards EU citizens on enlargement.

Democracy and the rule of law

While welcoming the progress made in adapting the legal framework to the rule of law, Members stressed that Kosovo needs to step up its efforts in the fight against corruption and organised crime, and needs to build strong, coherent and independent institutions to address these problems.

The report called on Kosovo to improve the implementation of its regulatory measures relating to the freezing, confiscation and recovery of assets, as well as to final convictions in cases of high-level corruption, organised and financial crime, money laundering and terrorist financing. It also recalled that non-merit-based selection and appointment to senior positions in the civil service and public enterprises remains a major concern.

Respect for fundamental freedoms and human rights

While Kosovo's legal and institutional framework broadly guarantees the protection of human, minority and fundamental rights, Members pointed out that challenges remain in its implementation, particularly with regard to language rights.

The report called for greater protection and inclusion of persons belonging to minorities and for greater efforts to combat discrimination and anti-gypsyism. It also noted that the financial and editorial freedom of the public broadcaster is not ensured and recalled the need to ensure full transparency of media ownership.

Members called on the Kosovar authorities to create an environment conducive to better representation of women in decision-making positions, calling in this respect for the participation of women in the negotiating team responsible for the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue. They reiterated their concern about the

extent of domestic and gender-based violence, stressing that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a detrimental impact on women and minorities by deepening inequalities and exacerbating existing problems.

Economy

Members considered that strong political support, effective implementation and close monitoring are needed to tackle Kosovo's informal economy, which is a serious obstacle to the development of its private sector and affects the state's ability to provide good quality public services. They expressed their concern about the massive emigration of highly skilled workers from Kosovo and called on the Commission and the Western Balkan countries to develop a regional strategy to tackle persistent youth unemployment.

Environment, energy and transport

Members are seriously concerned about the coal-dependent energy system and the continuing high rate of premature deaths due to air pollution resulting from emissions exceeding the legally established ceilings for large combustion plants. They urged the Kosovo authorities to tackle air pollution immediately and to develop a credible plan to phase out coal in a cost-effective manner.

Kosovo should align itself with the EU's climate protection and environmental standards and policy objectives, in line with the priorities of the European Green Deal.

Reconciliation and good neighbourly relations

The report welcomed Kosovo's efforts to maintain constructive neighbourly relations throughout the region and to proactively align itself with the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). It stressed that the normalisation of relations between Serbia and Kosovo is a priority and a precondition for the accession of both countries to the EU and would also be essential to ensure stability and prosperity in the whole region.

Members reiterated their support for the initiative to establish the Regional Commission for the establishment of facts about war crimes and other gross human rights violations on the territory of the former Yugoslavia (RECOM).