Report on the 2019-2020 Commission Reports on Kosovo

2019/2172(INI) - 25/03/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 471 votes to 109, with 104 abstentions, a resolution on the 2019-2020 Commission reports on Kosovo.

Commitment to enlargement

Parliament welcomed Kosovo's continued commitment to advance on its European path and the support of the Kosovar population for European integration. 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 deplored the lack of freedom of expression in the Serbian community in Kosovo and the fact that Kosovo continues to struggle with political instability after the elections. They also called on the Council to urgently adopt a visa-free regime for Kosovo citizens.

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 resolution 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.

Kosovo is invited to improve the fight against the financing of terrorism, as well as the reintegration of foreign fighters, to launch an effective programme for the confiscation or voluntary handing over of illegal weapons held by citizens to the police, and to improve coordination and exchange of information between Kosovo and EU security services in order to counter possible terrorist activities

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.

Parliament 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.

The resolution stressed the importance of combating violence against children while noting the need to fully implement the existing framework to combat discrimination against LGBTI persons.

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 called for the urgent introduction of active labour market policies, significant improvements in education and a regional strategy to tackle persistent youth unemployment.

Kosovo is called upon to strengthen the health sector in order to provide adequate and accessible basic health services to all citizens. The resolution highlighted the adoption of more than EUR 138 million in assistance for Kosovo, of which EUR 50 million were reallocated to address the disastrous socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 crisis.

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 resolution 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.