Report on the 2021 Commission Report on Bosnia and Herzegovina

2021/2245(INI) - 06/07/2022 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 479 votes to 81, with 75 abstentions, a resolution on the 2021 Commission report on Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Parliament called on Bosnia and Herzegovina to show commitment and **make significant steps towards EU membership** by advancing on the 14 key priorities, in particular by restoring the independence of the judiciary, strengthening the rule of law and its values and principles across state institutions, intensifying and enhancing the fight against corruption and organised crime, fostering and securing media freedom and an enabling environment for civil society, and protecting vulnerable groups.

Functioning of democratic institutions

Members regretted that regret that, more than 25 years after the end of the war, the country continues to face divisions fostered by political elites, secessionist tendencies and extensive corruption. They reiterated their **strong support for the democratic civic transformation of Bosnia and Herzegovina through European integration**, based on unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity, on the constitutional principles of equality and non-discrimination of all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Parliament insisted on respecting the legacy of the Dayton Peace Agreement, recalling its objective to end the war and safeguard peace. It condemned statements and proposals aimed at undermining Bosnia and Herzegovina's statehood and constitutional values and recalled that Bosnia and Herzegovina must address the shortcomings of its constitutional framework by bringing it into line with European standards and principles.

Members deplored the deadlock in the negotiations on the reform of the constitutional and electoral law in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the lack of political will in this respect, as well as the fact that this reform has not been implemented before the October 2022 elections. They called on all actors to ensure that the elections take place in October, as scheduled, and to negotiate in good faith in order to reach a balanced agreement quickly, in line with European standards, the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights and the recommendations of the Venice Commission.

Reconciliation

Parliament stressed the need to address the remaining obstacles to reconciliation more vigorously. It called on the authorities to respect their international human rights obligations to promote reconciliation by ensuring access to truth, justice and effective and non-selective reparations, to intensify their cooperation and data sharing on missing persons, to enable the families of civilian victims to obtain reparations and to ensure the safe and sustainable return of refugees and internally displaced persons. It condemned all forms of historical revisionism, denial, minimisation or glorification of war crimes, including the disregard of the decisions of international and domestic courts.

Reform process

Parliament believes that Bosnia and Herzegovina's political actors must make progress on the **judicial, electoral, administrative and economic reforms** needed to bring the country closer to the EU and allow civil society to contribute to this process. It stressed that IPA III funding should be modulated, or even

suspended, in the event of significant regression or persistent lack of progress in the field of rule of law and fundamental rights.

Members stressed the importance of holding **fair, open, transparent and inclusive elections in 2022**, as planned, and called for the timely parliamentary approval of election integrity legislation. It called on all stakeholders to reach agreement on the reform of the electoral law in line with the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights and the Constitutional Court, in order to ensure sufficiently diverse political representation at all levels of governance.

Economy, energy, environment, sustainable development and connectivity

Parliament stressed the need to enhance the internal and regional economic harmonisation and connectivity and emphasised the need to ensure that international funds improving connectivity reduce gaps and disparities and improve the situation of the whole country. It stressed the urgent need to ensure accountability and transparency of the economy and to shield state and private enterprises from the influence of patronage and criminal networks

Parliament reiterated the need to adopt improved state-level laws on gas and electricity, renewable energy, energy efficiency and climate, to achieve a sustainable socio-economic transition away from coal and to significantly reduce fuel poverty, and to strengthen environmental and nature protection. It recommended focusing public investment on sustainable projects that aim to advance the social market economy, foster the ecological and digital transitions and combat severe air pollution.

Rule of law, fundamental rights

Parliament called for urgent action to tackle widespread selective justice, state capture, nepotism, cronyism, high-level corruption and criminal infiltration. It reiterated the urgent need to implement **judicial reform** throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to improve the integrity of the judicial system. It stressed the need to align with the EU in the fight against money laundering and terrorist financing. Bosnia and Herzegovina should strengthen and adequately fund anti-corruption structures to cover conflicts of interest and lobbying.

Regretting that **media freedom and pluralism** are still not guaranteed, Members stressed the need to eliminate political interference and protect journalists from harassment. They called for effective measures to ensure the financial viability and political independence of public broadcasters and stressed the need to ensure citizens' participation in the democratic life of the country.

Parliament called for (i) safeguarding the rights of religious and ethnic minorities, including the Roma, and the social inclusion of vulnerable populations, including people with disabilities; (ii) effective implementation of the legislation on gender equality in the country (iii) introduce legislation to protect LGBTI+ persons; (iv) urgently end segregation and discrimination in education; (vi) intensify its efforts to combat cross-border crime, in particular trafficking in human beings, arms smuggling and illegal border crossing.

Parliament expressed deep concern about the pushbacks of refugees to Serbia and Montenegro, as well as the restriction of their movement and the limitation of public transport within the country. It deplored the authorities' failure of the authorities to address the severe migration-related humanitarian crisis at the border.

Lastly, Members warned against Russia's continued interest in destabilising the region and its European course, condemning Russia's support for the separatist policies of the Republika Srpska entity. They urged all actors to swiftly and unambiguously distance themselves from President Putin's regime.