Report on the 2021 Commission Report on Kosovo

2021/2246(INI) - 06/07/2022 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 469 votes to 96, with 72 abstentions, a resolution on the 2021 Commission report on Kosovo.

Commitment to enlargement

Parliament welcomed **Kosovo's continued commitment to pursuing EU-related reforms**, as well as the impressive consensus among political parties and the overwhelming support of the population for European integration and membership of the European identity. Noting the government's solid majority in the Kosovo Parliament following the recent parliamentary elections, it welcomed the improved political stability and the government's strong commitment to progress on its European path.

Parliament noted **Kosovo's intention to apply for EU membership in 2022**, with the aim of obtaining candidate status, but stressed that there is no fast-track procedure, and recalled that all countries aspiring to become Member States will be judged on their ability to meet all common European criteria and values. Members fully support Kosovo's application for membership of the Council of Europe and called on all EU Member States to support this application.

Regretting the Council's failure to implement the **visa-free regime** for Kosovo, Members reiterated their call on Member States in the Council to proceed urgently with the adoption of a visa-free regime for Kosovo citizens.

Members stressed that progress in normalising relations with Serbia on the basis of mutual recognition is a necessary precondition for both countries to move forward on the European path. They encouraged the Kosovo authorities to refocus on the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, moving forward in this process. They also stressed that Kosovo's independence was irreversible.

Parliament welcomed the adoption of the Kosovo Assembly resolution condemning Russia's military aggression and invasion of Ukraine. It welcomed Kosovo's swift decision to align itself with the European Union by adopting sanctions against Russia, as well as its deep solidarity with Ukraine, which makes Kosovo an extremely reliable partner.

Democracy and the rule of law

Parliament welcomed the intensified efforts to fight corruption, as well as Kosovo's efforts to combat terrorism and violent extremism. It encouraged Kosovo to adopt a new strategy for the prevention of violent extremism and radicalism leading to terrorism.

Members are concerned that the **judicial system** remains ineffective and vulnerable to political interference. They stressed the importance of ensuring the irreversible political independence and integrity of the judiciary and of improving the accountability and transparency of the judicial system.

Kosovo is encouraged to step up efforts to increase law enforcement capacity, enforce asset declarations and confiscate criminal assets. Members welcomed efforts to depoliticise and professionalise Kosovo's civil service and public administration and called on Kosovo to step up its public administration and public finance reforms in a progressive and proportionate manner. They welcomed the adoption by the

Kosovo Assembly of the laws on the financing of political parties and on asset declaration and called for their rigorous implementation.

Parliament urged the Commission to implement the recommendations of the European Court of Auditors' Special Report No 01/2022, in order to ensure that EU financial assistance in the Western Balkans has an effective impact on the rule of law, in particular by developing guidelines for the implementation of the modulation provisions of IPA III and by strengthening parliamentary scrutiny of the funds

Respect for fundamental freedoms and human rights

Parliament noted that Kosovo's legal and institutional framework largely guarantees the protection of human rights, minority rights and fundamental rights, but that its implementation is the key element. It called on Kosovo to better integrate children with disabilities into educational institutions. Parliament is also concerned that, while there has been progress in legislation and policies on LGBTI+ persons, implementation is lacking.

Initiatives to involve the Serbian community in the political, social and economic structures of Kosovo remain very limited. Parliament reiterated its call for greater inclusion of persons belonging to minorities, as well as persons with disabilities and displaced persons, through access to adequate health care, social protection, education, justice, housing, employment opportunities and other social and public services.

Parliament is deeply concerned about the persistence of high levels of domestic and gender-based violence, as well as violence against children, the number of cases of femicide and the unsatisfactory record of the judiciary in effectively prosecuting offenders. It called for the effective implementation of the national strategy to combat domestic and gender-based violence.

Parliament condemned the political pressure to which journalists are subjected and reaffirmed the need to ensure media transparency. It also condemned the disinformation campaigns carried out by Sputnik Serbia, a Russian state-owned Serbian-language media outlet, which regularly spreads misinformation to sow ethnic tensions, attempt to delegitimise Kosovo’s statehood, destabilise its governance and undermine Kosovo’s relations with the EU.

Reconciliation and good neighbourly relations

Parliament welcomed Kosovo's active participation in regional cooperation mechanisms, including the Western Balkans Common Regional Market and the Green Agenda for Western Balkans. It welcomed the various bilateral cooperation agreements between Kosovo, Northern Macedonia and Albania. It reaffirmed its unequivocal support for the EU-Facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina.

Economy, environment, transport

Parliament welcomed the positive development of Kosovo's economic growth, the government's measures to reduce the informal economy and Kosovo's successful management of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Members stressed that the implementation of both fundamental and structural reforms remains essential for economic recovery and social development, as efforts to fight corruption, improve the rule of law, enhance transparency and strengthen institutions and social dialogue will also contribute to attracting foreign direct investment to the country. Kosovo is urged to continue alignment with the EU's single market *acquis*.

Members stressed the need to **combat climate change** and accelerate the transition to a climate-neutral economy, as progress in these areas and alignment with EU standards remains limited. Concerned that the overwhelming majority of Kosovo's energy comes from coal, they called for the removal of all non-

compliant coal subsidies, decentralisation of energy production and a transition to renewable energy sources.

Parliament expressed its deep concern about the air quality in most urban areas of Kosovo. It stressed the crucial importance of a healthy environment and the protection of water resources and ecosystems and reiterated its call for the implementation of sustainable public transport and mobility policies.