

2022 Commission Report on Montenegro

2022/2202(INI) - 18/10/2023 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 529 votes to 51, with 53 abstentions, a resolution on the 2022 Commission Report on Montenegro.

Commitment to EU accession

While commending Montenegro's long-standing commitment to EU integration, Members regretted that, out of the 33 open chapters, no chapter has been closed in the past six years, slowing down Montenegro's progress and negatively affecting its positive record and status as the most advanced Western Balkan country on its path towards EU accession.

Members stressed the urgent need for political stability, commitment and credible engagement in consensus-building to move the stagnant EU reform process forward, in particular as regards the urgent rule of law reforms.

Parliament remained seriously concerned by malign foreign interference, destabilisation efforts, hybrid threats and disinformation campaigns by foreign actors in Montenegro that present the EU as an unreliable and uninvolved partner and undermine Montenegro's progress on its European path, in particular those originating from Russia, China and Serbia.

Following recent elections in the country, the resolution stressed that Montenegro needs a stable pro-European government capable and willing to continue on the EU accession path as soon as possible.

Democracy and the rule of law

Members regretted the deep polarisation, lack of dialogue, mistrust and political boycotts in the Montenegrin Parliament that have seriously hampered the legislative process. Both the legislative and executive branches are urged to strengthen loyal cooperation, including on the accession process.

The resolution regretted the lack of progress made on the reform of the electoral, legal and institutional framework.

Montenegro is urged to put in place a credible and effective criminal justice response to **corruption**. The resolution welcomed Montenegro's ongoing cooperation with EU agencies such as Europol and Eurojust and noted the importance of this cooperation in assisting Montenegro with tackling cross-border crime, including the trafficking of weapons, drugs and human beings, and with combating terrorism and extremism.

Fundamental freedoms and human rights

Montenegro is called on to step up its efforts to combat hate speech, online harassment, which disproportionately affects human rights defenders and women, and politically biased reporting and foreign influence in the Montenegrin media. Parliament expressed concern about the deep political polarisation in the media landscape, the lack of independence of the public broadcaster (Radio and Television of Montenegro – RTCG) and, in particular, the growing volume of foreign and domestic disinformation campaigns that negatively impact democratic processes.

Further measures are needed against hate speech, social exclusion and discrimination and to improve vulnerable groups' access to justice, employment, housing and healthcare.

Socio-economic reforms

Parliament noted that Montenegro's inflation rate remains one of the highest in Europe. It encouraged Montenegro to adjust its economic growth strategy in order to boost productivity and human capital and to accelerate its convergence with the EU. Increased public investment is needed in the education system for sustainable social and economic development. The country is called on to enhance its fiscal economic policies in order to align its public debt levels with the target set by the EU's Stability and Growth Pact, ensuring they do not exceed 60 % of GDP.

Moreover, it emphasised the importance of improving the sustainability of its exports by reducing overreliance on extractive industries, such as **copper ore and raw aluminium extraction**.

The resolution welcomed Montenegro's decision to terminate its citizenship by investment programme on 31 December 2022. It noted that between 2019 and 2022 more than 70 % of these passports issued were granted to citizens of the Russian Federation.

Montenegro is encouraged to make the best use of the EU funds available under the IPA III and the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans, including the Western Balkans Investment Framework, the Youth Guarantee in the Western Balkans and the Erasmus+ programme.

Energy, the environment and biodiversity

Montenegro is called on to better integrate with EU Member States' energy markets and to boost the implementation of energy efficiency measures in conjunction with facilitating the deployment of renewable energy with a view to transitioning away from fossil fuels.

Lastly, Parliament called on Montenegro to step up the development and adoption of a coherent and credible national energy and climate plan as well as improvements to waste management practices water quality protection.