

2023 and 2024 Commission reports on Montenegro

2025/2020(INI) - 20/05/2025 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted the own-initiative report by Marjan ŠAREC (Renew, SI) on the 2023 and 2024 Commission reports on Montenegro.

Commitment to EU accession

Members acknowledged Montenegro's strong commitment to European Union membership. They reaffirmed their **full support for the country's future membership in the Union** and welcomed the overwhelming support of Montenegrin citizens and the majority of political stakeholders for EU membership in 2028.

Members congratulated Montenegro for meeting the interim benchmarks set for Chapters 23 and 24 and welcomed the closure of three further negotiating chapters, bringing the total to six. They encouraged all political actors to **remain focused on European integration and the necessary reforms** and to move swiftly and more effectively towards the closure of other chapters in 2025. The adopted reforms must be implemented effectively and consistently to ensure genuine progress and full compliance with European Union law.

The report welcomed Montenegro's continued full alignment with the EU's **Common Foreign and Security Policy** (CFSP), including EU restrictive measures, notably those related to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and cyberattacks. It underlined the strategic importance of Montenegro's NATO membership.

Members remained concerned about **malign foreign interference** that discredits the Union and jeopardises Montenegro's progress towards accession. Montenegro is urged to adopt countermeasures in enhanced cooperation with the Union and NATO and through increased regional cooperation among the Western Balkan countries. Strategic communication with Montenegrin citizens on the benefits of the enlargement process and EU membership must be strengthened.

Democracy and rule of law

Concerned about the resurgence of tensions and ethnic polarisation, Members called for constructive dialogue and the search for consensus across the political spectrum, giving priority to legislative quality.

The report encouraged Montenegro to:

- consult and coordinate with the Union any possible changes to the citizenship law that could have serious repercussions on the decision-making processes and the identity of the country;
- ensure regular and meaningful participation of civil society in decision-making processes;
- fully align its electoral legal framework with Union standards, in particular as regards the harmonisation of electoral legislation, transparency, dispute resolution mechanisms, campaign and media monitoring, as well as the financing of political parties and electoral campaigns;

- adopt the law on governance which should make it possible to improve the governance framework and optimise public administration;
- implement relevant legislation in order to provide the country with a framework for the professionalisation, optimisation and rationalisation of public administration;
- further align its legal framework, including the constitution, in particular the composition and decision-making process of the Judicial Council, with Union legislation and standards on the independence, accountability, impartiality, integrity and professionalism of the judiciary;
- intensify its criminal justice response to serious corruption and create the conditions enabling judicial institutions and independent bodies responsible for fighting corruption to operate effectively, free from political influence;
- urgently align its visa policy with that of the Union, in particular with regard to countries presenting risks of irregular immigration or for the security of the Union.

Fundamental freedoms and human rights

Regretting that the most vulnerable groups in society continue to face discrimination, Members called on Montenegro to adopt a new anti-discrimination law to improve access to rights for vulnerable groups. They called for stronger implementation to ensure equal treatment for all ethnic, religious, national, and social groups.

Montenegro is invited to:

- address the difficult living conditions of the Roma population in Montenegro;
- implement strategies to ensure respect for the rights of persons with disabilities;
- strengthen institutional mechanisms for gender equality, strengthen its efforts to combat discrimination against women and fully align its definitions of gender-based violence and domestic violence with those of the Istanbul Convention. The draft law on legal gender recognition should be adopted without delay;
- conduct effective investigations and prosecute all cases of hate speech, smear campaigns and SLAPPs against journalists;
- guarantee the editorial, institutional and financial independence of the public broadcasting service RTCG, taking into account the strong polarisation of the media and their vulnerability to political interests and foreign influence.

The report recalled that good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation are essential elements of the enlargement process.

Socioeconomic reforms

The report encouraged Montenegro to make the best use of all available EU funding under the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA III), the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans, the Instrument for Pre-Accession for Rural Development (IPARD) and the Western Balkans Facility for Reform and Growth, to accelerate socio-economic convergence with the EU, and to continue aligning its legislation with EU legislation on fraud prevention.

Lastly, Montenegro is urged to advance the green transition with the support of EU funds, improve its institutional and regulatory framework, and enhance its energy resilience by adopting the National Energy and Climate Plan, adopting energy efficiency laws, and further integrating into EU energy markets.