

2023 and 2024 Commission reports on North Macedonia

2025/2021(INI) - 09/07/2025 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 461 votes to 121, with 107 abstentions, a resolution on the Commission's 2023 and 2024 reports on North Macedonia.

Parliament reaffirmed its **full support** for North Macedonia's strong and continued commitment to EU membership and for the transformations needed to fulfil the accession criteria. It welcomed the country's commitment to European integration and encouraged continued efforts to advance EU-aligned reforms.

Members called for **swift progress in the accession negotiations**, while stressing the importance of adopting the constitutional amendments. They called on the European Council to make clear, publicly and unequivocally, that the Council intends to take a swift and unconditional positive decision to enter the next phase of accession negotiations with North Macedonia once the conditions set out in its conclusions of 18 July 2022 have been met.

Accession negotiations should follow **a clear path** and be based solely on merit and compliance with the accession criteria (Copenhagen criteria), which require **deep reforms** in fundamental areas, as well as stable institutions that guarantee democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and respect for and protection of minorities. Members welcomed the new Western Balkans Facility for Reforms and Growth, which will provide EUR 750 million in grants and loans to North Macedonia once it has fulfilled the conditions set out in its reform agenda.

Functioning of democratic institutions

While North Macedonia's democratic institutions are functioning satisfactorily, **political polarisation** remains a major obstacle to necessary reforms. Parliament urged the political parties represented in the country's parliament to work together to reach an agreement on these reforms. It also called on the Assembly of North Macedonia to improve the planning, coordination, and quality of its legislative work through adequate consultation procedures and parliamentary oversight.

Members believe that **comprehensive electoral reform** remains necessary and that the financing of political parties and election campaigns must be better regulated. They called for the continued **modernisation of a merit-based public administration** and called on the North Macedonian authorities to refrain from opaque and politicised dismissals and appointments to positions within independent bodies and agencies.

Media and civil society

Parliament called for further reforms to move towards an **independent and resilient media landscape**, including reforming the legal framework governing online and offline media to fully align with the EU Media Freedom Act, addressing persistent problems of transparency of media ownership and media concentration. The authorities are encouraged to adopt a legal framework that effectively protects journalists, human rights defenders, environmental activists and other stakeholders against SLAPP lawsuits.

Members reiterated their call for a comprehensive reform of the rules governing public funding and political party advertising in the media. They encouraged North Macedonia to continue its efforts to

combat hate speech in all its forms against all groups and to improve the legal framework to combat disinformation and foreign interference.

Fundamental rights

While congratulating North Macedonia for ratifying most international human rights instruments, Members are concerned about their level of implementation, the lack of progress on **gender equality**, the rise of anti-gender movements, as well as their growing influence, which have a negative impact on legislative processes.

The Macedonian authorities are particularly invited to:

- fully implement the Istanbul Convention, strengthen formal government structures to promote gender equality and improve the status and rights of women at all levels;
- ensure the full and effective implementation of the existing legal framework for the protection of victims of gender-based violence and domestic violence;
- establish a national body responsible for coordinating all policies relating to the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- take concrete measures to recognise and integrate national communities and minorities into its Constitution;
- align the country's legislation with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;
- support and advance the rights of LGBTIQ+ people;
- strengthen migration management and intensify efforts in the fight against human trafficking.

Rule of law

Noting the country's deteriorating anti-corruption record, Parliament urged the strengthening of the **anti-corruption** framework and the ensuring of effective accountability, particularly in high-level corruption cases. Furthermore, the perceived level of trust in the **judicial system** remains very low. Members called for addressing the severe shortage of judges and prosecutors and for strengthening **the independence and transparency** of judicial bodies. They called for the strengthening of the Judicial Council and the Prosecutors' Council and the allocation of the necessary funds. Furthermore, all necessary measures must be put in place to effectively combat organised crime.

Socioeconomic reforms

Parliament recommended that North Macedonia continue to pursue steps to improve the business climate and infrastructure, strengthen education and digital infrastructure, and enhance social protection systems and their connection to employment initiatives. They encouraged labour market activation strategies for youth, the long-term unemployed, the low-skilled, women, people with disabilities, and Roma.