Basic information

2008/2200(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
Consolidating stability and prosperity in the Western Balkans **Subject** 6.10.05 Peace preservation, humanitarian and rescue tasks, crisis management 6.10.08 Fundamental freedoms, human rights, democracy in general 6.20.03 Bilateral economic and trade agreements and relations 6.40.03 Relations with South-East Europe and the Balkans	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
AFET Foreign Affairs	IBRISAGIC Anna (PPE-DE)	04/12/2008

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
INTA International Trade	BELDER Bas (IND/DEM)	14/07/2008

Council of the European Union

Council configuration	Meetings	Date
General Affairs	2926	2009-02-23
General Affairs	2903	2008-11-10
General Affairs	2915	2008-12-08
General Affairs	2933	2009-03-16

European Commission

Commission DG	Commissioner
Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations	REHN Olli

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
23/09/2008	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
10/11/2008	Resolution/conclusions adopted by Council		
08/12/2008	Resolution/conclusions adopted by Council		
23/02/2009	Debate in Council		Summary

16/03/2009	Resolution/conclusions adopted by Council		Summary
31/03/2009	Vote in committee		Summary
02/04/2009	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0212/2009	
23/04/2009	Debate in Parliament		
24/04/2009	Decision by Parliament	T6-0331/2009	Summary
24/04/2009	Results of vote in Parliament		
24/04/2009	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2008/2200(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 55-p4 Rules of Procedure EP 55
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	AFET/6/66642

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee opinion	INTA	PE412.167	05/11/2008	
Committee draft report		PE418.278	06/02/2009	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE421.232	03/03/2009	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A6-0212/2009	02/04/2009	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T6-0331/2009	24/04/2009	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary	SP(2009)3615	27/10/2009	

Consolidating stability and prosperity in the Western Balkans

2008/2200(INI) - 23/02/2009

Ministers discussed the situation in the Western Balkans, focusing on:

- **Bosnia and Herzegovina**: the situation in general and in particular the role of the EU's special representative;

- **Serbia**: including its cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and the developments on the political stage in the country;
- **Montenegro**: the current situation in the context of the elections of 29 March, and how to proceed further with its application for EU membership;
- **Kosovo**: recent events.

Consolidating stability and prosperity in the Western Balkans

2008/2200(INI) - 24/04/2009 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 305 votes to 35 with 8 abstentions a resolution on consolidating stability and prosperity in the Western Balkans in response to the Commission Communication on the subject. It points out that the leverage of the EU and its ability to function as an agent of stability and a driver of reform in the Western Balkans depends on the credibility of its commitment to allowing those States in the region that fully satisfy the Copenhagen criteria to become full members of the EU. It stresses therefore that the Commission and the Member States must maintain a firm commitment to future enlargement encompassing the Western Balkans. Members also point out the need for the Western Balkan countries to **assume ownership** of their rapprochement to the EU. They stress that the integration process must be driven from within and that successful accession depends on the existence of a strong civil society, a low degree of corruption and an overall change-over to knowledge-based economies and societies.

The resolution emphasises that the accession process must be based on a fair and rigorous application of the **principle of conditionality** whereby each country will be judged solely in the light of its capacity to meet the Copenhagen criteria, the conditions of the Stabilisation and Association process and all the benchmarks laid down in relation to a specific stage of the negotiations. The accession process must not be slowed down or blocked for countries that have satisfied the requirements previously set. However, the accession process must maintain a **clear regional perspective**. Efforts must be made to avoid a situation whereby differences in the pace of integration result in the erection of new barriers in the region, in particular with regard to the process of visa liberalisation.

All parties concerned must make serious efforts to find mutually acceptable solutions to **outstanding bilateral disputes** between EU Member States and countries of the Western Balkans and among countries of the Western Balkans themselves. In this context, good-neighbourly relations and acceptance of the respective cultural and historic heritage are extremely important. The opening of accession negotiations with the countries of the Western Balkans and the opening and closing of individual negotiation chapters should not be obstructed over questions relating to bilateral disputes and countries should agree on procedures for solving bilateral issues before the start of accession negotiations. Parliament notes the decision by certain Western Balkan countries to lodge complaints or seek advisory opinions from the International Court of Justice on bilateral disputes, and considers that the EU should make every effort to assist a comprehensive settlement of the pending issues.

The resolution states that it is necessary to continue to **promote inter-ethnic and intercultural dialogue** in order to overcome both the burden of the past and tensions in relations between the countries of the Balkan region. The Commission is asked to provide **increased funding** for initiatives promoting reconciliation between different ethnic groups.

Members support the efforts aimed at establishing by 2010 a **comprehensive Western Balkans Investment Framework** for the coordination of grants and loans offered by the Commission, by international financial institutions and by individual country donors.

Parliament goes on to stress the importance of a **liberalisation of the Schengen visa regime** for the citizens of the countries of the Western Balkans. It urges the Council and the Commission to conduct the process in as transparent a manner as possible and with clearly defined benchmarks, in order to facilitate external monitoring and increase public accountability of the process. A cumbersome visa procedure, compounded by the understaffing of consulates and embassies in the region, is liable to generate hostility towards the EU among the people of the region.

The resolution discusses the importance of transport infrastructure, energy policy, full **cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal** for the former Yugoslavia, improvement in education and an end to segregation in schools, the sustainable return of refugees and internally displaced persons, and the rights of journalists and independent media.

Consolidating stability and prosperity in the Western Balkans

2008/2200(INI) - 16/03/2009

The Council had an exchange of views on the recent developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Firstly, it welcomed the appointment of Ambassador Valentin Inzko as EU Special Representative/High Representative and discussed the continued planning for a reinforced EU presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

After the discussion, the Council adopted the following conclusions. In particular, it:

- reiterated its full support to the European perspective of Bosnia and Herzegovina and called upon the local political leaders to engage thoroughly and with stronger determination on the necessary reform agenda in order for the country to make substantial progress on its way towards the European Union;
- encouraged Bosnia and Herzegovina to continue fully implementing the Interim Agreement;
- reconfirmed its readiness for a transition from the Office of High Representative to increased local ownership, supported by a reinforced European Union presence, as soon as the conditions are met. The Council acknowledged the progress of the EU preparations, presented by the SG/HR and the Enlargement Commissioner, for its strengthened engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina under a reinforced, double-hatted EUSR/Head of the Commission Delegation;
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- urged Bosnia and Herzegovina to maximise its efforts to complete fulfilment of the five objectives and two conditions set by the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board. To this aim, the Council strongly encouraged continuation of the Prud/Odzak process, urging that the widest possible consensus be found and called for the commitments undertaken in this context to be rapidly translated into further progress and concrete legislative results.

Moreover, the Council appointed Ambassador Valentin Inzko as EU Special Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina and welcomed his appointment as High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Council commended the former EU Special Representative and High Representative Miroslav Lajčák for his outstanding efforts and commitment to Bosnia and Herzegovina and its European future.

Lastly, the Council noted that, despite the challenging political environment, the security situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina remained stable. It welcomed the progress on the preparatory work for a possible evolution of Operation ALTHEA and agreed to keep this work under regular review so that a decision on the future of the operation could be taken once the necessary conditions had been met. In this context, the Council reiterated that the possible evolution of operation ALTHEA would need to take political developments into account. The Council noted that cooperation with NATO on operation ALTHEA was continuing to work smoothly.