Basic information

2018/2147(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
2018 Commission report on Albania **Subject** 8.20.01 Candidate countries **Geographical area** Albania	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
AFET Foreign Affairs	FLECKENSTEIN Knut (S&D)	16/05/2018
	Shadow rapporteur KUKAN Eduard (PPE) THEOCHAROUS Eleni (ECR) KYUCHYUK Ilhan (ALDE) HADJIGEORGIOU Takis (GUE/NGL) MESZERICS Tamás (Verts/ALE) CASTALDO Fabio Massimo (EFDD)	

European Commission

Commission DG	Commissioner
Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations	HAHN Johannes

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
19/04/2018	Non-legislative basic document published	SWD(2018)0151	Summary
05/07/2018	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
09/10/2018	Vote in committee		
16/10/2018	Committee report tabled for plenary	A8-0334/2018	Summary

28/11/2018	Debate in Parliament		
29/11/2018	Decision by Parliament	T8-0481/2018	Summary
29/11/2018	Results of vote in Parliament		
29/11/2018	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2018/2147(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Annual report
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 89-p4
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 165
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	AFET/8/13246

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE622.360	02/07/2018	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE627.016	31/08/2018	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A8-0334/2018	16/10/2018	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T8-0481/2018	29/11/2018	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Commission working document (SWD)	SWD(2018)0151	19/04/2018	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary	SP(2019)92	26/03/2019	

2018 Commission report on Albania

2018/2147(INI) - 29/11/2018 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 459 votes to 112 with 62 abstentions a resolution on the 2018 Commission Report on Albania.

Parliament fully supported the Commission's recommendation to open accession negotiations with Albania in recognition of the reform efforts made by Albania, and **called on the Council to open accession talks** without delay since doing so would provide further incentives for the reform process and enhance its scrutiny. It noted that Albania has continued to make **steady progress** towards meeting the political criteria and the five key priorities for the opening of accession negotiations.

Members underlined the fact that **judicial reform** is a major demand by Albania's citizens and a prerequisite for re-establishing trust in the rule of law, public institutions and political representatives. They welcomed the progress made in justice reform aimed at increasing the independence, accountability, professionalism and efficiency of judicial institutions, but regretted that the administration of justice continues to be **slow and inefficient**, and stated that the vetting process should be accelerated.

Parliament also commended the significant improvements made in the legal and institutional framework and welcomed the progress made in the fight against **organised crime**, but called for **additional efforts to reduce the corruption** affecting the daily life of Albania's citizens. It also called for tangible results in the specific area of countering cultivation and trafficking of drugs. Whilst welcoming the fact that the Albanian police force is becoming more active in the fight against organised crime, Members pointed to the need to complete the establishment of the National Bureau of Investigation, the Special Tribunal and the Special Prosecution Against Corruption and Organised Crime. Parliament called for increased attention to be given to political and **public-private corruption**, and stressed that a convincing track record can only be attained through proactive investigations, prosecutions and final convictions in all cases and especially high-level cases of corruption. Members noted that corruption, rule-of-law deficiencies and cumbersome regulatory procedures continue to **deter investment** in Albania.

Parliament went on to urge the Albanian authorities to effectively ensure the enforcement of property rights, an important factor in guaranteeing the rule of law and an attractive business environment.

In addition, Albania was called upon to:

- ensure better information about **primary health care and sexual and reproductive health services** for women living in rural and remote areas and Roma and Egyptian women and ensure that such services are accessible, affordable and of quality;
- further improve the education, employment rates and living conditions for Roma, Egyptians and other ethnic minorities;

- effectively combat hate speech and the exclusion and discrimination of minorities, including **LGBTI persons**;
- enhance cooperation with **civil society organisations**, ensuring effective public participation throughout the decision-making process;
- take measures to improve the **financial transparency** of state advertising;
- foster cooperation with trade unions and take measures to address the **high unemployment rate**, especially among young people, and to further improve the quality **of education**;
- take further measures to disrupt financial flows aimed at **financing terrorism** and to address online radicalisation;
- align itself with the EU common position on the integrity of the **Rome Statute** of the International Criminal Court and to renounce its bilateral immunity agreement with the United States.

Parliament called on the Commission to ensure **strict conditionality** of Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) funds and to assess, as part of its country reports, the effectiveness of IPA support for Albania, especially on the key priorities and relevant projects.

Lastly, Parliament noted the tensions following an incident involving the loss of life of Konstantinos Katsifas, a member of the Greek National Minority and dual (Albanian and Greek) citizen, who was shot dead by the Albanian Special Police Forces (RENEA) during a World War II commemoration of fallen Greek soldiers in Bularat on 28 October 2018. It called for restraint on all sides and expected the Albanian authorities to investigate and clarify the circumstances which led to the loss of life.

2018 Commission report on Albania

2018/2147(INI) - 16/10/2018 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted the own-initiative report by Knut FLECKENSTEIN (S&D, DE) on the 2018 Commission Report on Albania.

Albania has continued to make **steady progress** towards meeting the political criteria and the five key priorities for the opening of accession negotiations, and accordingly, the Commission has recommended the opening of accession negotiations with Albania. The committee fully supported the Commission's recommendation in recognition of the reform efforts made by Albania, and **called on the Council to open accession talks** without delay since doing so would provide further incentives for the reform process and enhance its scrutiny.

Members underlined the fact that **judiciary reform** is a major demand by Albania's citizens and a prerequisite for re-establishing trust in the rule of law, public institutions and political representatives. They welcomed the progress made in justice reform aimed at increasing the independence, accountability, professionalism and efficiency of judicial institutions, but regretted that the administration of justice continues to be **slow and inefficient**, and stated that the vetting process should be accelerated.

They also commended the significant improvements made in the legal and institutional framework but called for **additional efforts to reduce the corruption** affecting the daily life of Albania's citizens. The report pointed to the need to complete the establishment of the National Bureau of Investigation, the Special Tribunal and the Special Prosecution Against Corruption and Organised Crime. It called for increased attention to be given to political and public-private corruption, and stressed that a convincing track record can only be attained through proactive investigations, prosecutions and final convictions in all cases and especially high-level cases of corruption. Members noted that corruption, rule-of-law deficiencies and cumbersome regulatory procedures continue to **deter investment**.

They went on to underline the importance of an effective **property rights** regime for guaranteeing the rule of law and an attractive business environment and urged the Albanian authorities to effectively ensure the enforcement of property rights, while at the same time taking into account property registration, restitution and compensation.

In addition, Albania was called upon to:

- further improve the education, employment rates and living conditions for Roma, Egyptians and other ethnic minorities;
- effectively combat hate speech and the exclusion and discrimination of minorities, including LGBTI persons;
- enhance cooperation with civil society organisations, ensuring effective public participation throughout the decision-making process;
- take measures to improve the financial transparency of state advertising in the media;
- foster cooperation with trade unions and take measures to address the high unemployment rate, especially among young people, and to further improve the quality of education;
- take further measures to disrupt financial flows aimed at financing terrorism and to address online radicalisation;
- align itself with the EU common position on the integrity of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and to renounce its bilateral immunity agreement with the United States;

Lastly, Members called on the Commission to ensure strict conditionality of Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) funds and to assess, as part of its country reports, the effectiveness of IPA support for Albania, especially on the key priorities and relevant projects.

2018 Commission report on Albania

2018/2147(INI) - 19/04/2018 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE: to present a Commission staff working document on the Albania 2018 report in the context of EU enlargement.

BACKGROUND: the Stabilisation and Association Agreement between Albania and the EU came into force in April 2009. Albania presented its application for membership of the European Union on 28 April 2009. The European Council of June 2014 endorsed the decision of the General Affairs Council granting Albania candidate status. In November 2016, in view of the **progress in meeting the key priorities the Commission** recommended opening accession negotiations with Albania subject to credible and tangible progress in the implementation of the justice reform, in particular the re-evaluation of judges and prosecutors (vetting). In the reporting period, Albania has implemented smoothly its obligations under the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA).

CONTENT: Albania continued to align its legislation to EU requirements in a number of areas, enhancing its ability to take on the obligations of membership. The country is moderately prepared in many areas, such as in financial control, education and culture, or has some level of preparation, including in the areas of public procurement and statistics. Albania will need to continue its efforts as regards the overall preparations for adopting and implementing the EU *acquis*. It should continue work on the development of transport and energy networks. Enhancing transparency and accountability, in particular ensuring the effective, efficient and transparent functioning of the public procurement system and public finance management, remains essential. Albania has continued to fully align with all EU common foreign and security policy positions and declarations.

IPA II: under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance II (2014-2020), Albania benefits from pre-accession assistance with a total indicative allocation of **EUR 649.4 million**.

A summary of the main chapters of the report is as follows:

Political and economic dialogue: strong polarisation persisted in the political establishment, particularly in the first half of 2017, when parliamentary activities were affected by a prolonged boycott by the opposition. This also delayed the appointment of the judicial vetting institutions. An agreement between the two main ruling and opposition parties in May allowed parliamentary work to resume ahead of the electoral recess. More recently, a number of bipartisan initiatives have been taken, including the wide cross-party consensus on the vote of principle to the law for the vetting of the police, the establishment of investigative committees, as well as continued dialogue in the ad hoc committee on electoral reform. Additional efforts are needed to better involve civil society organisations as part of an inclusive policy dialogue.

As regards the **economic criteria**, Albania has made some progress and is moderately prepared in developing a functioning market economy. The public debt-to-GDP ratio and the current account deficit have been reduced. Economic growth increased further and unemployment decreased but is still high. Reforms crucial to improving the business environment progressed but require further efforts, including the reduction of the informal economy. The new bankruptcy law entered into force and should strengthen the insolvency regime. However, business-relevant regulations remained cumbersome and shortcomings in the rule of law continued to hamper businesses and deter investments. The quality of education needs to be raised at all levels, not least to better equip people with skills that the labour market needs.

Judicial system: Albania's judicial system has some level of preparation. The implementation of comprehensive and thorough justice reform has continued, resulting in good progress overall. The re-evaluation of all judges and prosecutors (vetting process) has started and is delivering first tangible results.

Corruption and organised crime: Albania maintains some level of preparation in the fight against corruption. Good progress was made, notably with the adoption of amendments to the criminal procedure code. A chain of specialised anti-corruption bodies, including a special prosecutor's office, is being established. Corruption remains prevalent in many areas and continues to be a serious problem. Albania has some level of preparation in the fight against **organised crime**. Overall there was some progress in the reporting period, notably in the fight against cannabis cultivation. Albania needs to build on operational results in this area, intensifying confiscation of assets belonging to criminal gangs and pursuing the destruction of all existing cannabis stockpiles. Albania participated successfully in international police cooperation, intensifying its interactions particularly with EU Member States. At domestic level, effective police-prosecution cooperation remains to be improved. As regards the track record, there has been little progress in dismantling organised criminal groups. More efforts are needed to tackle money laundering, criminal assets and unjustified wealth.

Fundamental rights and freedom of expression: Albania has ratified most international human rights conventions and has developed its legal framework in line with European standards. Enforcement and monitoring of human rights protection mechanisms remain to be strengthened. As regards the freedom of expression, Albania has some level of preparation/is moderately prepared. There has been some progress in strengthening the independence of the regulatory authority and public broadcaster but transparency of state advertising in the media remains to be enhanced.

Institutional mechanisms to protect the rights of the child and to tackle gender-based violence remain weak. Important steps were made to improve the legal framework for the respect for and protection of minorities but relevant secondary legislation needs to be developed. Living conditions for Roma and Egyptians need to be improved.