

## Kosovo: 2016 country report

In June, following the early election in Kosovo, the European Parliament is due to vote on a resolution on Kosovo's 2016 report. It calls for restoring the political dialogue, swift fulfilment of the Commission's two conditions for visa liberalisation and continued commitment to the dialogue with Belgrade.

### Background

Kosovo declared independence in 2008, which [five EU Member States](#) have not recognised. Its EU bid is tied to [normalising relations](#) with Serbia, and implementing agreements reached under the EU-led [high-level dialogue](#). Despite some progress, relations continue to be strained, and a recent [non-binding resolution](#) of Kosovo's Assembly called for the dialogue's suspension. More positively, in 2016 the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU [entered into force](#) and the Commission proposed to grant visa-free travel, should the border demarcation deal with Montenegro be [signed](#) (despite [claims](#) it entails land loss), and the track record in high-level corruption cases improved. In 2017, political turmoil continued: the President [called](#) for the Kosovo Security Force to be transformed into an army, despite international [opposition](#), and a [no-confidence vote](#) led to early elections in June, to be observed by an [EU mission](#) led by Alojz Peterle (EPP, Slovenia).

### European Commission's 2016 report

The [2016 report](#) highlights the polarised domestic climate and violent disruption of parliamentary activities in early 2016, and calls for restoring constructive dialogue. The report [positively acknowledges](#) the set-up of the [Specialist Chambers and Specialist Prosecution Office](#) to investigate allegations of war crimes related to the 1999 conflict, and the extension of [EULEX's mandate](#) until mid-2018. It highlights good progress in key areas, such as the public administration reform, where a public financial management strategy and a law on general administrative procedures have been adopted. Continued politicisation, however, remains a concern. Judicial

reform has progressed, with the adoption of constitutional amendments and relevant secondary legislation. Yet, the judiciary remains susceptible to political influence and the administration of justice is inefficient. Regarding the fight against corruption and organised crime, gaps in the legislation and enforcement remain to be filled and the track record to be strengthened. There are worrying developments and no progress in the area of freedom of expression. Political pressure, insufficient regulation and threats against journalists remain a concern. In economic terms, Kosovo is at an early stage in preparations and despite some progress, macroeconomic stability may be challenged by the fiscally unsustainable decisions on war-veterans' benefits.

### European Parliament position

In a motion for a resolution on the 2016 report, the EP's Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) welcomes the SAA's entry into force and the launch of a related [European reform agenda](#). AFET calls for political will to implement the agreed roadmap, while highlighting the persistent political polarisation and condemning the violent disruption of parliamentary activities in 2016. It encourages the five Member States that have not recognised Kosovo to do so, and supports Kosovo's efforts to integrate into the international community. AFET welcomes the Commission's proposal to grant visa liberalisation once all criteria have been met. It recalls that progress in the dialogue with Serbia is a condition for both parties' EU bid and calls for sustained commitment. It welcomes the establishment of the Specialist Chambers and Specialist Prosecutor Office in The Hague. AFET deplores the political interference in public administration and urges a focus on shortcomings as regards the judiciary, the protection of freedom of expression, and the fight against corruption and organised crime.

	Progress	Level of preparation
Judiciary	good	early
Corruption	some/ good	early
Organised crime	good	early
Freedom of expression	none	some
PAR	some	some
Economic criteria	some	early

Based on: [European Commission](#), 2016.

Own-initiative report [2016/2314\(INI\)](#); Committee responsible: AFET; Rapporteur: Ulrike Lunacek (Greens/EFA, Austria).

