

Bosnia and Herzegovina: 2018 country report

In 2018, Bosnia and Herzegovina made little progress on the road to accession. In the four areas of rule of law, fundamental rights, public administration and economic development, reforms have yet to be implemented. During its February plenary session, the European Parliament is due to debate a resolution on the European Commission's 2018 country report on Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Background

The fragile relationship between the three main ethnic groups (Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats) has been a consistent source of tension in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). In January 2019, a controversial '[statehood parade](#)' by Bosnian Serbs re-kindled the debate on dividing BiH along ethnic lines. The October [2018 general elections](#) had a low voter turnout of 50 %; as in previous elections, votes were cast on ethnic lines, with little change in the balance between the parties. Despite a 2010 Constitutional Court [decision](#) on safeguarding basic democratic rights of Mostar citizens, elections have not been held in the city since 2008, due to [disputes](#) over representation of each ethnic group. [NATO](#) has invited BiH to implement its first annual reform programme in line with the country's [Membership Action Plan](#), as a possible step towards joining the alliance. BiH prosecutors filed a record number of [war crime](#) charges in 2018, however a number of cases have been put into question due to the refusal of defendants living abroad to attend their trials.

European Commission report

The [2018 report](#) acknowledged there has been little progress on the country's EU accession efforts this year, and calls for urgent development in 'fundamentals first' areas: the rule of law and fundamental rights, public administration, and economic development. **Political reforms** (for example of the electoral system) were delayed by obstruction and lack of

coordination within the government. Reform of **the judiciary** has been slow-paced, although progress has been made on implementing the 2016 recommendations on justice sector reform. **Corruption** is widespread and remains a key concern. Judicial independence from political influence, as well as overall observance of human rights, remains in need of improvement. The report noted no progress on **public administration reform** (PAR) or **freedom of expression**, as 2016 recommendations have not been implemented. BiH has made progress on **curbing organised crime, justice and security**, marked by the adoption of a new strategy on fighting crime and the implementation of an anti-money-laundering action plan. Although economic growth has remained stable (averaging 2.5 % over 5 years), weak rule of law, a difficult business environment and the size of the informal economy impede the development of a functioning **market economy**. Since the publication of the Commission's report, BiH has missed its December 2018 [deadline](#) to answer supplementary questions posed by the Commission as part of its 2016 '[questionnaire](#)' (a document used to assess a country's readiness to begin the accession process).

European Parliament position

The European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) adopted a [motion for a resolution](#) on the Commission's report on 6 December 2018. The committee [expresses](#) its concerns about the slow pace of EU-related reforms, and urges BiH to re-energise its commitment and implement European Court of Human Rights rulings. AFET also criticises BiH delegates to the Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee for failing to agree on the committee's rules of procedure.

Own-initiative report: [2018/2148\(INI\)](#); Committee responsible: AFET; Rapporteur: Cristian Dan Preda (EPP, Romania)

Bosnia and Herzegovina [report 2018](#) – summary

	Progress	Level of preparation
PAR	None	None
Freedom of Expression	Some	None
Organised crime	Some	Some
Fight Against Corruption	Some	Some
Judiciary	Some	Some
Economic Criteria	Some	Some

