

MEPs urge legal reform in Albania, rule of law for all in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Albania should step up the pace of judicial reform, as a key to starting EU accession negotiations, while Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) needs to overcome its ethnic and political divisions and remain united throughout the EU membership application evaluation process, said MEPs on Wednesday.

Albania

Rapporteur Knut Fleckenstein (S&D, DE) said: "Since summer 2014 Albania has been an EU accession candidate and since then it has been making constant progress. The adoption of a wide-ranging judicial reform is a milestone on Albania's path towards joining the EU and becoming a modern country. Less corruption, less organised crime, is crucial for everyday life in Albania. However, we should not put off the decision on the start of accession negotiations again and again."

MEPs welcome Albania's progress on EU-related reforms and further efforts to reform the judicial sector. While excluding criminal offenders from public office, whistle-blower protection and plans to re-evaluate judges, prosecutors and legal advisors are promising steps forward, MEPs remain concerned about selective justice, corruption, the overall length of judicial proceedings and political interference in investigations and court cases.

The resolution on Albania, approved by 546 votes to 85, with 62 abstentions, notes that credible implementation of justice reform, good progress in fighting organised crime and corruption, and holding free and fair elections in June 2017 could prove to be a key to advancing the EU accession process and starting negotiations.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Rapporteur Cristian Dan Preda (EPP, RO) said: "2016 was a particularly good year for Bosnia and Herzegovina as they launched an official application to join the EU in February and the European Commission sent out its questionnaire in December. Considerable progress has been achieved and we very much hope that the Commission will shortly be stating that BiH has won the status of a candidate country. We need to encourage the authorities to stay on track with the reforms decided upon in 2015, so that Bosnia and Herzegovina can become an effective,

inclusive, democratic country based on rule of law.”

MEPs stress that the EU remains committed to BiH’s EU perspective, territorial integrity and unity. They call on BiH to use the EU membership application evaluation process to prove that it is a functioning state. They view the Republika Srpska government’s efforts to establish parallel channels of communication with the Commission as unacceptable.

MEPs urge BiH to keep up the momentum of reform and become an effective and functional state “based on rule of law, guaranteeing equality and democratic representation of all its constituent peoples and citizens”.

MEPs also regret that “the declared political commitment to combat corruption did not translate into tangible results”. They see a need for effective scrutiny of political party and electoral campaign financing, transparent public sector employment and an end to corruption in public procurement cycle.

The resolution on Bosnia and Herzegovina was adopted by 496 votes to 132, with 67 abstentions.

Procedure: Non-legislative resolutions

Further information

[Adopted texts \(2016/2312 \(INI\) and 2016/2313 \(INI\)\) will soon be available here \(15.02.2017\)](#)

[Video recording of debate \(click on 14.02.2017\)](#)

[EbS+ \(14.02.2017\)](#)

[EP Research note on Albania progress \(February 2017\)](#)

[EP Research note on Bosnia and Herzegovina progress \(February 2017\)](#)

[Audiovisual material for media - Bosnia and Herzegovina](#)

Political groups

[News pages of the EPP group](#)

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