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on the 2022 Commission Report on Albania
(2022/2199(INI))

Committee on Foreign Affairs

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on the 2022 Commission Report on Albania (2022/2199(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Albania, of the other part¹,
- having regard to the European Council conclusions of 19 and 20 June 2003 and the Thessaloniki Agenda for the Western Balkans,
- having regard to Albania’s application for membership of the European Union, submitted on 28 April 2009,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 9 November 2010 entitled ‘Commission Opinion on Albania’s application for membership of the European Union’ (COM(2010)0680),
- having regard to the European Council conclusions of 26 and 27 June 2014, including the decision to grant Albania EU membership candidate status,
- having regard to the Council decision of 25 March 2020 to open EU accession negotiations with Albania,
- having regard to the outcomes of the first intergovernmental conference with Albania of 19 July 2022, in particular the opening of accession negotiations with Albania,
- having regard to the European Council conclusions of 28 June 2018 and of 17 and 18 October 2019,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 18 June 2019, 25 March 2020, 14 December 2021 and 13 December 2022 on enlargement and the stabilisation and association process,
- having regard to the outcomes of the Berlin Process, which was launched on 28 August 2014,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 5 February 2020 entitled ‘Enhancing the accession process – A credible EU perspective for the Western Balkans’ (COM(2020)0057),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 6 October 2020 entitled ‘An Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans’ (COM(2020)0641),

¹ [OJ L 107, 28.4.2009, p. 166.](#)

- having regard to the Declaration on Common Regional Market of 9 November 2020 and to the Declaration on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans of the Sofia Summit of 10 November 2020,
- having regard to the Commission staff working document of 6 October 2020 entitled ‘Guidelines for the Implementation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans’ (SWD(2020)0223),
- having regard to the declarations of the EU-Western Balkans summits, held in Sofia on 17 May 2018, Zagreb on 6 May 2020, Brdo pri Kranju on 6 October 2021 and Tirana on 6 December 2022,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/1529 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 September 2021 establishing the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA III)²,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 12 October 2022 entitled ‘2022 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy’ (COM(2022)0528),
- having regard to the Commission staff working document of 12 October 2022 entitled ‘Albania 2022 Report’ (SWD(2022)0332),
- having regard to the Council of Europe study of November 2021 entitled ‘Beyond Definitions: a call for action against hate speech in Albania – a comprehensive study’,
- having regard to the Venice Commission’s opinion of 14 December 2021 on the extension of the term of office of the transitional bodies in charge of the re-evaluation of judges and prosecutors,
- having regard to the final report of 26 July 2021 of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) entitled ‘Republic of Albania – Parliamentary Elections, 25 April 2021 – ODIHR Limited Election Observation Mission Final Report’,
- having regard to the joint opinion of the Venice Commission and the OSCE/ODIHR of 11 December 2020 on the amendments to the Albanian Constitution of 30 July 2020 and to the Electoral Code of 5 October 2020,
- having regard to all other opinions of the Venice Commission on Albania,
- having regard to the Declaration on Energy Security and Green Transition in the Western Balkans and the agreements on freedom of movement and the recognition of professional and higher education qualifications of the ninth Berlin Process Summit for the Western Balkans of 3 November 2022,
- having regard to special report 01/2022 of the European Court of Auditors of 10 January 2022 entitled ‘EU support for the rule of law in the Western Balkans: despite efforts, fundamental problems persist’,

² OJ L 330, 20.9.2021, p. 1.

- having regard to the working arrangement of 4 July 2022 on the cooperation between the European Public Prosecutor’s Office (EPPO) and the Prosecutor General’s Office of Albania,
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 14 April 2021 entitled ‘the EU Strategy to tackle Organised Crime 2021-2025’ (COM(2021)0170),
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 24 July 2020 entitled ‘2020-2025 EU action plan on firearms trafficking’ (COM(2020)0608),
 - having regard to Transparency International’s 2022 Corruption Perceptions Index, which ranks Albania 101 out of 180 countries,
 - having regard to the Reporters Without Borders 2022 World Press Freedom Index, which ranks Albania 103 out of 180 countries,
 - having regard to its resolution of 24 October 2019 on opening accession negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania³,
 - having regard to its resolution of 15 December 2021 on cooperation on the fight against organised crime in the Western Balkans⁴,
 - having regard to its resolution of 9 March 2022 on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation⁵,
 - having regard to its recommendation of 23 November 2022 to the Council, the Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy concerning the new EU strategy for enlargement⁶,
 - having regard to its previous resolutions on Albania,
 - having regard to the joint declaration of the second European Parliament-Western Balkans Speakers’ Summit of 28 June 2021,
 - having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (A9-0204/2023),
- A. whereas rules- and values-based enlargement has historically been the most effective EU foreign policy instrument, as well as a geostrategic investment in long-term peace, democracy, stability and security throughout the continent;
- B. whereas European integration contributes to the promotion of the fundamental values of respect for democracy, human rights, the rule of law and freedom of expression;

³ [OJ C 202, 28.5.2021, p. 86.](#)

⁴ [OJ C 251, 30.6.2022, p. 87.](#)

⁵ [OJ C 347, 9.9.2022, p. 61.](#)

⁶OJ C 167, 11.5.2023, p. 105.

- whereas it encourages fundamental reforms and stimulates economic growth and regional cooperation;
- C. whereas repeated delays in the accession process risk undermining citizens' support for EU accession;
 - D. whereas each country should be evaluated on its own merits and the conditionality-based accession process should not be misused to settle bilateral disputes;
 - E. whereas the EU is a community of cultural and linguistic diversity, based on solidarity and mutual respect among its peoples;
 - F. whereas malign direct and proxy foreign interference and disinformation aim to sow discord, provoke tensions and violence, and destabilise the whole region;
 - G. whereas the future of Albania and its citizens lies within the European Union;
 - H. whereas the prospect of Albania's merit-based membership is in the EU's own political, security and economic interests;
 - I. whereas the EU remains fully committed to supporting Albania's strategic choice for EU membership, which represents the aspirations of Albanian citizens towards democracy and prosperity;
 - J. whereas Albania is a reliable foreign policy partner, including through its active engagement in the UN Security Council and NATO; whereas the country remains an important geopolitical ally and a trustworthy partner, thanks to its efforts to advance regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations;
 - K. whereas the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine highlights the critical importance of EU enlargement for ensuring security and stability on our continent; whereas it exposes the need to increase resilience to hybrid warfare and malign foreign interference with democratic processes, along with the necessity of boosting cybersecurity and cyber-defence capabilities and of countering espionage and disinformation;
 - L. whereas the changing geopolitical environment has triggered new momentum for enlargement;
 - M. whereas Albania should remain focused on the EU reform agenda;
 - N. whereas democratic transformation, the rule of law, fundamental rights and adherence to EU rules, values and standards play a central role in the EU accession process and are a key benchmark for assessing progress towards EU accession; whereas each accession country should demonstrate robust, irreversible results as regards their democratic resilience and socioeconomic transformation;
 - O. whereas the protection and inclusion of people belonging to minority and vulnerable groups is crucial for aspiring EU Member States;

- P. whereas Albania has yet to fully align its electoral framework with the recommendations of the OSCE/ODIHR and the Venice Commission;
- Q. whereas good neighbourly relations and inclusive regional cooperation are indispensable for successful EU integration;
- R. whereas the fight against high-level corruption, malicious foreign interference, money laundering and organised crime is a European security issue; whereas addressing these issues is crucial for the progress of Albania and other enlargement countries towards EU accession, as it underlines the nexus between internal and external security;
- S. whereas the EU remains by far the biggest political, trade and investment partner of Albania and of the whole Western Balkans; whereas it remains the largest provider of financial assistance to the region; whereas it mobilised unprecedented cross-cutting additional support in the wake of the pandemic and Russia's brutal aggression against Ukraine;
- T. whereas Albania has been heavily targeted by Russian disinformation and other hybrid attacks; whereas it should strengthen the protection of its critical infrastructure and cybersecurity, as well as its measures to tackle disinformation and the energy transition;
- U. whereas mis- and disinformation campaigns organised by third parties aim to belittle the EU and portray it as an unreliable partner;
- V. whereas Albanian citizens have enjoyed visa-free travel to the Schengen area since December 2010 and have been able to participate in student, academic and youth exchanges under the Erasmus+ programme since 2015;
- W. whereas the start of accession negotiations is a clear recognition of Albania's progress; whereas it marks a new phase in EU-Albania relations and demands a united commitment in order to prepare for EU membership;

Commitment to EU accession

1. Welcomes Albania's steadfast, unwavering and strategic commitment to EU integration, reflecting the consensus among political parties and overwhelming support among citizens;
2. Commends its solidarity, dedication to good neighbourly relations, regional cooperation, consistent, full alignment with the EU's foreign and security policy and promotion of the rules-based international order, including its clear-cut response to the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, by adopting the EU's restrictive measures against Russia and Belarus; commends Albania's commitment to multilateralism in its role as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council;
3. Welcomes the start of accession negotiations with Albania; reiterates that each enlargement country should be assessed on its own merits and that the pace of accession should be determined by the progress on the due functioning of democratic institutions and should be grounded in the rule of law, good governance and fundamental rights;

4. Welcomes the fact that the Albanian Government has maintained a focus on EU-related reforms and has reinforced its coordination structure for European integration and its parliament's role in the EU integration process by amending the relevant legislation; stresses that the government needs to further advance the EU reform agenda in cooperation with the opposition and all segments of society, including through the National Council of European Integration and the National Council for Civil Society;
5. Stresses the need for the Albanian Government and the EU to strengthen the transparency, accountability and inclusiveness of the accession process, including its parliamentary dimension, by ensuring the inclusive participation and trust of citizens and by integrating civil society and the media into democratic governance and policy dialogue; underlines the importance of their effective involvement in the EU integration process and other consultative mechanisms, as legitimate partners in the process;
6. Urges the Albanian Government to intensify its efforts to improve the functioning of the rule of law and the judiciary, tackle corruption and organised crime, ensure media freedom, empower civil society, guarantee fundamental rights and the rights of minorities, including the LGBTIQ+ community, and strengthen its cooperation with the EU institutions;
7. Encourages its policymakers to accelerate the reforms that enabled the first long overdue intergovernmental conference and a successful start to the screening process, and to demonstrate steady and visible progress in guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights, while ensuring consistent alignment with the EU's policies;
8. Urges decision-makers to work jointly towards meeting the membership criteria by no later than 2030; recalls that, during accession negotiations, candidate countries must undergo significant transformations in order to fulfil the membership criteria;
9. Expresses its concern about the unjustified delays from the EU's side in the accession process, undermining the EU's credibility, the commitment of the Western Balkan countries and public support for EU membership;
10. Encourages the Commission to speed up its cross-cutting support to bring enlargement countries in line with the EU's policies on the economy and the single market, energy and transport, social policy, education, digitalisation, research and innovation, agriculture and rural development, justice and home affairs, civil protection, foreign affairs, and security and defence, including cybersecurity;

Democracy and the rule of law

11. Recalls that the rule of law and institutional integrity are the backbone of democratic transformation, societal resilience and socioeconomic cohesion;
12. Commends Albania's progress in and commitment to completing the implementation of its comprehensive justice reform, which will strengthen the independence, transparency, efficiency, accountability of and public trust in the Albanian justice system;

13. Encourages the country to intensify steps aimed at finalising the re-evaluation (vetting) process of judges and prosecutors and at mitigating its side effects, namely by filling in vacancies, reducing the backlog of court cases and improving the efficiency of its courts under the new judicial map, while ensuring universal access to justice through cross-cutting measures and taking into consideration the socioeconomic conditions of vulnerable groups;
14. Calls on the Albanian Government to improve the operational capacity of the judiciary, including the High Court, the High Inspector of Justice and the School of Magistrates, in order to meet the demand for qualified judges to deal with the significant backlog of cases; recalls the need for effective mechanisms that enable the prevention and prosecution of corruption and any criminal conduct in the judiciary through accountable, independent and fully functional judicial and governance institutions;
15. Deplores the enduring political confrontation, disruptive actions and inflammatory rhetoric by high-level politicians and officials, as well as breaches of the parliamentary rules of procedure; expresses its concern about the reduction of space for the parliamentary oversight role of the opposition, including the rejection of parliamentary inquiry committees; underlines a joint political and social responsibility for reforms; urges political actors to step up their commitment to dialogue and to strengthen democratic institutions and procedures through constructive interparty and intraparty engagement, mutual respect, inclusive consultations with civil society and transparent decision-making; stresses the importance of building a constructive parliamentary culture by fostering consensus among all political actors and upholding the rights and responsibilities of the opposition;
16. Recalls the need to strengthen parliamentary oversight capacities and to improve governance and pluralism, including through increased digitalisation and transparency;
17. Regrets the fact that the main political parties have failed to reach an agreement on electoral reform; calls on the Albanian authorities to urgently implement the outstanding changes to the electoral and party financing framework well ahead of the 2025 parliamentary elections, in line with the recommendations of the OSCE/ODIHR and the Venice Commission; calls on the authorities to guarantee the freedom of association, including in political parties, and the freedom to stand for election without state or other undue interference, by further improving electoral accessibility and integrity and by preventing vote-buying and the misuse of administrative resources, including through digitalisation, data protection and equitable access to media, in order to ensure a fair, open and transparent electoral process;
18. Insists on adequate funding for and the effective and impartial functioning of independent bodies and agencies and the consistent implementation of their decisions and recommendations;
19. Notes the ongoing progress and looks forward to systematic improvements and concrete results in the prevention, proactive investigation and prosecution of and non-selective final convictions for cases involving corruption and organised crime, including environmental, cyber- and trafficking crimes;

20. Welcomes the results delivered by the strengthened Specialised Structure for Anti-Corruption and Organised Crime (SPAK); urges the Albanian authorities to improve cooperation with the National Bureau of Investigation and collaboration with the EU and the Member States' agencies in the fight against organised crime and for the elimination of impunity;
21. Points out that more structured and consistent efforts, including adequate resources, tools and skills, are necessary to fight corruption, including at a high level; stresses the need to tackle the culture of impunity;
22. Calls for further progress in establishing a comprehensive, efficient, soundly coordinated and accountable public administration; calls for improved monitoring of officials' assets in order to contribute to the elimination of corruption from all domains of public life;
23. Stresses the need to establish a solid track record in corruption cases and to continue the seizure, confiscation and recovery of criminal assets resulting from corruption and organised crime offences, including through legislation targeting unjustified wealth, the digitalisation of transactions and the extended freezing and confiscation of illicit assets;
24. Encourages further police reform to ensure integrity, professionalism and full compliance with international human rights standards;
25. Recognises the contribution of civil society and the media in the fight against corruption; stresses the importance of their effective involvement in consultative mechanisms as legitimate partners in the process;
26. Supports removing provisions of the draft law on fiscal and criminal amnesty and the proposed citizenship-by-investment ('golden passport') scheme that are incompatible with the EU's norms and visa policy and that can pose risks as regards security, money laundering, tax evasion, corruption and organised crime; notes, in this regard, the announced suspension of the citizenship-by-investment scheme and the Albanian Government's intention to seek EU expertise on revising the draft fiscal and criminal amnesty law;
27. Calls on the Albanian authorities to focus on modernising the fiscal system and tax administration, including asset declaration and compliance, strengthening anti-money laundering controls and establishing an asset recovery office; invites the authorities to prosecute possible instances of crimes against the EU budget under the working arrangement on the cooperation between the EPPO and the Prosecutor General's Office of Albania; calls on the Western Balkan countries to enhance judicial cooperation with the EU in criminal matters under the working arrangements with the EPPO in order to facilitate the effective investigation and prosecution of the misuse of EU funds, including through the secondment of national liaison officers to the EPPO;
28. Stresses the authorities' obligation to ensure transparency and competition in public procurement, government contracts, privatisation, State aid and concession procedures; highlights the need to strengthen safeguards, transparency and conditionality under a strategic foreign investment screening process, and to prosecute incidents of corruption, fraud, abuse of office and money laundering, while simultaneously countering tax

evasion, illegal construction and the circumvention of sanctions; recalls that contract award procedures for infrastructure projects, including in and around the port of Durrës, must comply with EU standards on public procurement under the Stabilisation and Association Agreement;

29. Encourages and commends international cooperation and calls for continued action on dismantling transnational crime networks under an enhanced cooperation with the EU's justice and home affairs agencies, such as Europol, Eurojust and Frontex, covering intensified action against the production and organised trafficking of drugs, illegal weapons and people; urges the Albanian authorities to strengthen domestic operational and asset-recovery capacities; stresses that countering cybercrime, trafficking in human beings and money laundering remain areas in which additional results are needed;
30. Underlines Albania's crucial contribution to the protection of the EU's external border and the prevention of cross-border crime; welcomes effective international investigations and European police operations to combat the trafficking of people, narcotics, firearms, online fraud and terrorist threats;
31. Stresses the need to counter the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, as Albania remains both a destination and a transit country;
32. Encourages Albania to increase efforts to reduce unfounded asylum claims by its nationals and to further align its visa policy with the EU's list of third countries requiring a visa;
33. Condemns malign foreign interference and hybrid attacks, including manipulation and disinformation campaigns, incitement to all forms of radicalisation and cyberattacks against Albanian citizens and critical infrastructure, aimed at destabilising the country and discrediting the EU; invites the Commission and the European External Action Service to improve coordination and further assist the Albanian authorities in considerably strengthening the country's resilience against such threats by enhancing digital security, data protection and cyber-defence capabilities, in close cooperation with NATO; stresses the need to effectively implement and enforce its national cyber security strategy;
34. Condemns the unauthorised use of citizens' private data, including by political parties, and calls on the authorities to take urgent measures to prevent data leaks and to accelerate alignment with the EU *acquis* on personal data protection;

Fundamental freedoms and human rights

35. Notes the legal steps taken to eliminate discrimination against minorities, and calls for practical steps in order to ensure the inclusion of LGBTIQ+, Roma, Egyptian and all other ethnic and cultural minorities; urges the authorities to tackle the intersectional discrimination that these groups face through a systemic institutional approach in all spheres of social, economic and political life and to ensure a prompt investigation into abuses of their rights;

36. Calls on the authorities to continue cooperating with organisations representing the Roma and Egyptian communities in order to ensure their well-being and integration into society;
37. Calls on the authorities to engage in dialogue with civil society organisations working to protect the rights of the LGBTIQ+ community and to ensure the legal framework and the implementation of legislation guaranteeing the inclusion and protection of the community's members;
38. Urges the authorities to step up their work to combat gender-based violence, step up child protection, adopt and implement legislation on minority rights, in particular the pending by-laws on self-identification of national minorities and the use of minority languages, and conduct a population census in full compliance with EU standards; stresses the need to consolidate property and land registration rights and to complete the restitution of and compensation for expropriated property;
39. Urges the authorities to ensure inclusive education by undertaking immediate measures to end and prevent the segregation of Roma and Egyptian schoolchildren, in line with the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights; calls on the authorities to step up the fight against the online sexual exploitation of children;
40. Urges the Albanian authorities to further increase efforts aimed at gender equality and women's rights, including by prioritising gender mainstreaming, increasing cooperation with women's organisations and improving gender balance in the workforce;
41. Calls on Albanian lawmakers to take steps to ensure the adequate representation of women in all decision-making positions; welcomes, against this background, the first female-majority cabinet of the current government; calls on the authorities to further address the lack of implementation of female workers' rights, as well as gender stereotyping, gender imbalance and the gender pay gap in the labour force; points to significant gender differences, such as the lower participation of women in the labour market; highlights the need to end discrimination in legal provisions related to maternity leave and to improve childcare and pre-school capacity;
42. Acknowledges the progress achieved in implementing the Istanbul Convention; welcomes Albania's first report on the matter and calls on the authorities to step up the prevention of and responses to sexual- and gender-based violence and femicide, and to enhance support for survivors; recalls the urgency of increasing resources for implementing the Istanbul Convention's provisions, increasing women's awareness of their rights, stepping up prevention and providing services to the survivors of domestic and online abuse;
43. Welcomes the 2021-2027 action plan for LGBTI people in Albania and calls for its implementation; welcomes the success of the 11th Tirana Pride parade in 2022; calls on the authorities to adopt legislation on the recognition of gender identity and same-sex partnerships and/or marriages; expresses its serious concern about the discrimination against LGBTIQ+ persons regarding access to healthcare, education, justice, employment and housing; deplures cases of physical aggression and hate speech against the LGBTIQ+ community;

44. Deplores the lack of progress on the rights of persons with disabilities; calls for full legal alignment with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities through the ratification of its Optional Protocol; calls for adequate funding for the 2021-2025 national action plan for persons with disabilities;
45. Underlines the importance of addressing discrimination and violence, removing barriers to socioeconomic inclusion, promoting employment and ensuring accessible voting for people with disabilities;
46. Recalls the need to effectively and unselectively ensure the right to freedom of peaceful assembly; notes the importance of addressing allegations of police misconduct and the disproportionate use of force, with a view to bringing perpetrators to justice;
47. Notes that further progress is needed to improve detention conditions in line with the recommendation of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;
48. Regrets the lack of progress on achieving institutional transparency and the deteriorating situation of the freedom of expression and media freedom; stresses the role of the Albanian Government and political leaders in creating an enabling environment for the pursuit of these freedoms;
49. Condemns attempts to discredit reporters and arbitrarily withhold public information, such as decisions to ban journalists from attending government press conferences, as well as the failure to ensure the safety of journalists and media outlets; condemns all violence against them;
50. Encourages the Albanian Government to improve access to reporting on and scrutiny of its work via formal channels, such as press conferences and interviews, and to ensure journalists' equal, direct and transparent access to official sources;
51. Urges the authorities to take immediate action against political and economic interference in the media and to stop verbal attacks, smear campaigns and intimidation against journalists, especially those reporting on rule of law issues, as this undermines the journalism quality, media independence and journalists' ability to cover issues of public interest;
52. Calls on the authorities to adopt a legal framework that protects journalists, human rights defenders and other stakeholders from strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs);
53. Expresses its concern about enduring inflammatory rhetoric, including by high-level politicians, public officials and other public figures; calls for investigations into all attacks against critical media and for the authorities to bring perpetrators of attacks against journalists to justice;
54. Condemns any regulatory attempts to increase political control over media institutions; welcomes, in this context, the withdrawal of the draft anti-defamation legislation in line with the recommendations of the Venice Commission;

55. Urges the Albanian Government to ensure the independence of the public broadcaster and media regulator and the transparency of media ownership, financing and public advertising; deplores the fact that most Albanian media outlets lack sustainable business models and transparent funding;
56. Urges the authorities and civil society to work together in order to counter disinformation and manipulative narratives by promoting media literacy, creating an enabling environment for independent media and improving the labour and social rights of journalists;
57. Calls for the EU to assist in coordinating regional anti-disinformation efforts by mobilising relevant stakeholders and to enhance dialogue, research and analysis to produce evidence-based responses to disinformation threats; calls on the European External Action Service to proactively build up the EU's credibility in the region and to expand StratCom monitoring to focus on cross-border disinformation threats emanating from Western Balkan countries and their neighbours;
58. Welcomes the work of the Alliance for Ethical Media in Albania on implementing the Code of Ethics for Journalists; calls on the members of the Association of Professional Journalists of Albania to follow the highest industry standards, in particular by adopting the Journalism Trust Initiative set up by Reporters Without Borders;
59. Underlines the importance of an inclusive framework for meaningful civil society engagement in decision-making processes and the EU integration process at national and local government level, including through the National Council for Civil Society and the Open Government Partnership, and calls on the Albanian Government to improve the effectiveness of these platforms; urges all political actors and authorities to stop using and condemn hate speech, smear campaigns and harassment of independent civil society organisations and human rights defenders and to ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice;
60. Calls for the revision of provisions of the Law on Registration of Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs) undermining the freedom of expression and association; is particularly concerned by the highly disproportionate fines for administrative violations by NPOs; welcomes the self-regulatory Code of Standards for NPOs and suggests simplifying the electronic registration of civil society organisations;

Regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations

61. Welcomes Albania's continued dialogue to ensure good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation, which are essential elements of the enlargement process and the Stabilisation and Association Process; commends Albania's constructive engagement in inclusive regional and cross-border cooperation initiatives; welcomes the tangible agreements reached on free movement and the mutual recognition of qualifications as part of the Berlin Process and calls for their speedy implementation; commends the progress reached in the context of the EU-Western Balkans summit in Tirana, the first-ever event of its kind held in the region;

62. Stresses the importance of making full use of existing regional and intergovernmental initiatives, notably the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative, the Central European Initiative, the EU strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian region and the Berlin Process, and of creating synergies among them;
63. Commends Albania for playing a key role in promoting stability and cooperation across the Western Balkans, including its participation in EU- and NATO-led missions and operations;
64. Welcomes the support measure for the Balkan Medical Task Force amounting to EUR 6 million under the European Peace Facility, which procures the necessary equipment and supplies for the medical units of the Armed Forces of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia;
65. Recalls the need to complete the process of declassifying communist-era files and making them accessible to researchers and the wider public in order to advance justice and reconciliation, bring justice to victims and provide reparations to survivors and their families;

Socioeconomic reforms

66. Urges the authorities to continue structural reforms in line with the 2023-2025 economic reform programme and to enable sustainable recovery and inclusive growth through improved public-finance management and governance, the rule of law, digitalisation and accessibility, reduced social exclusion, the formalisation of the economy, and improved education and health services; calls for further efforts on upskilling, improved labour conditions and social dialogue through meaningful dialogue and collective bargaining;
67. Underlines the importance of empowering young people and fostering opportunities for the younger Albanian generations; notes the drafting of an action plan for the implementation of the Youth Guarantee in the Western Balkans; encourages increased investment in research and innovation, helping to reverse the brain drain of researchers and young people;
68. Calls on the authorities to reduce the risk of social exclusion and poverty by improving access to social, education and healthcare services, in particular for people from the Roma, Egyptian and LGBTIQ+ communities and other minorities and vulnerable groups;
69. Underlines the transformative nature of the substantial EU assistance provided under the IPA III and the Western Balkans Investment Framework; notes the role of the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans and its flagship projects; recalls that, in line with IPA III conditionality, funding must be reduced or suspended in cases of backtracking or unjustified delays in the reform process, particularly in the fields of democracy, fundamental rights and the rule of law;

Energy, the environment, sustainable development and connectivity

70. Welcomes Albania's steps in accelerating the energy transition and energy diversification towards wind and solar power and calls on the authorities to ensure the sustainable use of hydropower; applauds, in this regard, the speedy deployment of the EU energy support package for the Western Balkans worth EUR 1 billion, including immediate budgetary support of EUR 80 million to Albania; calls on the authorities to make the best use of this assistance in order to build a resilient and environmentally friendly energy market in line with the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans;
71. Recalls the importance of EU investment into projects such as the Vau i Dejës solar power plant, the modernisation of the Fierza hydropower plant, the renovation of the University of Tirana's campus and the new Tirana-Durrës railway; urges the authorities to step up efforts in mainstreaming environmental and climate action across the agricultural, energy, transport and industrial sectors;
72. Expresses its support for Albania's Presidency in Office of the Energy Community in advancing the region's integration into the EU energy market; welcomes its plan to save energy, produce clean energy and diversify its energy supply under REPowerEU and its joint energy purchases under the EU Energy Platform;
73. Calls for further progress in reforming the electricity sector and in ensuring sustainable energy-efficiency funding mechanisms;
74. Calls for thoroughly planned measures on biodiversity, water, air, climate, regional waste management, recycling and industrial pollution;
75. Stresses the need for Albania to improve its waste management infrastructure, increase efforts to strengthen the country's resilience against the impacts of climate change, including by updating the national strategy on climate change and mainstreaming climate change into sectoral strategies and plans;
76. Expresses its concern about marine waste pollution in Albania, which is affecting neighbouring countries, and calls for urgent action to address this;
77. Urges the Albanian Government to step up its efforts to improve air quality and to reduce lethal air pollution, in particular in urban areas;
78. Warmly welcomes the establishment of the Vjosa Wild River National Park, the first wild river national park in Europe, and commends the efforts of civil society in the run-up to the park's establishment; calls on the authorities to take into account the concerns raised by civil society on the delineation of the network's boundaries for protected areas;
79. Urges the Albanian Government to swiftly align with the EU water *acquis*, to complete and adopt the river basin management plans, to reduce wastewater pollution and to take action to ensure the protection of Lake Ohrid by ending the release of mining residue into it; calls on the Albanian Government to strengthen its efforts to protect its marine environment and biodiversity, including by designating and effectively managing marine protected areas;

80. Stresses the need to develop small- and medium-scale agriculture that is modern, ecological and climate friendly and that ensures the livelihood of farmers and the protection of Albania's natural resources and biodiversity;
81. Calls for improved transparency, conduct, enforcement and monitoring of environmental and strategic environmental impact assessments, especially on projects with large environmental and socioeconomic repercussions, such as the Skavica hydropower plant project; expresses its concern with the economic and environmental impact of non-competitive foreign-funded development projects;
82. Calls on the authorities to take urgent action to fight environmental crime and to improve and expedite policy and law enforcement for nature and biodiversity protection, particularly as regards protected areas and critically endangered species, such as the Balkan lynx; calls on the Albanian Government to work on sustainable wildlife management legislation and to enforce the logging moratorium;
83. Urges the Albanian Government to halt projects that risk violating national and international biodiversity protection norms, such as Vlorë International Airport, and to stop hydropower development in protected areas;
84. Welcomes Albania's full adherence to the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and, as a result, the EU's significant increased support to civil emergency preparedness and a coordinated crisis response following earthquakes, floods and wildfires; encourages the country to further modernise its crisis management capacities;
85. Calls for the swift adoption of the national transport strategy, including its 2021-2025 action plan; reiterates that significant efforts are needed for a structural transformation of digital, energy and transport connectivity;
86. Reiterates the need to fill in transport connectivity gaps and to upgrade public infrastructure in the Western Balkans, with the support of the EU Member States and the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans and in line with the Paris Agreement and the EU's decarbonisation goals; urges, in this respect, the authorities in all European countries to complete core infrastructure projects, including Pan-European Corridors VIII and X;
87. Welcomes the removal of roaming costs among the Western Balkan countries and expresses its support for the gradual elimination of roaming charges between the EU and the Western Balkans, following their reduction as of 1 October 2023;

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88. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the President of the European Council, the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and the President, Government and Parliament of the Republic of Albania.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

Date adopted	24.5.2023
Result of final vote	+: 52 -: 5 0: 1
Members present for the final vote	Alviina Alametsä, Alexander Alexandrov Yordanov, François Alfonsi, Petras Auštrevičius, Traian Băsescu, Susanna Ceccardi, Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, Katalin Cseh, Michael Gahler, Giorgos Georgiou, Sunčana Glavak, Raphaël Glucksmann, Klemen Grošelj, Sandra Kalniete, Dietmar Köster, Andrius Kubilius, Ilhan Kyuchyuk, David Lega, Miriam Lexmann, Nathalie Loiseau, Antonio López-Istúriz White, Thierry Mariani, Pedro Marques, David McAllister, Vangelis Meimarakis, Sven Mikser, Francisco José Millán Mon, Matjaž Nemeč, Gheorghe-Vlad Nistor, Demetris Papadakis, Kostas Papadakis, Giuliano Pisapia, Nacho Sánchez Amor, Isabel Santos, Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, Mounir Satouri, Andreas Schieder, Jordi Solé, Sergei Stanishev, Dominik Tarczyński, Anders Vistisen, Charlie Weimers, Isabel Wiseler-Lima, Salima Yenbou, Tomáš Zdechovský, Bernhard Zimniok, Željana Zovko
Substitutes present for the final vote	Katarina Barley, Adam Bielan, Vladimír Bilčík, Mercedes Bresso, Pierrette Herzberger-Fofana, Arba Kokalari, Andrey Kovatchev, Georgios Kyrtos, Karsten Lucke, Ramona Strugariu
Substitutes under Rule 209(7) present for the final vote	Javier Moreno Sánchez

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

52	+
ECR	Adam Bielan, Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, Dominik Tarczyński
ID	Susanna Ceccardi
PPE	Alexander Alexandrov Yordanov, Traian Băsescu, Vladimír Bilčík, Michael Gahler, Sunčana Glavak, Sandra Kalniete, Arba Kokalari, Andrey Kovatchev, Andrius Kubilius, David Lega, Miriam Lexmann, Antonio López-Istúriz White, David McAllister, Vangelis Meimarakis, Francisco José Millán Mon, Gheorghe-Vlad Nistor, Isabel Wiseler-Lima, Tomáš Zdechovský, Željana Zovko
Renew	Petras Auštrevičius, Katalin Cseh, Klemen Grošelj, Georgios Kyrtos, Ilhan Kyuchyuk, Nathalie Loiseau, Ramona Strugariu, Salima Yenbou
S&D	Katarina Barley, Mercedes Bresso, Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, Raphaël Glucksmann, Dietmar Köster, Karsten Lucke, Pedro Marques, Sven Mikser, Javier Moreno Sánchez, Matjaž Nemeč, Demetris Papadakis, Giuliano Pisapia, Nacho Sánchez Amor, Isabel Santos, Andreas Schieder, Sergei Stanishev
Verts/ALE	Alviina Alametsä, François Alfonsi, Pierrette Herzberger-Fofana, Mounir Satouri, Jordi Solé

5	-
ECR	Charlie Weimers
ID	Thierry Mariani, Anders Vistisen, Bernhard Zimniok
NI	Kostas Papadakis

1	0
The Left	Giorgos Georgiou

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention