

# Press release – Enlargement reports: MEPs fully support Western Balkans' European future



In their reports assessing the progress made by Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia and Serbia in the last two years, MEPs warn that advancement by these countries towards joining the EU depends on lasting, in-depth and irreversible reforms across fundamental areas such as the rule of law and the effective functioning of democratic institutions.

MEPs also stress the importance of stepping up the fight against corruption and organised crime, along with good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation.

## **Albania**

MEPs welcome Albania's clear strategic orientation and commitment to the country's EU integration and call for the formal start of accession negotiations without any further delay, following the complete fulfilment of the conditions set by the European Council. They underline that the Albanian general elections on 25 April 2021 will be key for the consolidation and renewal of Albania's democratic process, with MEPs warning that free and fair elections are fundamental to the EU integration process.

The report was adopted by 581 votes in favour, 61 against and 45 abstentions.

## **Kosovo**

MEPs urge the Kosovar and Serbian governments to refrain from any action that could undermine trust between the respective parties. Noting that five EU member states have not yet recognised Kosovo, MEPs reiterate their call for them to do so, stressing that Kosovo's independence is irreversible.

Recognition by these remaining EU member states, MEPs argue, would be beneficial to the normalisation of relations between Kosovo and Serbia, would enhance and consolidate the stability of the region, and would facilitate the EU integration of both states. MEPs also call on the Council to urgently proceed with the adoption of a visa-free regime for the citizens of Kosovo.

The report was adopted by 471 votes in favour, 109 against and 104 abstentions.

### **North Macedonia**

On North Macedonia, MEPs state the country has made consistent progress and is maintaining a steady pace in adopting EU reforms. As a result, they call for the EU to hold a first intergovernmental conference with North Macedonia – which would mark the formal start of accession negotiations – as soon as possible. MEPs regret that Bulgaria and North Macedonia have yet to come to an understanding on outstanding bilateral issues and encourage them to reach a compromise over an action plan of concrete measures to resolve this impasse. Their previous recommendations regarding discrimination against citizens who openly express their Bulgarian identity and/or ethnic background have not been implemented, they note.

The report was adopted by 558 votes in favour, 70 against and 59 abstentions.

### **Serbia**

MEPs warn that the normalisation of relations by Serbia with Kosovo, and the genuine respect of fundamental rights domestically, is essential to determining the pace of accession negotiations. They also express concern about the effective functioning of Serbia's new parliament, where there is no parliamentary opposition, and the legitimacy of which is challenged by opposition parties. MEPs reiterate the importance of alignment with the EU common foreign and security policy, given that Serbia's rate of alignment is currently the lowest in the region. MEPs welcome the progress Serbia has made in developing a functional market economy and encourage the Serbian government to continue its structural reforms in this area.

The report was adopted by 538 votes in favour, 69 against and 79 abstentions.

### **Background**

The enlargement reports are the European Parliament's response to the [annual Commission reports](#) on the candidate and the potential candidate countries for EU accession. Resolutions adopted in plenary represent the European Parliament's official position as regards EU relations with these countries.