



2022/2199(INI)

7.3.2023

DRAFT REPORT

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

Committee on Foreign Affairs

Rapporteur: Isabel Santos

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

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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,
- 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 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 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 joint opinion of the Venice Commission and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights 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’,
- having regard to the working arrangement of 4 July 2022 on the cooperation between the European Public Prosecutor’s Office and the Prosecutor General’s Office of Albania,

² OJ L 330, 20.9.2021, p. 1.

- 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 (A9-0000/2023),
- A. whereas enlargement is the most effective EU foreign policy instrument and represents a geostrategic investment in long-term peace, democracy, stability and security throughout the continent;
- B. whereas Albania is a reliable foreign policy partner, including through its engagement in the UN Security Council;
- C. whereas democratic transformation, the rule of law and reconciliation play a central role in the EU accession process;
- D. whereas the fight against high-level corruption, malicious foreign interference, money laundering and organised crime is a European security issue that is crucial for Albania’s EU accession;
- E. whereas accession negotiations mark a new phase in EU-Albania relations and demand a united commitment in order to prepare for EU membership;
- F. whereas the EU remains the main political and economic partner of the Western Balkan countries;

Commitment to EU accession

1. Welcomes Albania’s steadfast commitment to EU integration, reflecting the consensus among political parties and overwhelming support among citizens; commends its

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.](#)

⁶ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2022)0406.

solidarity and consistent, full alignment with the EU's foreign and security policy, including its clear-cut response to the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine;

2. 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 progress in guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights; urges decision-makers to work jointly towards meeting the membership criteria by 2030; stresses the need to strengthen the transparency, accountability and inclusiveness of the accession process, including its parliamentary dimension;

Democracy and the rule of law

3. Recalls that the rule of law and institutional integrity are the backbone of democratic transformation, societal resilience and socioeconomic cohesion;
4. Commends Albania's commitment to completing its comprehensive justice reform; encourages the country to intensify steps aimed at finalising the vetting process and ensuring universal justice through cross-cutting measures;
5. Deplores political confrontation and disruptive actions and underlines a joint political and social responsibility for reforms; invites political actors to step up their commitment to dialogue and to strengthen democratic institutions and procedures through constructive engagement, inclusive consultations and transparent decision-making; recalls the need to strengthen parliamentary oversight;
6. Calls on the Albanian authorities to address the outstanding electoral and party financing recommendations well ahead of the 2025 parliamentary elections;
7. Insists on adequate funding for and the effective and impartial functioning of independent bodies and agencies; recognises the contribution of independent civil society and the media in the fight against corruption;
8. Notes the ongoing progress and looks forward to systematic improvements in the prevention, proactive investigation and prosecution of and non-selective final convictions for cases involving corruption and organised crime; calls for further progress in establishing a comprehensive, efficient, soundly coordinated and accountable public administration;
9. Expresses its concern with the aspects of the draft law on fiscal amnesty and the proposed citizenship by investment scheme that are incompatible with EU norms and its visa policy;
10. Calls for continued action to reduce unfounded asylum claims by Albanian nationals, while tackling criminal trafficking networks and increasing cooperation with the EU's justice and home affairs agencies; welcomes successful international investigations and police operations to combat the trafficking of people, narcotics and firearms, and online fraud;
11. 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 fraud, abuse of office and money laundering, while simultaneously countering tax evasion and the circumvention of sanctions;

12. Condemns malign foreign interference and hybrid attacks, including disinformation, espionage, incitement to all forms of radicalisation and cyberattacks against Albanian citizens and critical infrastructure; invites the authorities to prevent data leaks by considerably strengthening cybersecurity;

Fundamental freedoms and human rights

13. Notes the legal steps taken to eliminate discrimination against minorities, and calls for practical steps in order to ensure their inclusion, namely the inclusion of LGBTI+, Roma and Egyptian minorities; recalls the need to combat gender-based violence, step up child protection, adopt and implement legislation on minority rights, strengthen property rights and conduct a population census; underlines the importance of removing barriers to the socioeconomic inclusion of persons with disabilities;
14. Expresses its concern with the lack of progress on achieving institutional transparency, freedom of expression and media freedom and stresses the role of political leaders in creating an enabling environment for the pursuit of these freedoms; condemns attempts to discredit reporters and arbitrarily withhold public information, as well as the failure to ensure the safety of journalists; urges the authorities to take immediate action against political and economic interference in the media and intimidation against reporters; welcomes the withdrawal of the draft anti-defamation legislation; urges the government to ensure the independence of the public broadcaster and media regulator and the transparency of media ownership, financing and public advertising;
15. Urges the authorities to counter disinformation and manipulative narratives by promoting media literacy and improving the working conditions of journalists;
16. Underlines the importance of an inclusive framework for meaningful civil society engagement in decision-making processes;

Reconciliation and good neighbourly relations

17. Commends Albania's constructive engagement in inclusive regional and cross-border cooperation initiatives; welcomes the tangible progress reached in the context of the Berlin Process and the EU–Western Balkans summit in Tirana;
18. 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;

Socioeconomic reforms

19. Urges the authorities to continue structural reforms that enable sustainable recovery and inclusive growth through improved governance, rule of law, digitalisation and

accessibility, reduced social exclusion, formalisation of the economy, education, upskilling, improved labour conditions and social dialogue;

20. Underlines the transformative nature of the substantial EU assistance provided under the IPA III and the Western Balkans Investment Framework, including the Youth Guarantee in the Western Balkans; 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;

Energy, the environment, sustainable development and connectivity

21. Welcomes steps in accelerating the energy transition and energy diversification towards wind and solar power; applauds, in this regard, the EU energy support package for the Western Balkans and calls on the authorities to make the best use of this assistance in order to build a resilient and environmentally friendly energy market;
22. Calls for thoroughly planned measures on biodiversity, water, air, climate, regional waste management and industrial pollution; stresses the need to strengthen the country's resilience to the impacts of climate change; notes the initial steps taken to establish a Vjosa National Park;
23. Calls for improved transparency, conduct, enforcement and monitoring of environmental and strategic environmental impact assessments, especially on projects with large environmental and socioeconomic repercussions; expresses concern with the economic and environmental impact of non-competitive foreign-funded development projects; calls on the authorities to take urgent action to fight environmental crime;
24. Welcomes Albania's full adherence to the EU Civil Protection Mechanism;
25. Calls for the swift adoption of the national transport strategy, including its action plan;

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26. 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.