

P6_TA-PROV(2006)0065

Outlook for Bosnia and Herzegovina

European Parliament resolution on the outlook for Bosnia and Herzegovina

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Bosnia and Herzegovina, in particular that of 14 April 2005 on the state of regional integration in the western Balkans¹, that of 17 November 2004 on the European Union military operation 'Althea' in Bosnia and Herzegovina² and that of 7 July 2005 on Srebrenica³,
 - having regard to the communication from the Commission to the Council on the progress achieved by Bosnia and Herzegovina in implementing the priorities identified in the 'Feasibility study on the preparedness of Bosnia and Herzegovina to negotiate a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the European Union (COM(2003)0692)' (COM(2005)0529),
 - having regard to the Council Decision on the principles, priorities and conditions contained in the European Partnership with Bosnia and Herzegovina (15267/2005), namely the short- and medium-term priorities identified as regards political requirements,
 - having regard to the Commission's 2005 enlargement strategy paper (COM(2005)0561),
 - having regard to the Commission communication entitled 'The Western Balkans on the road to the EU: consolidating stability and raising prosperity' (COM 2006)0027),
 - having regard to Rule 103(4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the Thessaloniki agenda sets a clear perspective for European integration and states unequivocally that the future of the western Balkans lies in the European Union, once they meet the established criteria, and whereas the Stabilisation and Association Process is the initial phase of the European integration process,
- B. whereas on 25 January 2006 the EU started negotiations with Bosnia and Herzegovina for a Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) and whereas the European Union continues to present itself as a reliable partner for its neighbours, committed to promoting stable democracies and prosperous economies with a view to integration into the EU, especially for the western Balkans,
- C. whereas the start of the negotiations adds further pressure for institutional reform and for creating fully efficient, transparent and stable state institutions which can take the necessary decisions for adopting and implementing EU standards and values in the legislation,

¹ OJ C 33 E, 9.2.2006, p. 565.

² OJ C 201 E, 18.8.2005, p. 77.

³ *Texts Adopted*, P6_TA(2005)0296.

- D. having regard to the urgent need to develop an efficient state administration and judiciary, establish modern, non-segregational education systems and promote social and economic inclusion measures for returnees in Bosnia and Herzegovina and, in general, to the need for further vigorous reform efforts in order to make the economy more competitive,
 - E. whereas, despite huge progress in many fields, the country is still deeply divided along ethnic lines and the reconciliation process is not complete,
 - F. whereas talks have started between the main Bosnian political forces with a view to amending the constitution following the Brussels talks of 12-14 November 2005 and the Washington Declaration of 21 November 2005 in consultation with the United States Institute for Peace; whereas these talks, due to end by March 2006, must lead to a constitutional and institutional model that gradually moves away from ethnic divisions and recognises individual rights instead of collective rights,
 - G. whereas Bosnia and Herzegovina would not be able to achieve the necessary incorporation of the EU acquis and integration into the EU with its present institutional framework, although significant progress has been made, including the establishment of new institutions at state level,
 - H. whereas the newly appointed EU Special Representative/High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, who has inside knowledge of the country, has declared that preparing Bosnia and Herzegovina for European integration and focusing on economic development are now crucial,
 - I. whereas NATO successfully concluded the mission of the Stabilisation Force (SFOR) and the European Union took over responsibility on 2 December 2004, launching the European Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUFOR) Operation Althea,
 - J. whereas the Austrian Presidency has made the western Balkans region one of its priorities and is planning to hold a substantial discussion on the western Balkans during the informal meeting of foreign ministers to be held on 10 and 11 March 2006 in Salzburg,
1. Welcomes the opening of negotiations on an SAA and stresses that the pace of negotiations will depend on the ability of the country's three main communities – Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats – to agree on the schedule of reforms, and on the country's ability to implement them,
 2. Notes the breakdown, in mid-January 2006, of the talks between the Serb, Croat and Bosniak political party leaders initiated by an American non-governmental organisation on the revision of certain constitutional mechanisms, although they partially reached agreement on the strengthening of the Prime Minister's powers and the expansion of the central government;
 3. Asks the government, the parliament and all parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina to continue actively to engage in discussions, building on what has already been agreed regarding possible institutional reforms, which should be aimed at inclusion of the values of democracy, human rights and equality among citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, at the simplification of State structures and at consolidation of the State's self-sustainability, overcoming ethnic division in a spirit of local ownership;

4. Calls on the Council and the Commission to involve themselves more actively in the joint reflection on institutional reforms by supporting the country's political forces and citizens in their search for a consensus;
5. Welcomes the decision of the Council to appoint Christian Schwarz-Schilling as the EU Special Representative/High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, and calls on him and the Commission to find ways to provide the necessary political, technical and legal assistance to the Bosnian leaders in their efforts to reform the existing institutional framework;
6. Underlines that the pace of reforms and their implementation will be determined by the ability of domestic political actors to assume responsibility and increased ownership of the political process in the country; calls on the new EU Special Representative/High Representative to use his powers with restraint so as to encourage the development of genuinely strong and democratic domestic institutions;
7. Recalls the importance for Bosnia and Herzegovina of a resolute transition from peace-building to state-building, of which the constitutional evolution forms part; recalls that the speed of SAA negotiations will depend, in particular, on progress in developing a proper legal framework and efficient public administration;
8. Calls on the country's competent authorities and institutions that they must, in particular, honour their commitments to implement and complete the public broadcasting, police, defence and intelligence reforms, in accordance with the agreed contents and schedule, and adopt and implement all the necessary laws;
9. Reconfirms that full cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia is a precondition for closer relations with the EU and a basic element for full reconciliation between all the different components of Bosnian society with a view to healing the wounds of the recent tragic past;
10. Asks the government authorities to redouble their efforts to complete the process of return of refugees and displaced persons, especially from the point of view of implementation of the conditions to make return sustainable (safety of individuals, access to reconstruction assistance, employment, health care, pensions, utilities and education); expresses concern about the situation of the Posavina region in this respect and asks that appropriate help be provided to those wishing to return;
11. Stresses that constitutional reform is not a precondition per se and cannot be imposed, but that the completion of SAA negotiations will require significant progress in implementing the conditions set out in the European partnership document;
12. Supports the initiative to establish a Truth and Reconciliation Commission aimed at coming to terms with the recent past and dealing with the problems of justice and compensation, with a view to achieving reconciliation between all the components of Bosnian society;
13. Stresses that the forthcoming parliamentary elections scheduled for October 2006 will be crucial for the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina and progress on its path towards

European integration, and calls on all political leaders, parties and authorities to prepare and adopt the necessary reforms and take all measures to guarantee free, fair and democratic elections once again;

14. Welcomes the police, defence, value-added tax (VAT) and public broadcasting reforms; emphasises the need for a comprehensive action plan for public administration reform that is able to increase the capacity for the implementation of reforms; calls for the preparation and implementation of an adequate anti-corruption action plan, and the rapid implementation of VAT law and police reform;
15. Points out that the functional review of policing financed by the EU has confirmed that the level of classic crimes is very low in Bosnia and Herzegovina and that the percentage of solved crimes is quite high;
16. Asks the government to pay more attention to the special needs of rural areas and to work with the Commission on implementation of the reforms identified as being necessary for an effective agriculture and rural development policy;
17. Welcomes the new Commission communication on the western Balkans, which aims at fostering trade, economic development, movement of persons, education and research, regional cooperation and civil society dialogue as a further step forward towards the integration of the countries of the region into the European structures;
18. Reiterates its calls for strengthened cooperation with the countries in the region on border control, as part of a wider EU justice and home affairs strategy for the region, and looks forward to the progressive easing of visa requirements which this process entails;
19. Welcomes the recently signed agreement between Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia-Montenegro on the return of refugees and property reparations as an important step towards tackling the legacy of about three million refugees and internally displaced persons; urges the Commission and the Member States not to further decrease their contributions to housing reconstruction and economic sustainability projects and, where possible, to make donations, loans and investments conditional upon employment opportunities for returnees;
20. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments of the Member States, the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the governments of its entities, and the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina.