

## **Follow-up to the European Parliament non-legislative resolution on the 2023 and 2024 Commission reports on Montenegro**

- 1. Rapporteur:** Marjan ŠAREC (Renew/SL)
- 2. Reference number:** 2025/2020(INI) / A10-0093/2025/P10\_TA(2025)0130
- 3. Date of adoption of the resolution:** 18 June 2025
- 4. Competent Parliamentary Committee:** Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET)
- 5. Brief analysis/ assessment of the resolution and requests made in it:** The resolution supports Montenegro's commitment to EU accession and welcomes its progress on EU-related reforms including in the rule of law. Political stability and reform implementation remain crucial. Montenegro aligns fully with EU foreign policy and supports Ukraine, but concerns remain about foreign interference and influence. Judicial and electoral reforms, anti-corruption efforts, and media freedom need further improvement. Human rights, minority protections, and gender equality also require attention. The Parliament urges inclusive policymaking, stronger civil society involvement, and protection of democratic institutions.

The European Parliament stresses that good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation are essential elements of the enlargement process. It calls for resolving bilateral issues constructively, tackling war crimes effectively, and avoiding historical revisionism. The resolution welcomes Montenegro's economic reforms, inclusion in SEPA and adoption of a Reform Agenda under the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, but urges Montenegro to reduce budget deficits, foreign debt, and improve public procurement transparency. The country must also focus on combating depopulation, youth unemployment, and brain drain. Montenegro needs to advance environmental reforms, adopt a National Energy and Climate Plan, and improve transport and waste management. Progress on digital integration with the EU is welcomed, and further efforts are encouraged.

- 6. Response to requests and overview of action taken, or intended to be taken, by the Commission:**

The Commission welcomes the report by the European Parliament which builds on the Commission assessment from its annual reports on Montenegro from 2023 and 2024. Montenegro remains the frontrunner in the EU accession process, with all 33 screened chapters open for negotiations and seven provisionally closed. The Commission is committed to supporting Montenegro's ambitious plan to provisionally close all negotiating chapters by the end of 2026.

To this end, the Commission recognises the importance of effective strategic communication (paragraph 9) in Montenegro and shares the European Parliament's objective of ensuring that citizens are well informed about the benefits and requirements of EU membership.

The Commission is actively engaged in communicating the objectives of the enlargement process and European values to Montenegrin citizens, including through institutional channels, the EU Delegation, and the regional WeBalkans programme, as well as Europe Houses. A new Europe House was recently opened in Bar to increase EU visibility and enable direct engagement with local communities, with another planned to open later this year in the northern region. The EU Delegation continues its proactive communication, including through implementing yearly nationwide communication campaigns focused on core European values and key enlargement topics. The Commission continues communicating about the benefits stemming from the Growth Plan, including access to geographical scope of SEPA and disbursement of (pre-)financing. In cooperation with national authorities, the Commission also organised a Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX) workshop to support the Montenegrin government's communication capacities regarding the EU accession process.

Public opinion surveys in Montenegro and the wider region inform planning of communication activities and ensure that communication is evidence based and targeted. The Commission works closely with the European External Action Service, including its Strategic Communications division and notably the Western Balkans Task Force, to counter disinformation, promote fact checking and media literacy, and support outreach through civil society and independent media.

Concerning the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) (paragraph 52), a working arrangement between EPPO and Montenegro's Supreme State Prosecution Office was signed in September 2022. The Commission follows the implementation of the arrangement under both rule of law chapters 23 and 24, including in the context of the fulfilment of the closing benchmarks, in view of effectively increasing the cooperation in concrete cases between Montenegro and the EPPO. Montenegro should ensure that the cooperation between the EPPO and its national competent authorities takes place in accordance with 1959 Council of Europe Convention, for the purpose of which the Member States recognised the EPPO as a competent judicial authority, as well as in accordance with other relevant mutual legal assistance instruments and the working arrangement between the EPPO and Montenegro's Supreme State Prosecution Office.