

Belgrade-Pristina dialogue

The rocky road towards a comprehensive normalisation agreement

SUMMARY

Regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations are key elements in the EU accession process of all Western Balkan countries. Two of them – Serbia and Kosovo* – have both declared their intention to join the EU. The dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, initiated in 2011 and facilitated by the EU, achieved some initial success, such as the Brussels Agreement of 2013, but later stalled. In 2020, in a bid to provide fresh momentum, the EU appointed Miroslav Lajčák as the EU special representative for the dialogue and for other Western Balkan regional issues. Following a flare-up of border tensions in July 2022 and a Franco-German initiative in November 2022, on 27 February 2023 the EU brokered the EU Proposal – Agreement on the path to normalisation between Kosovo and Serbia. While the two sides only gave their tacit consent, but not their signatures, the agreement provided a positive momentum to negotiations and a blueprint for normalisation. On 18 March 2023 in Ohrid, Kosovo and Serbia agreed on the implementation annex to the agreement.

Despite these positive results, the Serbian President, Aleksandar Vučić, said that his country had agreed on 'some kind of [a] deal' to normalise relations. 'We have agreed on some points, not on all points. This is not the final deal', Vučić stated in Ohrid, demonstrating how differently the two sides perceive the normalisation agreement. For Kosovo it symbolises the recognition of its statehood by Serbia, whereas for Serbia it seems to hold more economic relevance. Serbia also stresses that the process must abide by the provisions of its Constitution, where Kosovo features as an integral part of Serb territory, and those of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999). The outcome of the political dialogue will influence Serbia's EU accession process, as the commitments made in Ohrid will be incorporated into the 35th chapter of its accession negotiation while also serving as a condition for Kosovo's promised EU path.

This publication updates a briefing by Branislav Stanicek from March 2021.



Belgrade-Pristina dialogue meeting, 27 February 2023.

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Introduction

Kosovo,¹ with a population of 1.8 million, is predominantly ethnically Albanian (93 %). In 2008, it unilaterally declared independence from Serbia. However, some EU Member States (Cyprus, Greece, Romania, Slovakia and Spain) have not recognised this, despite the [advisory opinion](#) of the International Court of Justice delivered on 22 July 2010, which concluded that 'the declaration of independence of Kosovo adopted on 17 February 2008 did not violate international law'. United Nations Security Council (UNSC) members China and Russia have not recognised Kosovo either, thereby blocking the country's accession to the United Nations (UN). Joining the UN requires a UNSC vote in favour and a two-thirds UN General Assembly (UNGA) majority, which Kosovo lacks as well. It has however acceded to some international organisations, such as the [World Bank](#).

Together with other Western Balkan countries, Kosovo shares the prospect of a 'European future', as stated during EU-Western Balkans summits in [Thessaloniki](#) (2003), [Sofia](#) (2018), and [Zagreb](#) (2020). Most recently, this happened in [Brdo](#) (2021) and [Tirana](#) (2022), where EU leaders reaffirmed their 'unequivocal support for the European perspective of the Western Balkans' ([Zagreb Declaration](#)). In addition to the [Copenhagen criteria](#), two specific conditions were added for the Western Balkan countries following Croatia's accession to the EU: regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations as a basis for resolving bilateral problems, including the Belgrade-Pristina dispute.

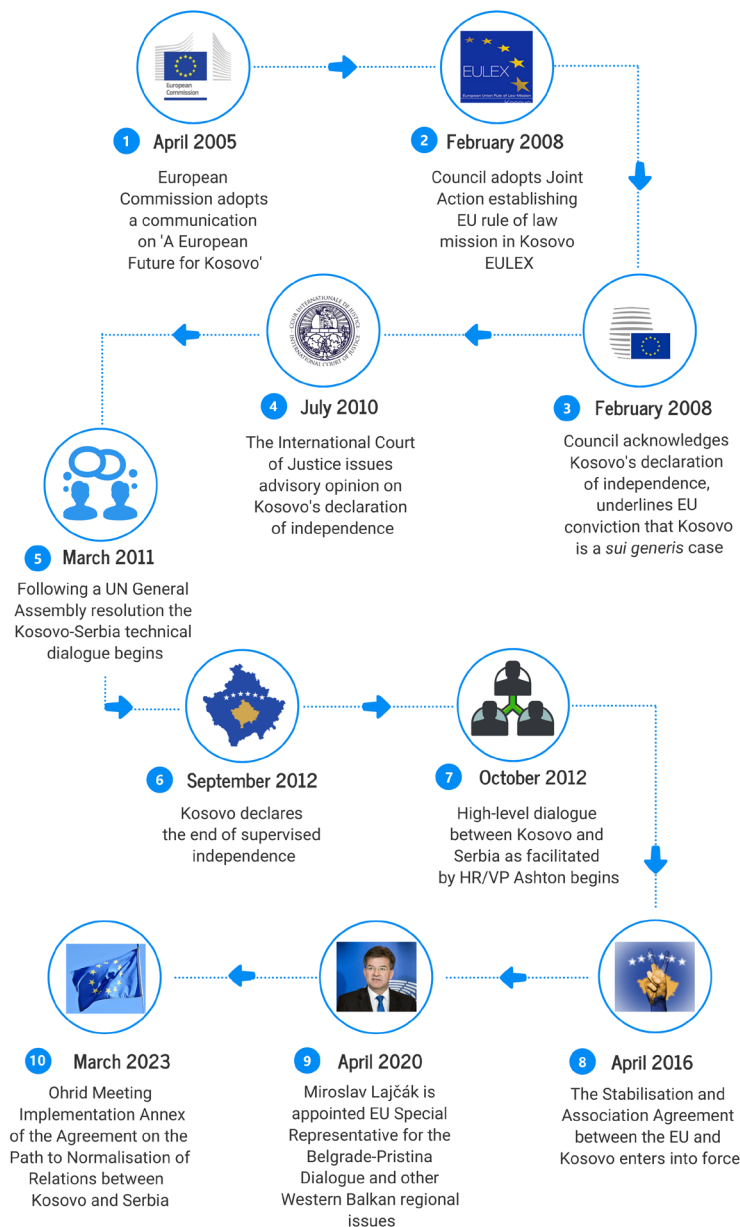
Although in March 2011, a year after the adoption of UNGA [Resolution 64/298](#), Belgrade and Pristina engaged in the [EU-mediated dialogue](#), 'comprehensive normalisation' of relations, an essential precondition to the progress of both Serbia and Kosovo towards EU membership, is still out of reach, despite some encouraging developments.² In 2013, within the framework of the dialogue, Serbia and Kosovo assented to the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalisation of Relations (also referred to as the [Brussels Agreement](#)). However, this agreement, as highlighted by Kosovar Albanian political scientist [Krenar Gashi](#), was full of ambiguity: 'The legal ambiguity of the agreement provides flexibility for parties in implementing its provisions'. Of the two parties, only the Kosovar Parliament ratified the Brussels Agreement as an 'international agreement'. In 2018, following Kosovo's unilateral imposition of 100 % tariffs on all Serbian goods, the two parties suspended the dialogue. Despite these difficulties, the international community has tried to defuse the conflict, in particular through the engagement of the EU and the United States (US).

On 2 April 2020, [Miroslav Lajčák](#) was appointed EU special representative (EUSR) for the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue and other Western Balkan regional issues. The EUSR's policy objectives are set out in his [mandate](#): 'First and foremost, achieving comprehensive normalisation of relations between Serbia and Kosovo, which is key to their respective European paths'. Lajčák's appointment as the new EUSR was welcomed as a sign of relaunch of the dialogue. In July 2020, after a 20-month break, the dialogue resumed following a partial lifting of the tariffs by Kosovo. On 16 July 2020, the High Representative/Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP), Josep Borrell, [hosted](#) a high-level meeting with the then Kosovo Prime Minister, Avdullah Hoti, and the Serbian President, Aleksandar Vučić. This was the first dialogue meeting since [November 2018](#). It took place after the 10 July 2020 virtual summit hosted by the French President, Emmanuel Macron, and the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, in support of the relaunch of the dialogue. At the Foreign Affairs Council meeting of 12 October 2020, HR/VP Josep Borrell [said](#) that '[if there is political will,] reaching an agreement between Belgrade and Pristina is a matter of months, not years'.

Following the [Franco-German initiative](#) of 2022, EU-facilitated negotiations culminated in the submission on 27 February 2023 of an 11-point EU proposal – [Agreement on the path to normalisation between Kosovo and Serbia](#) – which traced a path to normalisation. However, on 10 March, the Serbian president [reiterated](#) his view that Serbia 'will not agree to Kosovo joining NATO, nor will it recognise Kosovo in any way'. Vučić however confirmed that Serbia 'must remain in the negotiation process'. Following a 12-hour discussion at their meeting of 18 March in Ohrid, in the presence of EU and US delegations, President Vučić and Kosovo's Prime Minister, Albin Kurti, [agreed](#) on the implementation annex to the EU Proposal.

Figure 1 – Belgrade-Pristina dialogue and EU-Kosovo relations

Belgrade-Pristina dialogue and EU-Kosovo relations



Source: [European Commission](#), 2023.

Agreement in Ohrid and different interpretations of 'comprehensive normalisation'

Despite the relative [euphoria](#) at the meeting in Ohrid, in particular on the side of the EU delegation – with the HR/VP [announcing](#) that 'Kosovo and Serbia have agreed on the Implementation Annex of the Agreement on the Path to Normalisation of Relations between them' and that 'the Parties have fully committed to honour all Articles of the Agreement, and implement all their respective

obligations expediently and in good faith' – President Vučić [told](#) the press drily that Kosovo and Serbia had reached 'some kind of [a] deal'. 'We have agreed on some points, not on all points. This is not the final deal', added Vučić, and specified that for his country to advance towards EU membership, it would need to implement the deal as part of the requirements under [Chapter 35](#) ('Other Issues') of the country's EU accession negotiations, which include, among other things, normalisation of relations with Kosovo. Furthermore, at a forum held on 30 March by the Vienna Diplomatic Academy, Kosovo's President, Vjosa Osmani, [stated](#) that Western powers had coerced her government into accepting Article 7 of the 'basic agreement'. 'Kosovo did not want article 7 in the agreement ... it has not been the right choice to push Kosovo in this direction', the president explained. These opposing reactions to the agreement in Ohrid were already discernible at the 27 February 2023 [meeting](#) and were further reconfirmed by the two sides' stances towards the EU proposal: Kosovo was ready to sign the agreement, while Serbia was not (the ultimate solution was for the sides to 'tacitly agree').

Critics, among them Professor [Daniel Serwer](#), observe that the agreement in Ohrid seems to be more process-focused, without ensuring a real engagement of the parties, given that they did not sign it and that it is not valid from the point of view of international law. Furthermore, the parties did not assume any reciprocal engagements or set a deadline for implementation: 'A process-focused agreement without signatures leaves a lot to future negotiations. This one is more smoke and mirrors than substance. It is more likely to generate further confusion than peace'.

The different attitudes towards the agreement reflect the longstanding difficulty in finding common ground for working on a comprehensive legally binding normalisation agreement. Obstacles in this regard include the two sides' differing notions of what normalisation means. For Kosovo, as former Prime Minister, Avdullah Hoti [stated](#) in October 2020, 'the dialogue will be concluded with mutual recognition'. [Bernard Nikaj](#), a former Kosovo ambassador to Brussels, wrote that the solution offered by the EU is the 'only one available for both Kosovo and Serbia and if they don't take it they will start to fall faster into the abyss of either Russian and Chinese influence in the case of Serbia or near-complete global isolation in the case of Kosovo'. In February 2023, Prime Minister Kurti [stated](#): 'we do accept the EU Proposal for normalisation of relations between Kosovo and Serbia, and consider it a good basis for further discussion and a solid platform for moving forward'.

However, as [stated](#) by President Vučić on 12 March 2023, the 'factual or de jure' recognition of Kosovo's sovereignty, as implied by Point 4 of the EU Proposal, is unacceptable to Serbia. Recognising Kosovo's independence and sovereignty under international law is a red line Serbia would be reluctant to cross. Belgrade's position rather suggests it is seeking economic normalisation facilitating trade and investment. As [Marko Đurić](#), Serbian Ambassador to the United States and former chairman of the Serbian Government Office for Kosovo and Metohija stated, Belgrade's position remains rooted in the [Serbian Constitution](#) and [UN Security Council Resolution 1244](#): 'Do not dream about the story of Kosovo's independence. Let us discuss practical issues, cooperation, and that is what we will absolutely do'. The preamble to the Serbian Constitution still refers to 'the Province of Kosovo and Metohija' as 'an integral part of the territory of Serbia'. Article 203 of the Constitution requires a referendum for amendments to a number of its provisions, including the one on Kosovo being an integral part of Serbia. Within the former Yugoslav Federation, Kosovo was an autonomous province of Serbia, the latter being one of the six 'republics' that made up the federation. Following the [rise to power](#) of nationalists, Kosovo's autonomy was revoked in 1990 and placed under Belgrade's direct control.

US policy on Kosovo-Serbia relations

The US-initiated trilateral meetings held in the course of 2020 resulted in a 16-point [commitment](#) that Vučić and Hoti signed on 4 September 2020 in Washington, in the presence of the then US President, Donald Trump, with Serbia and Kosovo each committing to economic normalisation. The talks aimed at clinching an '[economic deal](#)' focused on business and trade, but these aspects

had [already been covered](#) by partial bilateral agreements negotiated under the auspices of the EU. Key commitments made at the Washington meeting included establishing the [Belgrade-Pristina rail network](#) with a deep seaport on the Adriatic coast ([Shëngjin](#) in Albanian), and finding and identifying the remains of missing persons from the 1998–1999 Kosovo conflict. Furthermore, as [Trump](#) stated at that same meeting in Washington, 'Kosovo and Israel agreed to normalise ties and establish diplomatic relations and Serbia committed to opening a commercial office in Jerusalem and to moving its embassy to Jerusalem by July [2021]'.

Kosovo opened its embassy in Jerusalem on 1 February 2021. One day later, the EU [stated](#) that this decision 'diverges Kosovo from the EU position on Jerusalem', as all EU Member States' embassies in Israel, as well as the EU delegation, are located in Tel Aviv, based on the corresponding UN Security Council resolutions and European Council decisions. [UNSC Resolution 478 \(1980\)](#) calls on all UN member states to withdraw their embassies from Jerusalem. Currently only four countries – Guatemala, Honduras, Kosovo and the United States – have their embassies located in Jerusalem. On 13 May 2021, the Israeli Ambassador to Serbia, Jahel Vilan, [said](#) that Israel had recognised the independence of Kosovo 'under pressure from the United States'. However, Israel's official position is that it sees its new diplomatic ties with Kosovo as part of its broader normalisation of relations with the Arab and Muslim world.

Moreover, as [pointed out](#) by legal scholars in Washington, Kosovo and Serbia did not sign a legally binding agreement. From the point of view of international law, the Washington deal was not an 'agreement', since any international agreement has to be endorsed by the parties' parliaments. Furthermore, international agreements or treaties have to be registered and published by the [UN Treaty Collection](#). Instead, the two parties signed two separate but nearly identical documents, essentially letters of intent to cooperate with each other and with the US on a limited set of issues. Some [critics](#) pointed out that the 'historic commitment', welcomed by Trump, served his own political campaign but did not really advance the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue. Prime Minister Hoti ironically remarked that even though he was going to Washington to secure mutual recognition with Serbia, 'the paper [he] signed agreed to mutual recognition with Israel'.³ According to the rector of the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna, [Ivan Vejvoda](#), 'the solution for Kosovo can be found in conjunction with efforts of the European Union and the United States ... The European Union clearly takes the lead given that this is part of Europe's geography and history and culture'.

Joe Biden's campaign team issued a [vision paper on Kosovo and Albania](#), in which it highlighted the future president's intention to work with the EU on the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue as a 'long-time friend of Albania and Kosovo and the Albanian-American community'. At his confirmation hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the US Secretary of State, [Antony Blinken](#), stated that the new US administration would help Kosovo and Serbia to move forward: '[Joe Biden] spent a lot of time on those countries in the past, and I think he shares your convictions that there are things we can do to help move Kosovo forward, and also move Serbia forward'. Finally, on 19 April 2021, in a letter addressed to Kosovo's newly elected President, Vjosa Osmani, Joe Biden [expressed](#) his support to the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue, stating that 'it should be centred on mutual recognition', and avowing the United States' readiness to work with Kosovo's authorities on a range of issues, including the rule of law, the fight against corruption and the protection of ethnic and religious minorities. The new US special envoy for the Western Balkans, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, [Gabriel Escobar](#), was present at the negotiations for the agreement in Ohrid. After the meeting, he said that the Serbia-Kosovo normalisation agreement would 'create a peaceful, predictable, and friendly relationship' between the two countries and open 'the door for both of them to move faster into Euro-Atlantic structures'.

The association/community of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo

Figure 2 – Serb municipalities in Kosovo



Source: EEAS and the Office for Kosovo and Metohija, 2023.

In March 2023, Vučić [reiterated](#) the need for the establishment by the Kosovo authorities of an association/community of Serb-majority municipalities to provide a forum for dialogue with the country's Serb minority, in line with what Pristina had pledged in a decade-old agreement also mediated by the EU. Analysts [believe](#) that the establishment of an association/community of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo is a necessary precondition for the successful achievement of the Belgrade- Pristina political dialogue. They furthermore argue that the unconditional application of the Brussels Agreement of 2013 would lead to the return of Serbs to Kosovar institutions, from which they had [resigned](#) in November 2022. This view was also supported by Borrell, who [stated](#) on 7 November 2022 that 'The Kosovo Assembly has ratified the Brussels Agreement and Kosovo's Constitutional Court ruled that the association/community needs to be established. Therefore, its establishment is a binding legal obligation for Kosovo. Continued failure to implement this obligation undermines the principle of rule of law and damages Kosovo's reputation and credibility'. 'If there will be no Association for Serb-majority municipalities, then there will be no [normalisation] agreement at all', [said](#) Lajčák in Belgrade on 14 March 2023. 'In Europe, there are models of self-government of minority groups or people. It is nothing dangerous, no one should be afraid of it. It is normal in Europe that we have a legal guarantee, rules, that the minority community feels safe', Lajčák added.

Although the establishment of an association/community of Serb-majority municipalities was the sole most important element of the 2013 and 2015 agreements,⁴ in its 2022 [report on Kosovo](#) the European Commission stated that the 'Kosovo government needs to uphold its previous commitments and commit to the full implementation of all past Dialogue agreements ... Kosovo authorities have failed to take action to establish the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo and Kosovo is urged to engage constructively in its establishment with no further delay or obstruction'. The dual name ('association/community') has [created](#) additional problems: Serbia sees it as a governing entity to be established under the agreement, while for Kosovo it is merely an inter-municipal association similar to the existing one involved with helping local governments coordinate and share expertise.

Owing to the two sides' different interpretations of the agreement, the [proposals](#) for the setup of the future institutional structures have ranged from a much-feared Kosovar version of Bosnia's Republika Srpska to a loosely organised association or an NGO. However, the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo cannot go beyond Kosovo's constitutional and legal order. As [noted](#) in the Brussels Agreement, the status of the association/community must be agreed by the parties to the dialogue and later by Kosovo's Constitutional Court. This agreed procedure for establishing the association therefore excludes any of the extreme and feared outcomes, in particular one where an association of Serb-majority municipalities would develop into an autonomous region over which the central government would have no real control. These fears pushed Kosovo's President, Atifete Jahjaga, to ask Kosovo's Constitutional Court to assess the compatibility of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo with the spirit of the Constitution (see [Case No KO130/15](#)). In its [judgment](#) of 23 December 2015, the Constitutional Court considered that 'the Principles laid down in the chapter on Objectives [of the Association/Community] do not meet entirely the constitutional standards'. Among other issues, the Court noted that 'the Principles regarding the organizational structure of the Association/Community raise concerns regarding respect for the diversity of communities resident within the participating municipalities, and the reflection of this diversity in the staffing and structures of the Association/Community as required by the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo'.

Despite some Kosovar political representatives' reluctance to support the establishment of the association, legal scholars such as Florent Muqaj and Përparim Gruda are of the [opinion](#) that doing so is an international obligation that Kosovo 'must fulfil'. Any delay on Kosovo's part involves the risk that the association would take on a form other than that originally envisaged by the two parties. Recent [statement](#) of the Kosovo Prime Minister Kurti's that forming an association of Serb-majority municipalities is possible, but only after reaching an agreement with Belgrade for mutual recognition, clearly highlighted the paradoxical nature of the situation.

Risks and challenges following the agreement in Ohrid

Following Serbia's [accession negotiations](#), which began in January 2014, and the signing of Kosovo's [Stabilisation and Association Agreement](#) in October 2015, which offered realistic prospects of EU membership to both parties, real commitment to dialogue became more urgent. Despite obstacles and challenges, there is strong support for the EU to continue working towards a 'full and comprehensive agreement'. Resolving the above politically sensitive issues is an extremely challenging task, but the opportunity to do so is also huge, not only for Serbia and Kosovo but for the region as a whole. Normalisation could help both countries navigate through difficult historic memories and start a new EU future. The EU and the two parties have already made progress, mainly through the adoption of the agreement in Ohrid and the Brussels Agreement. Furthermore, in 2019, Serbia and Kosovo agreed to join the [Mini Schengen initiative](#)⁵ (an economic zone, which in 2019 represented a combined gross domestic product of around US\$80 billion between Serbia, Albania, North Macedonia and Kosovo). They have also signed around 20 bilateral agreements, for instance, on common transport or energy investment or on the mutual recognition of university diplomas.

According to scholars, the [implementation](#) of the Mini Schengen initiative can demonstrate that the region has reached an advanced level of political maturity by implementing EU policies without having EU membership. Moreover, the countries that are already part of the initiative agreed, through the Berlin Process, to establish a common regional market. The [International Crisis Group](#) notes that the international community and in particular the EU must 'help curb the potential growth of frustration with the status quo, especially among Kosovars, that over time risks being destabilising'. Some experts have raised concerns that, facing a deadlock in negotiations with Belgrade, Pristina can also seek closer economic and political ties with Albania.

In Serbia, [painful memories](#) continue to linger and [wounds remain open](#), and some opinion polls [show](#) that 81 % of Serbs (2018 data) are against recognising Kosovo's independence even if this would accelerate their EU integration. According to [research](#) conducted by the Belgrade Centre for Security Policy in November 2020, only 8 % of Serbs believe that the aim of the dialogue with Pristina should be the 'recognition of Kosovo within current borders'; 48 % of respondents believe that the dialogue should be aimed at returning Kosovo to Serbia 'with wider autonomy'.⁶ Fitch credit rating agency recently [reaffirmed](#) Serbia's BB+ rating and praised its 'credible macroeconomic policy framework, prudent fiscal policy and somewhat stronger governance – while also mentioning the country's high net external debt and cautioning that 'geopolitical risks linger.' Based on all this Fitch concluded that advancing along the 'European path' would be crucial for Serbia economically. However, support for EU membership has been declining in Serbia recently. In June 2022, 51 % of Serbs [said](#) they would reject EU membership and 34 % said they would vote in favour of it.

Serbia [is also asking](#) whether joining the EU is a realistic objective: 'We need to wait for a decision and a conclusion from the European Union, about whether they want to see Serbia as a part of the European Union or not'. President Vučić's stance is clear: 'We don't see the real alternative to that path ... But, you know, we have been on that path for 20 years already. I think, apart from Turkey, not a single country has been waiting so many years'. Slow progress towards EU membership is also affecting public opinion. An [International Republican Institute](#) analysis conducted in 2020 showed that only 29 % of Serbs support an exclusive EU/Western foreign policy orientation and 36 % would support a balanced Western/Russian orientation. In Kosovo, 88 % of respondents favour a pro-EU/Western oriented foreign policy.

The war in Ukraine has far from changed the pro-Russian sentiments in Serbia. Polls have stressed that 'Putin is the world leader that Serbs [admire](#) the most and 95 % of Serbs see Russia as a true ally, compared to only 11 % who see the EU that way, despite the EU being Serbia's major financial supporter, according to a recent poll. And 68 % of Serbs said in the same poll that they believed NATO, not Vladimir Putin, had started the war in Ukraine, with 82 % against the sanctions imposed on Russia'.

European Parliament's position

During his [hearing](#) at the European Parliament on 7 October 2019, Josep Borrell said that special attention will be paid to the Western Balkan region, which is surrounded by the EU, and in particular to the Belgrade-Pristina political dialogue. He also committed on that occasion to conduct his first bilateral visit as HR/VP to Kosovo and Serbia, and kept his promise. Parliament supported Miroslav Lajčák's appointment as EUSR, which would boost the efforts for the comprehensive normalisation of relations between Serbia and Kosovo and the advancement of good neighbourly relations. It also called for visa liberalisation for Kosovo, as the country had already fulfilled all the visa liberalisation benchmarks endorsed by Council back in 2018.

In its [resolution](#) of July 2022 on the 2021 Commission Report on Kosovo, Parliament stated that 'the independence of Kosovo is irreversible' and underlined that 'progress in normalising relations with Serbia based on mutual recognition is a necessary precondition for both countries to advance on their European path'.

In its [resolution](#) of July 2022 on the 2021 Commission Report on Serbia, Parliament reconfirmed its 'unequivocal support for the EU-facilitated Belgrade-Pristina dialogue'. It also expressed concerns that public support for EU membership in Serbia has been significantly lower than in the rest of the region and that according to the latest polls, a majority of Serbians are against joining the EU. Parliament's rapporteur for Serbia, Vladimír Bilčík (EPP, Slovakia), [welcomed](#) the agreement between Serbia and Kosovo of 27 February, observing that: 'Following months of low points in the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue with a focus on crisis management, I'm hopeful that last night's meeting is a positive step forward in changing the European future of both Serbia and Kosovo.'

Parliament's [recommendation](#) of June 2020 on the Western Balkans recalled the need for enlargement as a positive EU agenda that must be accompanied by strong and tangible incentives. Parliament stressed that the 'enlargement process fosters and strengthens capacities to resolve bilateral disputes and strives for reconciliation between societies in the region'. According to the Parliament's [recommendation](#) on the new EU strategy for enlargement adopted in November 2022, enlargement policy is 'the most effective EU foreign policy instrument and one of the Union's most successful policies'. It is a strategic investment in stability and prosperity on the European continent. The recommendation includes 'step[ping] up the EU's constructive engagement with the authorities of both Serbia and Kosovo to achieve a comprehensive legally binding normalisation agreement'.

Finally, Parliament also supported the [economic and investment plan for the Western Balkans](#), adopted in October 2020, which is to mobilise some €9 billion in investment to boost the region's economic and social development.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the International Court of Justice opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.
- ² The UNGA had welcomed 'the readiness of the European Union to facilitate a process of dialogue between the parties' and clarified that 'the process of dialogue in itself would be a factor for peace, security and stability in the region, and that dialogue would be to promote cooperation, achieve progress on the path to the European Union and improve the lives of the people'.
- ³ See analysis by Paul Fraioli from the Strategic Comments, 2020.
- ⁴ Twelve of the 15 points of the 2013 Brussels Agreement specified the creation of an 'Association/Community of Serb majority municipalities' and covered the governance of Kosovo's Serb-controlled northern region. Only one point was explicitly about bilateral relations, and all it said was that neither party would block the other's progress toward EU membership. There are no doubts with regard to the establishment of the association, as the agreement stated 'there will be an Association/Community of Serb majority municipalities in Kosovo'.
- ⁵ The majority of Kosovar politicians are against this initiative, as they perceive it as a reconstitution of the 'Yugoslav space'.
- ⁶ Analysis reveals that Serb citizens are only partially informed about the content of the Belgrade-Pristina negotiations and that a majority think that overall, the process is not transparent enough. Despite this, half of them support the dialogue, although 90 % feel that it has brought no tangible benefit and 75 % think its effect is almost nil. Citizens seem to believe that the dialogue has the potential to resolve the outstanding issues, yet feel it has been wasted on dealing with secondary issues that bring no positive results. The roles of the US and EU special envoys, Richard Grenell and Miroslav Lajčák, are viewed positively by a thin majority. See M. Bjeloš and B. Elek, Kosovo – What do Citizens Know, Think and Feel?, Analysis of public opinion research, Belgrade Centre for Security Policy, November 2020.

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