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on the 2022 Commission Report on Serbia
(2022/2204(INI))

Committee on Foreign Affairs

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

**on the 2022 Commission Report on Serbia
(2022/2204(INI))**

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 Serbia, of the other part¹, which entered into force on 1 September 2013,
- having regard to Serbia's application for membership of the EU of 19 December 2009,
- having regard to the Commission opinion of 12 October 2011 on Serbia's application for membership of the European Union (COM(2011)0668), the European Council's decision of 1 March 2012 to grant Serbia candidate status and the European Council's decision of 27-28 June 2013 to open EU accession negotiations with Serbia,
- having regard to the presidency conclusions of the Thessaloniki European Council meeting of 19-20 June 2003,
- having regard to the Sofia declaration of the EU-Western Balkans summit of 17 May 2019,
- having regard to the Zagreb Declaration adopted at the EU-Western Balkans Summit of 6 May 2020,
- having regard to the Tirana Declaration adopted at the EU-Western Balkans Summit of 6 December 2022,
- having regard to the Berlin Process launched on 28 August 2014, and to the 8th Berlin Process Summit of 5 July 2021,
- having regard to the Sofia Summit of 10 November 2020, including the Declaration on the Common Regional Market and the Declaration on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans,
- having regard to the Energy Community Treaty of 20 July 2006² and the Council Decision of 29 May 2006 on the conclusion by the European Community of the Energy Community Treaty³,
- 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

¹ [OJ L 278, 18.10.2013, p. 16.](#)

² [OJ L 198, 20.07.2006, p. 18.](#)

³ [OJ L 198, 20.07.2006, p. 15.](#)

professional and higher-education qualifications adopted at the Berlin Process Summit for the Western Balkans of 3 November 2022,

- having regard to the UN Economic Commission for Europe Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, adopted on 25 June 1998 at the Fourth Ministerial Conference in the ‘Environment for Europe’ process and ratified by the European Community on 17 February 2005 and by the Republic of Serbia on 31 July 2009,
- having regard to the UN General Assembly Resolution of 26 July 2022 on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment,
- having regard to UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999) of 10 June 1999, to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) Advisory Opinion of 22 July 2010 on the accordance with international law of the unilateral declaration of independence in respect of Kosovo, and to UN General Assembly Resolution 64/298 of 9 September 2010, which acknowledged the content of the ICJ opinion and welcomed the EU’s readiness to facilitate dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo,
- having regard to the first agreement on principles governing the normalisation of relations between the governments of Serbia and Kosovo of 19 April 2013, to the agreements of 25 August 2015, and to the ongoing EU-facilitated dialogue for the normalisation of relations,
- having regard to the agreement on free movement between the governments of Serbia and Kosovo of 27 August 2022, and to the agreement on licence plates of 23 November 2022, as well as to the Energy Agreements’ Implementation Roadmap in the EU-facilitated Dialogue of 21 June 2022,

having regard to the European Council conclusions of 9 February 2023 on the EU-facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina,

- 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 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)⁴,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 6 October 2020 entitled ‘An Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans’ (COM(2020)0641), and 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 Commission assessment of 22 April 2022 on the economic reform programme of Serbia for 2021-2023 (SWD(2021)0096), and to the joint conclusions of

⁴ [OJ L 330, 20.9.2021, p. 1.](#)

the economic and financial dialogue between the EU and the Western Balkans and Turkey adopted by the Council on 24 May 2022,

- having regard to the Commission communication of 12 October 2022 entitled ‘2022 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy’ (COM(2022)0528), accompanied by the Commission staff working document entitled ‘Serbia 2022 Report’ (SWD(2022)0338),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 29 April 2020 entitled ‘Support to the Western Balkans in tackling COVID-19 and the post-pandemic recovery’ (COM(2020)0315),
- having regard to the 12th and 13th meetings of the Accession Conference with Serbia at ministerial level, which took place on 22 June and 14 December 2021 and resulted in the opening of cluster 4 (on the green agenda and sustainable connectivity),
- having regard to the sixth meeting of the EU-Serbia Stabilisation and Association Council, held in Brussels on 25 January 2022,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 13 December 2022 on enlargement and the stabilisation and association process,
- having regard to European Court of Auditors Special Report 01/2022 of 10 January 2022 entitled ‘EU support for the rule of law in the Western Balkans: despite efforts, fundamental problems persist’,
- having regard to European Court of Auditors Special Report 09/2021 of 3 June 2021 entitled ‘Disinformation affecting the EU: tackled but not tamed’,
- having regard to its previous resolutions on Serbia,
- having regard to its recommendation of 19 June 2020 to the Council, the Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on the Western Balkans, following the 2020 summit⁵,
- having regard to its resolution of 6 July 2022 on the 2021 Commission Report on Serbia⁶,
- having regard to its resolution of 15 December 2021 on cooperation on the fight against organised crime in the Western Balkans⁷,
- having regard to its resolution of 16 December 2021 on forced labour in the Linglong factory and environmental protests in Serbia⁸,

⁵ [OJ C 362, 8.9.2021, p. 129.](#)

⁶ OJ C 47, 7.2.2023, p. 102.

⁷ [OJ C 251, 30.6.2022, p. 87.](#)

⁸ [OJ C 251, 30.6.2022, p. 124.](#)

- having regard to its resolution of 9 March 2022 on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation⁹,
- having regard to the European Council conclusions of 23 and 24 June 2022 on Ukraine, the membership applications of Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, the Western Balkans and external relations,
- having regard to the final report of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe/Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights election observation mission on the early parliamentary and presidential elections of 3 April 2022 in Serbia, published on 19 August 2022,
- having regard to the five evaluation rounds on Serbia of the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) of the Council of Europe,
- having regard to the Global Corruption Perception Index 2022 published by Transparency International on 31 January 2023,
- having regard to the conclusions of the Inter-Party Dialogue in the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia on improving the conditions for holding parliamentary elections, facilitated by the European Parliament,
- 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 enlargement¹⁰,
- having regard to the declaration and recommendations adopted at the 14th EU-Serbia Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee meeting of 23-24 November 2022,
- having regard to its resolution of 23 November 2022 on recognising the Russian Federation as a state sponsor of terrorism¹¹,
- having regard to the UN General Assembly resolution on aggression against Ukraine, adopted on 2 March 2022,
- having regard to the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities,
- having regard to the joint declaration of the Second European Parliament-Western Balkans Speakers' Summit of 28 June 2021, convened by its President with the leaders of the Western Balkan parliaments,
- having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure,
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (A9-0172/2023),

⁹ [OJ C 347, 9.9.2022, p. 61.](#)

¹⁰ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2022)0406.

¹¹ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2022)0405.

- A. whereas enlargement has historically been the most effective EU foreign policy instrument, one of the EU's most successful policies to incentivise and encourage fundamental reforms, including in the rule of law area, and a geostrategic investment in long-term peace, stability and security throughout the continent;
- B. whereas the future of the Western Balkans lies in the European Union; whereas the new enlargement momentum sparked by the EU membership application of Eastern partnership countries has prompted the EU to accelerate the long-overdue deliveries to the Western Balkans by making decisions on starting of accession talks with North Macedonia and Albania, and granting of candidate status to Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- C. whereas the slower pace of EU enlargement has created a breeding ground for malign third actors in the Western Balkans region, in particular Russia and China;
- D. whereas Serbia as a candidate country should be judged on its own merits, which includes respect and unwavering commitment for European shared rights and values and alignment with EU's foreign and security policy, as part of the negotiation process accepted by Serbia; whereas Serbia's path towards EU membership depends also on the normalisation of relations with Kosovo;
- E. whereas genuine political will by political leaders in enlargement countries is necessary to advance fundamental reforms; whereas the EU and its political leaders in both Member States and in accession countries need to prove their genuine commitment (and promises) to enlargement with concrete steps and progress, ensuring its continuity, consistency, credibility and impact;
- F. whereas over time the governing majority has steadily undermined some political rights and civil liberties, putting pressure on independent media, the political opposition and civil society organisations (CSOs);
- G. whereas Serbia is the biggest beneficiary of the EU's pre-accession assistance in the Western Balkans amounting to EUR 1.404 billion in IPA II funding since 2014;
- H. whereas the EU is Serbia's biggest investor, trading partner and principal donor, amounting to EUR 1.85 billion in direct investment in 2021;
- I. whereas over the next seven years, the EU in cooperation with international financial institutions will mobilise up to EUR 30 billion through the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans launched in 2020;
- J. whereas Serbia has ratified all the fundamental conventions of the International Labour Organization;
- K. whereas Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and the growing Russian threat to European security have further underlined the importance of common foreign and security policy (CFSP) alignment in the enlargement process;
- L. whereas Serbia has voted in favour of the resolutions condemning Russian aggression in Ukraine while supporting respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine in accordance with international law at the UN General Assembly;

- M. whereas Serbia has not imposed sanctions against Russia following the unprovoked and illegal Russian invasion of Ukraine; whereas Serbia's alignment rate with European common foreign and security policy has dropped from 64 % in 2021 to 45 % in 2022;
- N. whereas Russia is using its influence in Serbia to try to destabilise, interfere with and threaten neighbouring sovereign states; whereas Serbia has become a safe haven for Russian companies, such as major communication and media companies, including Russia Today (RT); whereas social media platforms have become tools to foster anti-democratic political movements in the Western Balkans;
- O. whereas according to the Balkan Free Media Initiative Report in Serbia, disinformation is spreading much faster than independent fact-checkers can document, which is stoking division, anti-EU sentiment, leading to growing security concerns in the region; whereas disinformation often originates in a false or misleading statements made by a political figure, which is then reported upon by state-affiliated media and subsequently shared on Social Media;

Commitment to EU accession

1. Welcomes the fact that EU membership continues to be Serbia's strategic goal and in this context welcomes the appointment of the new Minister for European Integration; underlines the fact that progress on the rule of law and fundamental rights, functioning of democratic institutions, commitment to shared European rights and values, and the normalisation and de-escalation of relations with Kosovo will determine the dynamics of the accession process, as set out in the Negotiating Framework; underlines, in this context, the importance of EU's common foreign and security policy (CFSP) alignment, especially with regard to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine;
2. Expects the formation of a robust new EU accession negotiating team in Serbia; invites the authorities to develop capacity-building plans to strengthen Serbia's capacities in the implementation of the EU accession process;
3. Regrets Serbia's continued low level of alignment with the CFSP, which dropped from 64 % in 2021 to 45 % in August 2022, in particular in the context of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine; stresses that Serbia is one of the very few European countries not aligning with EU sanctions against Russia; calls on the relevant authorities to show unambiguous commitment to international law and EU values and to align with the EU's restrictive measures against Russia; reiterates its position that accession negotiations with Serbia should advance only if the country aligns with EU sanctions against Russia and makes significant progress on its EU-related reforms; urges Serbia to ensure the effective application of sanctions decided by the EU against Russia and Belarus by countering any circumvention or attempted circumvention;
4. Regrets that in 2022 the Commission noted backsliding in one of the negotiating chapters, notably in Chapter 31 on foreign, security and defence policy; underlines the fact that, as a candidate country, Serbia must adhere to the EU's principles and policies and that any alignment with a warmongering autocratic regime must stop;

5. Notes Serbia's alignment with the EU in voting in favour of relevant UN General Assembly resolutions and Russia's suspension from the Human Rights Council; welcomes Serbia's support for territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine; regrets, however, the fact that Serbia has consistently failed to align with the EU's restrictive measures and most declarations of the High Representative on behalf of the European Union against Russia, which is an aggressor against Ukraine; welcomes Serbia's alignment with the EU's restrictive measures against Belarus for its role in the Russian invasion of Ukraine and measures against former Ukrainian leadership, as well as Serbia's energy assistance, reconstruction efforts and steps taken to provide humanitarian aid to Ukraine; regrets, however, that the Government of Serbia often chooses not to publicly announce its decision to align with these measures;
6. Deplores Serbia's continued close relationship and partnership with Russia, raising questions about Serbia's strategic direction and hindering economic and political development; is concerned about the degree to which Russian officials influence some decisions of Serbian public institutions; condemns the campaigning of state officials and influential media attempting to undermine the EU integration process;
7. Deeply regrets the fact that some key components of Serbian foreign policy run counter to EU positions, including the signature of the Plan of Consultations Between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Serbia and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia for 2023-2024 and meetings with senior officials from Russia who are on the EU sanctions list; is concerned by the appointment of the Director of the Security Intelligence Agency (BIA) Aleksandar Vulin, who is known for his anti-EU and pro-Kremlin rhetoric and in the past has shared with the Russian authorities information about meetings of the Russian opposition in exile; expresses concern about allegations of wiretapping of members of the Russian opposition in Belgrade by the Serbian authorities;
8. Stresses that any cooperation contributing to authoritarian and anti-democratic practices in either Russia or Serbia would be detrimental to the future of EU-Serbia relations, and underlines that mutual trust between Serbia and the EU and Serbia's genuine commitment to EU integration are essential in the context of the ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine; reiterates its calls on the Serbian authorities to provide more transparency on the role and activities of the so-called Russian-Serbian Humanitarian Center in Niš and immediately end all cooperation, in particular military cooperation, with Russia;
9. Regrets Serbia's engagement with the authoritarian regime in Iran and its hosting of high-level representatives in Belgrade at the same time as the Iranian regime is brutally repressing mass protests of its citizens; calls on Serbia to credibly distance itself from anti-democratic regimes;
10. Recalls that the EU accession process is based primarily on the candidate country's genuine willingness to adhere to EU values and principles; expresses concern about the recent decreasing trend in public support for EU membership in Serbia reaching the lowest ever numbers and growing support for the Russian regime, which is a result of a long-standing anti-EU/pro-Russian political rhetoric widely spread via government-controlled media as well as by government officials and of a gross failure from officials to face and come to terms with Serbia's past; condemns the attacks by politicians and

public officials against the EU and certain Member States, especially France and Germany; notes that this decrease in support is directly related to the increasing presence of other international actors; calls for the Serbian authorities to promote fact-based and open discussion about accession to the European Union; regrets that the EU's calls for Serbia to respect commitments as a candidate country have been portrayed as blackmail by the highest Serbian officials; urges both Serbian and EU officials to actively communicate the benefits of EU membership as a matter of priority;

11. Is concerned that public support for EU membership in Serbia has been significantly lower than in the rest of the region, including polls indicating that a majority of Serbian citizens may be against joining the European Union; deplores that many media outlets are strongly biased against the EU and in favour of Russia in their reporting; remains concerned that publicly financed media outlets, often quoting office-holders, contribute to the dissemination of anti-EU rhetoric in Serbia;
12. Recalls that the EU is Serbia's main political and economic partner and by far the largest donor; calls for the EU to reconsider the extent of financial assistance provided by the EU to Serbia in case of continued support for anti-democratic regimes and non-alignment with EU restrictive measures and CFSP; calls on the Commission to ensure that all EU expenditure is fully in line with the EU's own strategic goals and interests;
13. Calls on the Serbian Government, the Commission, the EU Member States and the EU Delegation to Serbia to pursue a more active and effective communication strategy in order to promote the role and benefits of EU accession and EU-funded projects and reforms among the Serbian population, including beyond the major cities, and to take measures to counter disinformation about the EU; calls on Serbian political leaders to use clear and unambiguous communication about Serbia's European path and close relationship with the EU; invites the National Assembly to support Serbia's European future; reiterates the European Parliament's readiness to take part in communication activities together with Serbian MPs in order to bring the EU and Serbia closer together;
14. Notes with concern that since the publication of the Commission's 2020 Report on Serbia there has been no improvement in the assessment of the overall state of play across 33 negotiating chapters and that in 2022 the Commission did not detect 'good progress' in any chapter;

Democracy and the rule of law

15. Welcomes the steps taken by Serbia to align with the EU's list of non-EU countries whose nationals require visas for the EU and calls for further immediate alignment, in particular with those third countries with irregular migration or security risks to the EU; recalls that such alignment is of crucial importance for overall EU-Serbia relations, including on migration management and on the sustainability of the visa-free regime; notes that since autumn 2022 Serbia has cancelled visa-free regimes with six countries, including the ones identified as priorities (India, Tunisia, Burundi and Cuba), which has led to a decrease in the number of citizens from these countries entering EU Member States irregularly and applying for asylum; calls on Serbia to continue to contribute to the management of the mixed migration flows towards the EU by cooperating

effectively with its neighbours, including with Kosovo and EU Member States, with full respect for human rights and international standards;

16. Commends Serbia's good cooperation with the EU in managing irregular migration, including continued good cooperation with Frontex and the opening of negotiations for concluding a broader agreement;
17. Welcomes Serbia's continued active participation in and positive contribution to EU missions and operations under the CSDP;
18. Notes the adoption of the amendments to the Serbian constitution following the referendum in January 2022, aiming to strengthen the independence of the judiciary and enhance the transparency and effectiveness of Serbia's rule of law institutions; welcomes the adoption of the new judicial laws by the Serbian National Assembly on 9 February 2023; stresses that the reform process should continue through the adoption of the relevant implementing legislation in line with European best practices, fully implementing the Venice Commission recommendations and in line with the constitutional deadlines; notes the need to closely involve the population in the reform process to increase its democratic legitimacy;
19. Notes that, according to multiple CSOs and independent legal experts, the laws on the judiciary still leave space for undue influence on its work by the executive, while the National Convention on the EU states that the views of civil society may not have been sufficiently taken into account; calls on Serbia's public institutions to strengthen the safeguards for the independence and efficiency of the judiciary as a matter of priority; calls for full alignment with the Venice Commission's opinions on the set of judicial laws and for ensuring the implementation of solutions that remove any undue influence on the judiciary; reminds the Serbian authorities that substantial and concrete progress will be required and measured against the track record and actual implementation of rule of law reforms, judiciary practice, respect for fundamental rights and the work of the Public Prosecutor's Office;
20. Welcomes the adoption of measures on improving the electoral conditions ahead of the April 2022 elections as a result of the Inter-Party Dialogue (IPD) facilitated by the European Parliament; notes with regret the parallel dialogue on electoral conditions 'without external mediation', which threaten to undermine the IPD facilitated by the European Parliament;
21. Welcomes the readiness of all constructive forces, particularly the opposition, to take part in the work of National Assembly and the readiness of the National Assembly to continue this dialogue; supports the establishment of the European Parliament's co-facilitated Parliamentary Dialogue in Serbia; stresses that the aim of the dialogue is to improve the work of the National Assembly of Serbia and that all parties are invited to contribute to this goal;
22. Recalls the importance of following the rules of procedure in the National Assembly, including the timely organisation of parliamentary debates and keeping order in the Assembly during key political debates, including the special parliamentary session on Kosovo; regrets the continued use of inflammatory language against political opponents, civil society, the media and representatives of other institutions during

parliamentary discussions, including by government officials; calls once again on the new National Assembly not to tolerate such practices and to effectively enforce its Code of Conduct; reiterates the importance of following Assembly procedures, as well as maintaining the reputation of the highest house of representatives; calls on the President of National Assembly to adhere to Assembly procedures;

23. Notes the conclusions of the final report of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe / Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights election observation mission, according to which the 3 April 2022 parliamentary elections presented diverse political options, but a number of shortcomings resulted in an uneven playing field, favouring the incumbents; regrets the fact that the long-standing issues of unbalanced media reporting, putting pressure on voters, including on the beneficiaries of social benefits and subsidies, and the abuse of public office have persisted throughout the election campaign; regrets the serious allegations of manipulating the voter registry and the lack of an adequate institutional response; expresses its political concern that it took 93 days to determine the final results of the early parliamentary elections; urges the Serbian authorities to ensure that the electoral results are determined efficiently and transparently in the future;
24. Welcomes the amendments to the legal framework for election campaign finance, in line with the previous Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe recommendations, and calls on the Serbian authorities to address fully the outstanding recommendations, in particular competing candidates' access to the media, the enhanced transparency and accountability of campaign finance, and measures to tackle pressure on voters and the misuse of administrative resources, in consultation with expert CSOs and well ahead of the next elections, in order to prevent irregularities and any fraud, and guarantee the democratic functioning of the country;
25. Welcomes the participation of all relevant political actors in the early parliamentary elections, resulting in a more pluralistic parliament; regrets, however, the delays in the finalisation of election results and in the formation of the new parliament and government, which resulted in delays in important decision-making, including on EU-related reforms;
26. Welcomes the fair distribution of vice-presidential offices and committee chairmanships in the new Assembly, which reflect its composition; regrets, however, the return of unwelcome practices in the work of the parliament, including the absence of government question-time sessions, the lack of discussion on the reports of independent institutions, and the more frequent use of urgent procedures, which reverse the progress achieved by the reform of parliament in recent years; expresses concern about the occasionally heated atmosphere in the parliament as well as the instances of obstruction of the work of some parliamentary committees; calls for equal treatment of opposition MPs, consistent and effective implementation of the parliamentary Code of Conduct and the impartial sanctioning of breaches of parliamentary integrity;
27. Reiterates its call on the National Assembly to stop the use of abusive inflammatory language and to counter hate speech and sexism towards women during parliamentary debate; calls on the leadership of the Serbian Parliament, including the Women's Parliamentary Network of the Assembly, to take a proactive role in this regard;

28. Welcomes the appointment of the new Serbian delegation to the EU-Serbia Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee; encourages Serbian MPs and MEPs to continue their constructive cooperation;
29. Notes that all but one Serbian parliament in the past 10 years were dissolved early and that any further unnecessary snap elections would not contribute to political stability; underlines that constant early elections, permanent campaign mode and long delays in forming governments do not contribute to an efficient democratic governance of the country, but weaken the Parliament, as well as giving rise to a lack of parliamentary legislative oversight and legitimacy;
30. Notes some progress in the fight against corruption; reiterates its call on Serbia to deliver convincing results in cases with a high level of public interest, including Krušik and Jovanjica and Belivuk; is concerned about the little amount of progress made in these cases since last year's report and about the allegations that Darko Saric was running an international criminal organisation while in prison in Serbia; stresses the fact that more demonstrable effort and political will are needed to achieve tangible results, in particular with regard to serious and organised crime, and a convincing track record with effective investigations, prosecutions and final convictions, including the freezing and confiscation of criminal assets;
31. Reiterates its call for justice with regard to the unlawful demolition of private property in the Savamala neighbourhood in Belgrade; notes that the sentenced police officer took sole responsibility for the entire case; urges the authorities to fully investigate the case and prosecute all persons responsible without delay;
32. Notes with concern that the new Ombudsperson was re-elected only after his five-year term in office had expired; regrets that the Government of Serbia has not filled the vacancies in the Anti-Corruption Council; calls on Serbia to implement the recommendations in GRECO's fifth evaluation round on preventing corruption and promoting integrity in central governments and law enforcement agencies, in particular the adoption of a public strategy on corruption prevention;
33. Stresses that IPA III provides for the modulation or even suspension of funds in the event of a significant regression or persistent lack of progress on fundamentals, including the fight against corruption and organised crime, as well as media freedom; calls, in this context, for the EU and the Western Balkan countries to establish a framework for fruitful cooperation between the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) and its Western Balkan counterparts in order to ensure that the EPPO can effectively exercise its competences on IPA III funds in Western Balkan countries; reiterates its call on the Commission to implement the recommendations of the European Court of Auditors Special Report 01/2022, in particular by developing guidelines on the application of IPA III provisions on modulation/conditionality;
34. Calls on the authorities to uphold core European values and principles, securing the primacy of democracy, fundamental rights, values and the rule of law, including the functioning of democratic institutions and the separation of powers, in line with the Tirana Declaration of 6 December 2022;

35. Notes the adoption of the programme for reform of the local government system 2021-2025, which aims to address shortcomings in the functioning of local governments, and underlines that implementation is key; regrets that local authorities continue to remain weak; deplores the fact that the Law on Vojvodina's financing resources has still not been adopted, despite being provided for under the Constitution;

Fundamental freedoms and human rights

36. Stresses that respect for human rights is an essential element of democracy and progress on the European path; notes that Serbia's adequate legislative and institutional framework for upholding fundamental rights needs to be put into practice; calls on the Serbian authorities to intensify their efforts to safeguard and promote human rights, notably with regard to specific vulnerable groups, including by strengthening human rights institutions, and by investigating and prosecuting the perpetrators of human rights violations; encourages Serbia to foster an environment in which European values and approaches can flourish and become consistent attitudes within the wider Serbian society and which can assist with the fulfilment of the nation's European aspirations;
37. Commends the government for the constructive public consultation process with civil society and human rights organisations on withdrawing the Draft Law on Internal Affairs in December 2022 following a strong public reaction; notes that this was the second time that the government had introduced highly controversial provisions, including the legalisation of the use of biometric face-recognition cameras purchased from China; urges the Government of Serbia to introduce a moratorium on biometric surveillance in public spaces and the mass processing of citizens' biometric data until this issue has been harmonised at EU level;
38. Deplores further deterioration of freedom of expression, the cases of hate speech and smear campaigns and the increasing number of strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) in the country; reiterates that pressure, intimidation, harassment, hate speech and attacks on activists, journalists and media outlets are unacceptable; urges the authorities to investigate and prosecute all such offences, including those against the investigative outlet KRIK and the daily newspaper *Danas*, and to create an environment in which freedom of expression can genuinely flourish;
39. Notes the continuing impunity in the cases of the murder of Slavko Ćuruvija, the attack against Milan Jovanović and on a TV crew and journalists covering environmental issues, as well as attacks against local media; is worried about reports about the abuse of public money to acquire ownership of media outlets and allegedly use them as a tool for media capture in Serbia;
40. Reiterates that the state of freedom of expression and media independence remains a serious concern which needs to be addressed as a matter of the utmost priority; in this respect, welcomes the establishment of the working group for the protection of journalists under the Prime Minister's Office; is concerned about the imbalance between government and opposition members in the reporting of national television channels outside the period of the election campaign; urges Serbia to improve and protect media professionalism, diversity and media pluralism, and to promote quality investigative journalism and media literacy; calls for increased transparency of media public

financing and its distribution based on merit; calls for all public funds for media generating disinformation to be stopped with immediate effect;

41. Regrets the misuse of the media by the governing majority to gain an unfair political advantage, attack political opponents and spread disinformation; calls for greater transparency of media ownership and media financing, including making information about it available to the public, as well as for the creation of an environment that allows the independent and investigative media to access funding and operate safely;
42. Condemns the opening of an RT (formerly Russia Today) office in Belgrade and the launch of its online news service in Serbian in addition to the already available international English broadcast; urges the Serbian authorities to counter hybrid threats and fully align with the Council's decision on the suspension of the broadcasting activities of Sputnik and RT; calls for pro-Russian reporting across the media spectrum to be abandoned, in the spirit of Serbia's dedication to integrate into the EU;
43. Is deeply concerned about the spread of disinformation about the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine; calls on the Serbian authorities to take an active stand against the disinformation and not to contribute to the spread of disinformation, as well as to fight back against the most widely circulated fake news; is highly alert to the fact that the EU accession countries in the Western Balkans are being hit particularly hard by attacks in the form of foreign interference and disinformation campaigns stemming from Russia and China; is alarmed that Hungary and Serbia are helping China and Russia with their geopolitical objectives; calls on Serbia to fight against disinformation, including manipulative anti-EU narratives and state-sponsored disinformation campaigns aimed at shifting political preferences; calls for the EU to increase cooperation with Serbia to strengthen democratic resilience and counter hybrid threats, including in the areas of cybersecurity, protecting critical infrastructure and food and energy security;
44. Notes that some media outlets, particularly private broadcasters favourably reporting on the government, are the main source of the anti-EU and pro-Russian narratives in Serbia; stresses that a tolerant attitude towards malign external influences may have serious negative consequences on Serbia's prospects of EU integration; calls on the European External Action Service (EEAS) to reinforce its engagement on dealing with foreign interference and information manipulation threats, and further strengthen its work on building up the region's resilience, by fostering media professionalism and media literacy that would also contribute to increasing the impact of strategic communication about EU-Western Balkans relations in general and the enlargement process in particular; calls on the Serbian authorities to join these EU-led efforts;
45. Is deeply concerned about the reported attempts by Wagner Group to run recruitment campaigns in Serbia; notes that Serbia's Criminal Code prohibits citizens from participating in foreign wars; notes the Serbian authorities' condemnation of such attempts and calls on the Serbian authorities to monitor and prevent Serbian nationals from joining the Wagner Group and participating in Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine;

46. Urges the authorities to address the lack of political pluralism in the public service broadcaster, as well as across the media spectrum; regrets the fact that pluralism was only present during the election campaign; expresses concern about the delayed implementation of the media strategy and the related action plan; encourages their speedy implementation; urges the government to increase the transparency of media ownership and financing and ensure the independence of the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media (REM); recalls that media ownership should be a matter for public scrutiny and calls for an independent investigation into the financing of the media;
47. Underlines the importance of improving the functioning and independence of the REM in accordance with the IPD; calls on the Serbian National Assembly to ensure that independent regulatory bodies are empowered to exercise their oversight roles effectively by supporting and monitoring the implementation of independent regulatory bodies' findings and recommendations;
48. Notes the fact that the REM awarded four national frequencies to channels that have a history of violating journalistic standards, including the use of hate speech and misleading the public, in particular by Happy TV, non-compliance with warnings issued by the REM, and spreading disinformation and supporting the Kremlin's narrative on Russia's war in Ukraine; notes the new open call for the allocation of national television frequencies and licences, and calls for the fifth licence to be awarded through a transparent and impartial process without unnecessary delay and in compliance with international media freedom standards;
49. Reiterates its concern about the dominant market position of Telekom Srbija, where the majority stakeholder is the state, and about the allegations that the ruling party is using it to increase its influence over the media market in Serbia; is also concerned about the level playing field when it comes to the competitive media market environment; in this context, underlines the importance of advances in the area of EU competition policy; is concerned about any possible state financing of Telekom Srbija, which gives the company an unfair competitive advantage and contributes to the declining condition of the independent media in Serbia; urges the Commission to look into the European Investment Bank's loan of EUR 70 million to Telekom Srbija in view of the alleged abuse of its dominant market position;
50. Urges Serbia to ensure the full financial and operational independence of the regulators for electronic communication and postal services (RATEL) and for the electronic media (REM) to boost their capacity to work proactively; calls on Serbia to align to the EU electronic communication code, ensure competitiveness and market operators' access to the electronic communication infrastructure;
51. Underlines the importance of a framework enabling CSOs to operate freely and participate in policy-making in inclusive and meaningful ways; commends the work of the National Convention as an efficient instrument in this regard; welcomes the adoption of the National Strategy for an Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development and the accompanying action plan for the implementation of the strategy for creating a conducive environment for the development of civil society and calls for its implementation without delay;

52. Welcomes Serbia's lively and pluralistic civil society; commends the Government for the adoption of 'Guidelines on inclusion of CSO in the decision-making processes'; calls on the Serbian Government to step up cooperation between the public authorities and civil society, and to genuinely involve civil society in a transparent legislative process from an early stage onwards;
53. Strongly condemns the smear campaigns and attacks against CSOs, portraying them as traitors and enemies of the state; regrets, furthermore, the verbal attacks and smear campaigns against political opponents; reiterates its concerns about the lack of progress regarding the 'List' case and calls on the Serbian Administration for the Prevention of Money Laundering of Serbia's Ministry of Finance to fully clarify these investigations and resolve the situation for the concerned CSOs and media outlets;
54. Is concerned about the unfounded attacks with respect to the ongoing negotiations on this resolution
55. Welcomes the stronger representation of national minorities in the new parliament; calls on all newly elected members of parliament to ensure that national minority rights are protected and the relevant legislation is implemented in practice; welcomes the appointment of ministers from the national minorities and the holding of the regular elections for the national minority councils in November 2022;
56. Reiterates its concerns about violence by extremist groups and encourages the Serbian authorities to step up their efforts to ensure the non-discriminatory treatment of ethnic, religious and sexual minorities and other vulnerable groups, and to ensure the swift processing of investigations into and convictions for hate-motivated crimes and discrimination cases against women, ethnic minorities, the LGBTIQ community, refugees, displaced persons and persons with disabilities;
57. Calls on the Serbian Government to respect the rights of national minorities in full conformity with EU principles and legislation, and to ensure the proper use of their respective languages and meet their educational needs; notes that more has to be done to actively implement anti-discrimination legislation;
58. Calls on Serbia to ensure respect for the rights of national minorities, including access to education, information and religious services in minority languages, as well as adequate representation in the public administration, in line with the relevant European standards; calls on Serbia to protect and promote the cultural heritage and traditions of its national minorities, in particular to create a positive atmosphere for education in minority languages and deplores the violation of minority rights in this area; welcomes the continued implementation of the Law on the restitution of heirless Jewish property, as well as the return of properties to churches and religious communities;
59. Repeats its calls for an independent and thorough investigation into allegations of abusing the law on the residence of citizens and the 'passivisation' of the residential addresses of citizens of Albanian ethnicity in central and southern Serbia, and calls on the Serbian authorities to cease all discriminatory practices and targeting;
60. Calls on the Serbian Government to be more committed to the protection and promotion of cultural heritage; is concerned about the unsuitable and unsustainable development

projects affecting the protected ensemble of the Belgrade Fortress which has already been put on the Europa Nostra list of the most endangered cultural heritage sites, and calls on the government to ensure its prompt and comprehensive protection;

61. Welcomes the adoption of the National Strategy for Gender Equality and Strategy for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination, but notes that gender-based discrimination and violence should be further tackled, including verbal violence in the National Assembly; calls on the government to adopt the overdue action plan and funding for the strategy relating to violence against women and domestic violence; urges Serbia to appoint the members of the government's gender equality body on the basis of a credible track record;
62. Calls for a more comprehensive response to all violence against women, as covered by the Istanbul Convention;
63. Welcomes the organisation of the first-ever EuroPride march in south-east Europe, which took place in Belgrade; regrets, however, the contradictory and unclear communication by the Serbian authorities, including the initial ban on the march; condemns the vilification of the EuroPride organisers and participants by some members of the government and some media favourably reporting on the government; deplores all verbal attacks and threats against the EuroPride organisers and participants in the weeks leading up to the event; notes with concern that the investigation and prosecution of and the penalties for hate speech, threats and attacks against members of the LGBTIQ community are often inadequate, and calls for increased measures to combat hate crimes against LGBTIQ people; calls for the Draft Law on Same-Sex Unions to be submitted to the parliament;
64. Reiterates its call for the intensification of efforts to provide minority groups with equal opportunities and to ensure that the rights of LGBTIQ persons are better protected; calls for support by the government for the 2023 Belgrade Pride and to ensure its smooth planning and organisation, as well as the safety and well-being of the participants in all future Pride events in Belgrade;
65. Notes the need for Serbia to undertake further efforts to eliminate human trafficking; urges the government to adopt the 2021-2022 national action plan for the implementation of the strategy for the prevention and suppression of trafficking in human beings; reiterates that Serbia must improve its alignment with EU labour laws, also in light of the alleged forced labour and violation of human rights, and of trafficking, in the Chinese Linglong factory;
66. Welcomes the adoption of a new general protocol for the protection of children from abuse and neglect; encourages Serbia to improve the situation of all children, particularly those from vulnerable groups and with disabilities; calls for the adoption of a national action plan for the rights of the child, as the previous one expired in 2015, and to amend its Family Law to explicitly prohibit corporal punishment of children in the family and to ban child marriage;
67. Is concerned about violations of children's rights in large-scale institutions for children with disabilities, despite a relatively small number of children having been placed in institutional care; condemns the fact that women with disabilities in residential

institutions continue to face specific forms of violence; welcomes the fact that Serbia adopted a strategy on de-institutionalisation in January 2022 and calls for the speedy implementation and completion of de-institutionalisation;

68. Welcomes Serbia's adoption of a Law on temporary social care residents, further aligning its legislation with the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities;
69. Welcomes the adoption of new strategies on anti-discrimination and Roma inclusion, as well as action plans on gender equality and Roma inclusion, and calls for their effective implementation; deplores the instrumentalisation and violation of the civil rights of vulnerable groups, particularly the Roma community, in the pre-election period and during the elections;

Reconciliation and good neighbourly relations

70. Reiterates that good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation remain essential elements of the enlargement process; notes Serbia's engagement in regional cooperation initiatives and the efforts made in improving good neighbourly relations; expresses concern about non-inclusive regional initiatives such as Open Balkan Initiative; emphasises the importance of implementing bilateral agreements and resolving open bilateral issues, and encourages Serbia to step up its reconciliation efforts and to adopt and implement measures that would actively contribute to resolving the open bilateral issues; strongly condemns the widespread public denials of international verdicts for war crimes and underlines that there is no place for genocide denial, including the denial of the genocide in Srebrenica or the glorification of war criminals in a candidate country, and stresses that such practices are not in line with progress on the European path; regrets the fact that a number of Serbian political parties, including at ministerial level, have continued to provide support to and public space for convicted war criminals, including Veselin Šljivančanin, Dragoljub Ojdanić and Nikola Šainović, who are close to the ruling parties in Serbia;
71. Welcomes Serbia's participation in the inaugural summit of the European Political Community in Prague on 6 October 2022; regrets, however, the lack of representation at the Crimea Platform;
72. Stresses the importance of regional cooperation on war crimes and missing persons and urges Serbia to address the issue of missing persons and to deliver convincing results in the prosecution of perpetrators of war crimes, the restitution of stolen cultural treasures and the identification of mass graves, and to implement the new national strategy for the prosecution of war crimes; calls on the Serbian authorities to achieve justice for victims by recognising and respecting court verdicts on war crimes, fighting against impunity for crimes committed during wartime; calls for transparency and inclusiveness in reporting on implementation; calls for adherence to the established practices and rules of international law, including in attempts to give Serbian courts universal jurisdiction over war crimes in the territory of former Yugoslavia;

73. Reiterates its support for the initiative to establish the regional commission for the establishment of facts about war crimes and other serious violations of human rights committed in the former Yugoslavia (RECOM);
74. Reiterates that Serbia must respect the full integrity and sovereignty of all neighbouring countries and must refrain from influencing their domestic politics; strongly condemns the repeated presence of high-ranking Serbian government officials at the illegal celebrations of the Republika Srpska day in Bosnia-Herzegovina, aimed at undermining the country's statehood;
75. Calls on the authorities in Belgrade to follow the positive example of some of Serbia's neighbouring countries which are members of the EU and stresses the progress that these nations have achieved since becoming members of the Union, as this can provide an incentive for deepening cooperation; welcomes the recent improvement in bilateral relations between Serbia and Croatia and the appointment of a minister of human and minority rights and social dialogue from the Croatian minority;
76. Calls for historical reconciliation and for the discrimination and prejudices from the communist past to be overcome; reiterates its call on the authorities to address the legacy of the former Communist secret services by making their files open to the public, particularly those of the former Yugoslav secret service (UDBA) and the Yugoslav People's Army Counterintelligence Service (KOS); calls for these archives to be returned to the respective governments of the successor states if they so request;
77. Reiterates its full support for the EU Special Representative for the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue, Miroslav Lajčák; calls on Serbia and Kosovo to engage in this dialogue in good faith and in the spirit of compromise to achieve a comprehensive, legally binding agreement on the normalisation of their relations, based on the principle of mutual recognition, in accordance with international law and without further delay; calls for the full implementation, in good faith and in a timely manner, of all the relevant agreements by both sides, including the establishment of the Association/Community of Serb-Majority Municipalities; believes that a final and comprehensive settlement will enhance cooperation, stability and prosperity in the wider region;
78. Calls on both sides to demonstrate leadership and be ready to take necessary decisions which lead to progress in the dialogue and reconciliation between their societies; underlines that the current geopolitical environment makes it even more imperative to overcome the legacies of the past and engage in meaningful negotiations;
79. Stresses that the normalisation of relations is a priority and a precondition for EU accession of both countries; acknowledges the increased engagement from both sides and urges the governments of Serbia and Kosovo to refrain from any action that could undermine trust between the parties and put the constructive continuation of the dialogue at risk; recalls that refraining from belligerent rhetoric and an aggressive foreign policy approach to neighbouring countries is a precondition for the normalisation of regional relations;
80. Takes note of the positive signals on de-escalating tensions by both sides; welcomes the positive steps towards accepting the EU's proposal, which is a good basis for furthering the normalisation of relations between Serbia and Kosovo; urges Serbia not to block

Kosovo from becoming a regular member in international organisations and calls on both sides to embrace the EU's proposal and put all their efforts behind it with a view to finally achieving a sustainable long-term solution; reiterates its call to improve the quality of the Dialogue process through the engagement of all sectors of society and participation of women, as well as through increased transparency towards the public and the meaningful involvement of civil society;

81. Condemns, in the strongest terms, all actions that endanger stability and jeopardise the reconciliation process; is deeply concerned about the tensions in the north of Kosovo and the unacceptable shooting on Orthodox Christmas Eve and several other violent incidents targeting Serbs in Kosovo; condemns the arbitrary detention of Kosovo Serb politician Rada Trajković at the Merdare crossing point in December 2022; calls for transparent and thorough investigations into these incidents and for the perpetrators to be held accountable; recalls the shared responsibility for peace and the rule of law for all people in Kosovo; is concerned about the role of organised crime groups operating in the north of Kosovo and their alleged links to state structures in Serbia; underlines that failure to effectively resolve the tensions in relations between Serbia and Kosovo increases the risk of destabilisation in the region; welcomes Serbia's commitment to the process of normalisation;
82. Calls on the negotiating parties to restore the full functioning of all institutions and enable the implementation of the agreements reached within the Dialogue; calls on the Serbian authorities to engage in a constructive and respectful dialogue with their Kosovar counterparts;
83. Calls on the Serbian and Kosovar authorities to promote people-to-people contacts between local communities in order to strengthen dialogue and reconciliation, including at non-governmental level; commends, in this context, cultural and youth initiatives, such as the annual cross-border art festival Mirëdita, Dobar Dan, which promote cooperation between artists and activists in Kosovo and Serbia; welcomes the continued work of CSOs that bring young people, activists, young political leaders and journalists together and which pave the way for long-term reconciliation and better mutual understanding between the two societies; encourages the governments of both Kosovo and Serbia to invest more in language courses and translations of cultural content, which would bring Serbian and Albanian communities closer; condemns the continuation of Russian attempts to exert influence over the Western Balkans, by means of exploiting and stoking cultural, ethnical and religious divisions and destabilising pro-democratic forces;
84. Welcomes the recent agreements in the framework of the Berlin Process on the Freedom of Movement with Identity Cards, on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications, and on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications for Doctors of Medicine, Dentists and Architects; encourages the Serbian Parliament to ratify these agreements soon as possible and calls for their rapid implementation;
85. Stresses the need to reinforce and find synergies between the EU initiatives for the region, such as the EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region (EUSAIR), and other multilateral initiatives, such as the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative (AII), the Central European Initiative (CEI) and the Berlin Process;

Socio-economic reforms

86. Welcomes Serbia's continued progress towards developing a functioning market economy and attracting significant foreign direct investment but underlines the fact that the country's economy is hampered by long-standing structural challenges, including weaknesses in the rule of law; reiterates that reforms in these fundamental areas, as well as efforts to tackle corruption, enhance transparency, strengthen institutions and social dialogue, remain essential for economic development;
87. Underlines the need to uphold environmental, labour and social standards for all investments; calls on Serbia to improve alignment with EU labour law;
88. Welcomes the Tirana Summit agreement on reducing roaming costs between the EU and the Western Balkans from 1 October 2023, with a view to their full removal thereafter; calls on the authorities, private actors and all stakeholders to work towards reaching the agreed targets in order to achieve a substantial reduction in roaming charges for data exchange;
89. Calls on the Serbian authorities to take measures to counter depopulation and emigration, in particular through investments in education and healthcare, as well as through the decentralisation of the country by investing in medium-sized cities;
90. Notes the results of the 2022 population census, which detected a decrease in the population by 495 975 since 2011; welcomes the encouragements by minority leaders to participate in the census; encourages the authorities to allocate rights to the relevant minority communities based on the census results; welcomes the formation of the Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography;
91. Encourages Serbia to ensure that its social and employment policies have adequate financial and institutional resources; notes with concern that additional efforts need to be invested in the socio-economic development of the border regions in order to prevent them from depopulation; recalls that IPA III cross-border cooperation programmes could be utilised for this purpose;
92. Is concerned about all the investments in strategic sectors in Serbia by malign third countries, including by Russia, particularly in the energy sector, and recent investments by China and their growing influence on the political, economic and environmental processes in the region, as well as about the higher number of projects conducted outside the regular public procurement system through intergovernmental agreements; notes the increasing share in total investments in Serbia by China, the increase in imports from China, as well as the planned Free Trade Agreement with China;
93. Deplores the fact that foreign actors, most notably Chinese companies, have been able to benefit from lower social and environmental standards to the detriment of the safety of local populations; reiterates its concern about Serbia's increasing dependence on defence equipment and technologies from China, including a mass surveillance system in Belgrade provided by Huawei, and about the scale of loans that Serbia will have to pay back to China; calls on the Commission, the European bank for Reconstruction and Development and Western Balkan Investment Framework implementing partners to put in place the necessary safeguards to prevent Chinese companies from circumventing fair

competition rules and environmental and labour standards and implementing projects supported by the EU or the European Investment Bank; calls for the EU and the Serbian authorities to fully utilise the Union's Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans to provide a sustainable alternative to Chinese investments;

94. Recalls that the EU is Serbia's most important trade partner and that all projects, irrespective of their origin, should support Serbia's efforts to join the EU and respect European policies and rules on public procurement, competition, the environment, including Environmental Impact Assessments, energy and transport; encourages Serbia to invest more efforts in establishing the Western Balkans Common Regional Market based on EU rules as this is part of Serbia's preparations for the requirements of the EU's internal market;
95. Recalls the substantial EU assistance provided to the country, in particular through IPA III; urges the Serbian authorities to strengthen strategic communication and improve the visibility of EU funding; calls on the Commission to continue to monitor closely the use of EU financial assistance by the Serbian authorities and other beneficiaries, and to ensure that all EU expenditure is fully in line with the EU's own strategic goals and interests, as well as to put a stronger focus on support to Serbian CSOs and independent quality media;
96. Urges the Serbian authorities to strengthen strategic communication linked to EU accession and recalls that the Serbian authorities should act in line with the Brdo and Tirana Summit declarations calling for pluralistic media as crucial components of any democratic system that would also accurately reflect the EU's support to Serbia and improve the visibility of EU funding; calls on the EEAS to reinforce its strategic communications efforts and presence in the region by establishing a regional stratcom post that would help Serbia fight foreign interference and information manipulation, including disinformation, which seek to undermine the region's stability, democratic processes and its EU perspective;

Energy, the environment, sustainable development and connectivity

97. Welcomes the Commission's energy support package of EUR 1 billion in EU grants to help the Western Balkans overcome the energy crisis and build resilient and environmentally friendly energy systems; welcomes the signing of the EUR 165 million budget support to fight the energy crisis in Serbia; underlines the importance of the energy support package funds being directed to support Serbia moving towards an energy efficient and renewable energy-based economy; calls on the Serbian authorities to prepare a credible plan for reducing the country's dependence on Russian fossil fuels and Chinese investments in the energy sector, and building environmentally friendly energy systems in line with REPowerEU;
98. Welcomes the announcement that a new energy policy, environmental protection and climate change are among the five priorities of the government; reiterates its call on the government to swiftly adopt and implement the integrated national energy and climate plan and to define ambitious climate and coal phase-out goals, in accordance with the EU's climate neutrality goals and the Paris Agreement; calls on the Serbian Government

to intensify its efforts in integrating climate change into other sectoral policies and strategies;

99. Welcomes the beginning of the construction of the gas interconnector between Serbia and Bulgaria and the measures to pursue the improvement of Serbia's energy security, and the opening of Serbia's gas market for diversification; welcomes the recently signed agreement on the Trans-Balkan Electricity Corridor in Serbia, part of the EU's efforts to improve energy security in the Western Balkans and partially financed by the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans;
100. Regrets the lack of action by Serbia to unbundle its gas transmission operators, in order to grant third-party access to the Horgos interconnection pipeline, despite its obligations under the Energy Community, and the lack of commitment to deal with problems of corruption and the rule of law in the environmental area; calls on the Serbian authorities to align the Law on Environmental Impact Assessment with the 2014 Environmental Impact Assessment Directive¹²; expresses concern about the lack of a proper legal framework for environmental impact assessment and urges the Serbian authorities to prevent the adverse practice of issuing construction permits without prior environmental impact assessments;
101. Expresses concern about persistent air pollution; welcomes the new plan on protection from air pollution and reiterates its calls on the Serbian authorities to urgently start the implementation of these plans; reiterates its concern that several places in Serbia are often on the list of the most polluted areas in the world in terms of air quality, particularly in large cities and industrial areas such as Belgrade, Smederevo, Bor and the Kolubara and Tamnava valleys; urges the authorities to swiftly take measures to improve air quality, particularly in large cities and industrial areas; underlines that fossil fuels are redundant in a carbon-neutral economy and welcomes the announced efforts to diversify the energy mix, improve energy efficiency and increase energy independence; reiterates its concern about Chinese-financed coal power generation projects and their impact on the environment and air quality;
102. Calls on the Serbian authorities to address all legitimate concerns expressed in the environmental protests and concerns about the environmental impact of new infrastructure constructions and projects in Serbia by Serbian entities and Chinese companies, which also create strategic dependencies; calls on the Serbian authorities to improve the transparency and environmental impact assessment of such projects; calls on the authorities to ensure the safe transport of all hazardous substances in light of the train accident near Pirot in 2022;
103. Calls on the government to continue investing efforts in measures regarding river pollution and further align with the EU *acquis* on water quality and nature protection; welcomes the establishment of a Special Police Unit for Environmental Crimes, while calling for its resources and capacities to be increased; reiterates its regret over the lack of action on the pollution of several rivers by mines operating in the region and the detrimental effect on the health of the local people and the environment;

¹² Directive 2014/52/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 April 2014 amending Directive 2011/92/EU on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment, OJ L 124, 25.4.2014, p. 1.

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104. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the President of the European 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 National Assembly of Serbia.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

Date adopted	26.4.2023
Result of final vote	+: 43 -: 6 0: 5
Members present for the final vote	Alexander Alexandrov Yordanov, Petras Auštrevičius, Traian Băsescu, Anna Bonfrisco, Reinhard Bütikofer, Susanna Ceccardi, Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, Anna Fotyga, Michael Gahler, Giorgos Georgiou, Sunčana Glavak, Klemen Grošelj, Bernard Guetta, Balázs Hidvéghi, Dietmar Köster, Stelios Kouloglou, Ilhan Kyuchyuk, Nathalie Loiseau, Leopoldo López Gil, Lukas Mandl, David McAllister, Vangelis Meimarakis, Sven Mikser, Gheorghe-Vlad Nistor, Tonino Picula, Giuliano Pisapia, Thijs Reuten, Nacho Sánchez Amor, Isabel Santos, Andreas Schieder, Jordi Solé, Dominik Tarczyński, Harald Vilimsky, Viola von Cramon-Taubadel, Thomas Waitz, Witold Jan Waszczykowski, Charlie Weimers, Bernhard Zimniok, Željana Zovko
Substitutes present for the final vote	Attila Ara-Kovács, Vladimír Bilčík, Mercedes Bresso, Andrey Kovatchev, Georgios Kyrtos, Hannah Neumann, Mick Wallace, Milan Zver
Substitutes under Rule 209(7) present for the final vote	Asim Ademov, Franc Bogovič, Andor Deli, Matthias Ecke, Mircea-Gheorghe Hava, Aušra Maldeikienė, Dace Melbārde

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

43	+
ID	Anna Bonfrisco, Susanna Ceccardi
PPE	Asim Ademov, Alexander Alexandrov Yordanov, Pablo Arias Echeverría, Traian Băsescu, Vladimír Bilčík, Franc Bogovič, Michael Gahler, Sunčana Glavak, Mircea-Gheorghe Hava, Andrey Kovatchev, Leopoldo López Gil, David McAllister, Aušra Maldeikienė, Lukas Mandl, Vangelis Meimarakis, Dace Melbārde, Željana Zovko, Milan Zver
Renew	Petras Auštrevičius, Klemen Grošelj, Bernard Guetta, Georgios Kyrtos, Ilhan Kyuchuk
S&D	Attila Ara-Kovács, Mercedes Bresso, Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, Matthias Ecke, Dietmar Köster, Pedro Marques, Sven Mikser, Tonino Picula, Giuliano Pisapia, Thijs Reuten, Nacho Sánchez Amor, Isabel Santos, Andreas Schieder
Verts/ALE	Reinhard Bütikofer, Hannah Neumann, Jordi Solé, Viola von Cramon-Taubadel, Thomas Waitz

6	-
ECR	Charlie Weimers
ID	Bernhard Zimniok
NI	Andor Deli, Balázs Hidvéghi
The Left	Giorgos Georgiou, Mick Wallace

5	0
ECR	Anna Fotyga, Dominik Tarczyński, Witold Jan Waszczykowski
ID	Harald Vilimsky
The Left	Stelios Kouloglou

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention