



Plenary sitting

B9-0609/2021

14.12.2021

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

with request for inclusion in the agenda for a debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 144 of the Rules of Procedure

on forced labour in the Linglong factory and environmental protests in Serbia (2021/3020(RSP))

Anna Fotyga, Joachim Stanisław Brudziński, Raffaele Fitto, Ryszard Antoni Legutko, Witold Jan Waszczykowski, Ladislav Ilčić, Jadwiga Wiśniewska, Carlo Fidanza, Angel Dzhambazki, Valdemar Tomaševski, Assita Kanko, Adam Bielan, Elżbieta Rafalska, Joanna Kopcińska, Elżbieta Kruk, Bogdan Rzońca
on behalf of the ECR Group

**European Parliament resolution on forced labour in the Linglong factory and environmental protests in Serbia
(2021/3020(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its resolution of 25 March 2021 on the 2019-2020 Commission reports on Serbia,
 - having regard to the Serbia 2021 Report by the European Commission of 19 October 2021,
 - having regard to the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) between the European Union (EU) and Serbia,
 - having regard to relevant International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions,
 - having regard to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers, that Serbia signed in 2004,
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,
 - having regard to Rule 144 of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Shandong Linglong Tyre Co, Ltd, a large-scale Chinese tyre manufacturer, signed an investment memorandum with Serbia in August 2018 for the construction of a tyre factory in Zrenjanin, encompassing an investment of approximately EUR 800 million; whereas construction works for the Linglong International Europe D.O.O. tyre factory started in March 2019;
- B. whereas Linglong received 95 hectares of land free of charge and 75 million euros in subsidies from the Serbian government for the recruitment of the 1,200 employees by the end of 2024, according to the Commission for the Control of State Aid;
- C. whereas the China Energy Engineering Group Tianjin Electric Power Construction Co. Ltd. and Sichuan Dinglong Electric Power Engineering Co. Ltd, are the subcontractors responsible for recruiting the workers to construct the tyre factory and signed a one-year agreement to recruit around 500 Vietnamese workers for the construction project;
- D. whereas according to reports from NGOs, the Vietnamese workers are subject to harsh working conditions, facing long working days, financial penalties, lack of vacation

days and face being fired if they try to unionize or protest and while they are being threatened and warned against speaking to critical journalists; whereas in some cases workers showing symptoms of COVID-19 were forbidden from seeking medical assistance;

- E. whereas the workers reportedly are kept in dirty and cramped housing conditions, lacking proper sanitation; whereas reportedly the workers' passports were confiscated upon arrival in Serbia;
- F. whereas according to experts the working and living conditions of the Vietnamese workers point to 'systematic exploitation and potentially human trafficking' while the terms of the workers' contracts might violate rules under Serbian labour law;
- G. whereas in 2020, a Serbian NGO pointed out that some of the objects under construction at the Linglong plant are being built without an appropriate construction permit and that the construction of the facilities went on without the proper environmental study and clearance; whereas in February 2021 the authorities limited public participation at the presentation of an environmental impact assessment study prepared by Linglong;
- H. whereas critics say the government is turning a blind eye to labour and living conditions of workers on major, particularly Chinese, foreign investment projects;
- I. whereas on 15 September 2021, European Commission President Von der Leyen announced in the European Parliament a proposal for an EU ban on products made by forced labour;
- J. whereas over the last years a significant increase in Chinese investments in Serbia has been recorded and Serbia is one of the largest recipients of Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI) out of the 17+1 network; whereas Chinese FDI has been directed mainly towards Serbia's export-oriented manufacturing areas, as well as key infrastructural projects;
- K. whereas late November and early December 2021 tens of thousands of people took to the streets across Serbia in protest against a planned lithium mining project in Loznica and new legislation on expropriation and referendums; whereas fights broke out in several cities between protesters and people opposing them; whereas reportedly there was a lack of police presence at the events; whereas several protesters were apprehended;
- L. whereas Serbia suffers from some of Europe's worst air and water pollution; whereas the European Commission in its 2021 Report on Serbia invites Serbia step up efforts on implementing and enforcing environment and climate legislation, in particular on

environmental impact assessment, waste management, air and water quality, trans-boundary cooperation and law enforcement by inspectorates;

M. whereas Serbia is an EU candidate country and concluded a Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU;

1. Expresses its deep concern at the reports of harsh working conditions and dire living circumstances of the Vietnamese workers employed at the Linglong tyre factory construction site;
2. Asks the Serbian government to take serious note of the situation and stresses the need for launching an independent and thorough investigation into the allegations of human rights violations;
3. Emphasizes that workers' rights, including that of migrant workers, must be respected at all times, in line with international obligations; encourages the Serbian government in that regard to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and to uphold the obligations stemming from it, being a signatory state;
4. Welcomes the announcement by Commission President Von der Leyen of an EU proposal for an EU ban on products made by forced labour;
5. Expresses concern about China's increasing influence in Serbia and across the Western Balkans and the lack of transparency and environmental and social impact assessment of Chinese foreign investments and loans; calls on Serbia to strengthen its legal compliance standards for Chinese business activities;
6. Recalls that the EU is the largest provider of financial assistance to Serbia; welcomes the Commission's efforts to invest more strategically in the Western Balkans through a dedicated Economic and Investment Plan (EIP) for the Western Balkans;
7. Takes note of the recently erupted environmental protests in Serbia; recalls the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association; urges the Serbian authorities to ensure alignment with EU standards and policy objectives on environmental protection and to step up its action in that regard; welcomes in this regard the opening on 14 December 2021 of cluster 4 in Serbia's accession negotiations with the EU, that includes chapter 27 on environment and climate change;

8. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the EEAS, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission, the parliaments and governments of the Member States, and the President, Government and Parliament of Serbia.