



Plenary sitting

B9-0134/2024

5.2.2024

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statements by the Council and the Commission

pursuant to Rule 132(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on the situation in Serbia following the elections
(2024/2521(RSP))

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on behalf of the ECR Group

B9-0134/2024

European Parliament resolution on the situation in Serbia following the elections (2024/2521(RSP))

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 its previous resolutions on Serbia and Kosovo, in particular those of 10 May 2023 on the 2022 Commission Report on Serbia² and of 10 May 2023 on the 2022 Commission Report on Kosovo³,
 - 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 its co-facilitated parliamentary dialogue process in Serbia,
 - having regard to the declaration and recommendations adopted at the 14th EU-Serbia Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee meeting of 23 and 24 November 2022,
 - having regard to its resolution of 23 November 2022 on recognising the Russian Federation as a state sponsor of terrorism⁴,
 - having regard to the UN General Assembly resolution on the aggression against Ukraine, adopted on 2 March 2022,
 - having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Aleksandar Vučić’s Serbian Progressive Party (Srpska napredna stranka – SNS) was declared the election winner by the state election commission following snap parliamentary and local elections on 17 December 2023;
- B. whereas opposition parties have accused President Vučić of committing fraud in the elections, particularly in the capital Belgrade; whereas the state election commission has rejected the opposition’s complaints; whereas the Constitutional Court is yet to rule on the dispute;

¹ OJ L 278, 18.10.2013, p. 16.

² OJ C, C/2023/1065, 15.12.2023, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2023/1065/oj>.

³ OJ C, C/2023/1066, 15.12.2023, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2023/1066/oj>.

⁴ OJ C 167, 11.5.2023, p. 18.

- C. whereas according to a statement by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE/ODIHR), the elections held in Serbia on 17 December 2023, although technically well-administrated and offering voters a choice of political alternatives, were dominated by the decisive involvement of the President, which, together with the ruling party's systemic advantages, created unjust conditions; whereas the ODIHR's final report has not yet been presented; whereas international observers reported major irregularities in the December elections, stating that the SNS had gained an unfair advantage through media bias, the improper influence of President Aleksandar Vučić, and voting irregularities such as 'vote buying' and 'ballot box stuffing', said the Serbian election was generally held in 'unjust conditions' and have called for a probe into their conclusions; whereas the Serbian authorities deny any irregularities;
- D. whereas domestic condemnation of the elections was intensified by the brutal beating and hospitalisation of opposition leader Nikola Sandulović, apparently at the hands of Serbian security forces;
- E. whereas thousands of people rallied peacefully in Belgrade to demand the annulment of the elections and that a new ballot be held;
- F. whereas in their statement of 19 December 2023, Vice President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell and Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Olivér Várhelyi took note of the initial findings of the ODIHR and concluded with concern that the electoral process required tangible improvement and further reform;
- G. whereas the rule of law and the proper functioning of Serbia's democratic institutions remain a core challenge for Serbia's EU accession process;
- H. whereas the revised enlargement methodology clearly sets out that progress on the fundamentals determines the overall pace of negotiations;
- I. whereas it is expected that all credible reports of irregularities will be followed up in a transparent manner by the relevant authorities and international observers and whereas this also includes allegations related to the local elections in Belgrade and other municipalities;
- J. whereas the Kremlin has condemned the public protests against Serbia's defrauded general elections as Western attempts to overthrow the government and orchestrate another 'Maidan coup';
- K. whereas the protection of minority rights is an important pillar of the EU's enlargement policy;
- L. whereas the EU adopted a set of sanctions against Russia and Belarus in March 2014, which were further strengthened after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022; whereas a majority of Member States also criminalise the violation of EU sanctions; whereas Serbia is currently cooperating with the EU to prevent the circumvention of EU restrictive measures, although it is not yet fully aligned with the EU common foreign and security policy (CFSP);

- M. whereas the Serbian media continues to face challenges, such as the threat to journalists from political pressure and impunity for crimes committed against them; whereas the Agreement on the path to normalisation between Kosovo and Serbia, concluded on 18 March 2023, contains specific obligations to be fulfilled by both parties before their EU accession process may be accelerated;
- N. whereas Serbia's continued close political, economic and even military relations with Russia raise questions about Serbia's strategic orientation; whereas Serbia has not imposed economic, financial, trade, or energy sanctions against Russia for its attack on Ukraine; whereas Serbia continues to benefit from trade deals, investments, energy contracts and other engagements with Moscow;
- O. whereas Serbia has welcomed thousands of Russian immigrants, many of whom express strong anti-Ukrainian, anti-American and anti-EU sentiments and back Serbia's mini-imperialist agenda in the Balkans;
- P. whereas Serbia continues to purchase an array of weapons from Russia and has strengthened its institutional and intelligence ties with Moscow, providing the Kremlin with intelligence on NATO and US forces in the region; whereas it helps train agents and saboteurs, prepares for broader regional destabilisation and deepens its dependence on Russia;
- Q. whereas Moscow has hired a few hundred Serbian private soldiers for immediate deployment in Ukraine; whereas a 'Serbian unit' is now being created as part of Russia's 106th Guards Airborne Division;
- R. whereas, allegedly, Serbian secret service agents beat Nikola Sandulović soon after he apologised for crimes against ethnic Albanians;
- S. whereas the independence of the judiciary in Serbia continues to face significant challenges, such as continued political influence on judicial appointments and external pressure on their decisions;
1. Expects that, following the adoption of the final OSCE/ODIHR report, Serbia will rapidly implement the recommendations for future elections; underlines the importance of upholding the right to peaceful demonstration, while stressing that violence is not a solution and is unacceptable, and that police action must therefore be proportionate and respect fundamental rights under the rule of law;
 2. Expects Serbia to clearly demonstrate its determination to move forward with the accession process by accelerating work on implementing EU accession-related reforms in all areas and by delivering real and tangible results, in particular in the area of the rule of law and the normalisation of relations with Kosovo through the swift implementation of all commitments under the EU-facilitated dialogue, including the Agreement on the path to normalisation and its Implementation Annex;
 3. Reiterates the EU's strong expectation that Serbia will, as a matter of the highest priority, step up its efforts towards fully aligning with the EU's CFSP positions and restrictive measures, in particular those imposed on the Russian Federation since its invasion of Ukraine;

4. Is seriously concerned about the growing ties between Serbia and Russia and Serbia's deepening dependence on Russian investments and trade;
5. Urges Serbia to make further efforts and show unwavering political commitment in the fight against corruption and organised crime in order to achieve tangible results;
6. Considers that Serbia should improve the overall environment for freedom of expression and media independence and encourages Serbia to increase its efforts to effectively implement its media strategy action plan;
7. Expresses concern about frequent high-level meetings between Serbian leaders and Russian authorities, including in Russia; reminds the Serbian authorities that deepening relations with Russia goes against the common European interests;
8. Is especially appalled by Serbia's increasing cooperation with Russia in military and intelligence exchange and the creation of a Serbian volunteer unit destined to fight in Ukraine on the side of Russia;
9. Strongly condemns Russian actions in Serbia and in the Western Balkans in general, which aim to undermine the credibility of the EU, NATO and the US and to exploit local sentiments to cause further destabilisation of the region;
10. Calls for an urgent investigation into the alleged kidnapping and torture of Serbian opposition politician Nikola Sandulović by secret service agents and for bringing to justice those who gave this order, as well as those responsible for carrying it out;
11. 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 presidents, governments and parliaments of Serbia and Kosovo.