



TEXTS ADOPTED

P8_TA(2016)0135

2015 Report on Bosnia and Herzegovina

European Parliament resolution of 14 April 2016 on the 2015 Report on Bosnia and Herzegovina (2015/2897(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), of the other part¹,
- having regard to BiH's application for membership of the European Union on 15 February 2016,
- having regard to the Council decision of 21 April 2015 concluding the SAA with BiH,
- having regard to the European Council conclusions of 19-20 June 2003 on the Western Balkans and to the annex thereto entitled 'The Thessaloniki Agenda for the Western Balkans: moving towards European integration',
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 16 March, 12 October and 15 December 2015 concerning BiH,
- having regard to the first meeting of the EU-BiH Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee (SAPC) held in Sarajevo on 5-6 November 2015 and the first meetings of the Stabilisation and Association Council (SAC) and the Stabilisation and Association Committee between BiH and the EU held on 11 and 17 December 2015 respectively,
- having regard to the Final Declaration by the Chair of the Vienna Western Balkans Summit of 27 August 2015 and to the Recommendations of the Civil Society Organisations for the Vienna Summit 2015,
- having regard to the Commission Communication of 10 November 2015 entitled 'EU Enlargement Strategy' (COM(2015)0611), accompanied by the Commission Staff Working Document entitled 'Bosnia and Herzegovina 2015 Report' (SWD(2015)0214),

¹ OJ L 164, 30.6.2015, p. 2.

- having regard to the Written Commitment to EU Integration adopted by the BiH Presidency on 29 January 2015 and endorsed by the BiH Parliamentary Assembly on 23 February 2015, as well as to the Reform Agenda for BiH 2015-2018 adopted by all three levels of government in July 2015,
 - having regard to its previous resolutions on the country, including its resolutions of 9 July 2015 on the Srebrenica Commemoration¹ and of 17 December 2015 on the 20th anniversary of the Dayton Peace Agreement²,
 - having regard to the conference on the ‘European Future of Bosnia and Herzegovina – 20 years after Dayton-Paris Peace Agreement’ held in the European Parliament on 9 December 2015,
 - having regard to the work of Cristian Dan Preda as the standing rapporteur on Bosnia and Herzegovina for the Committee on Foreign Affairs,
 - having regard to Rule 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the EU remains committed to BiH’s European perspective, and to its territorial integrity, sovereignty and unity;
 - B. whereas EU accession is an inclusive process which requires consensus on the Reform Agenda; whereas BiH citizens must be placed at the centre of institutional, economic and social reforms;
 - C. whereas the EU initiated a renewed approach to BiH in order for the country to progress towards the EU and address the outstanding socio-economic and rule-of-law challenges, thereby allowing the country to prepare for future membership; whereas, following this approach, the SAA entered into force on 1 June 2015;
 - D. whereas an effective coordination mechanism on EU matters between the various levels of government is indispensable in order to ensure better interaction with the EU, to facilitate the alignment, implementation and enforcement of EU laws, and to make BiH’s EU membership application a success; whereas the BiH Council of Ministers (CoM) adopted the ‘Decision on a Coordination System in the Process of European Integration in Bosnia and Herzegovina’ on 26 January 2016; whereas progress in its coordination on EU matters will open the way for BiH to benefit fully from EU funding;
 - E. whereas there are still 84 500 internally displaced persons as well as a huge number of refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina in neighbouring countries, all around Europe and world-wide;
 - F. whereas strong political support is a key factor in making the country’s institutional set-up more effective;
1. Welcomes the first more positive Commission Report on BiH and reiterates its unequivocal commitment to BiH’s European perspective; calls on the authorities to show determination in pursuing institutional and socio-economic reforms, including their effective implementation, and making steady progress towards the EU; calls for transparency in the process of planning and implementing reforms; welcomes the Joint

¹ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0276.

² Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0471.

Action Plan by the State and Entities to implement the 2015-2018 Reform Agenda, and calls for harmonised implementation in order to achieve real, visible change across the country and to improve the lives of all BiH citizens;

2. Welcomes the submission of the application for EU membership by BiH on 15 February 2016; calls on the Council to examine this application at the earliest opportunity and to forward it without delay to the Commission in order to start the preparation of the *avis*;
3. Welcomes the adoption by the BiH CoM, on 26 January 2016, of a decision establishing a coordination mechanism on EU matters and, on 9 February 2016, of the negotiation position on the adaptation of the SAA following the accession of Croatia to the EU; recalls that, alongside meaningful progress in the implementation of the Reform Agenda, these elements are necessary for the EU to consider the membership application as credible; calls for the entities' position on the adopted coordination mechanism to be harmonised without delay and encourages cooperation between all stakeholders in further improving it; calls for its swift implementation and urges constructive cooperation on EU matters; stresses that this mechanism is indispensable for efficient decision-making in the EU accession process; welcomes the initial concrete consultations – on a parliamentary level – with a view to the full implementation of the coordination mechanism, and strongly encourages the further intensification of such meetings among institutional stakeholders; insists again on the adaptation of trade concessions granted under the SAA; considers the full implementation of the SAA, including its adaptation, an important element of BiH's commitment to the EU and one of the preconditions for endorsement of its candidacy for membership; recommends that BiH also engage with the EU Member States on its progress towards the EU;
4. Reiterates the need to continue also with constitutional, legal and political reforms that would transform BiH into a fully effective, inclusive and functional state, guaranteeing the equality and democratic representation of all its constituent peoples and all citizens, and guaranteeing that all citizens can stand as candidates and are eligible to be elected and to serve at all political levels, on equal grounds and regardless of their ethnic or religious backgrounds, in accordance with the principles expressed in its previous resolution, including the Copenhagen criteria, the EU *acquis*, recommendations made by the Venice Commission and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the relevant decisions of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR); calls on the authorities to actively promote the principles of legitimate representation, federalism, decentralisation and subsidiarity, as well as European values and the importance of the European perspective; calls on the EU institutions to become actively involved in the efforts to find a sustainable solution to BiH's constitutional arrangements;
5. Urges political and religious leaders to refrain from divisive nationalistic and secessionist rhetoric that polarises society and to continue with political dialogue and activities aimed at mutual respect, consensus and cooperation between legitimate political representatives and at protecting the diversity of its society; calls on all citizens to embrace reconciliation and cooperation, which are key prerequisites for attaining the European perspective;
6. Emphasises the important role of grassroots civil society in the process of peace-building and reconciliation, and particularly youth participation in intercultural dialogue and exchange, as well as in the political sphere; notes the significant role of cultural activists, artists, writers and academics in promoting dialogue and understanding between the different groups in society; urges the promotion of education for democracy, fundamental rights and citizenship in Bosnia and Herzegovina;

7. Takes note of the announcement by the President of the Republika Srpska (RS) to postpone the planned referendum in the RS on the BiH State-level judiciary; regrets, however, that this decision has not been passed by the RS National Assembly; calls for this idea of a referendum to be dropped altogether, as it challenges the cohesion, sovereignty and integrity of the country and risks undermining the efforts being made to improve the socio-economic situation of all BiH citizens and to make further progress towards EU integration; stresses that any shortcomings in the BiH judiciary should be addressed in a spirit of cooperation rather than through unilateral initiatives, within the broadened Structured Dialogue on Justice; recalls that under the Dayton Agreement the RS has no right to secession;
8. Is deeply concerned about statements made by the Interior Minister of the Republika Srpska about the future training of RS special police units in the Russian Federation, the deepening of cooperation, particularly regarding the exchange of information, and the intention to buy Russian military equipment; calls on the authorities in the RS not to pursue an independent foreign and security policy which might undermine the State-level policy;
9. Welcomes the entry into force of the SAA and the fact that the SAPC was the first common body constituted on its basis; deeply regrets, however, that it failed to adopt its Rules of Procedure (RoP) due to the attempts to introduce ethnic blocking into the SAPC's voting rules; recalls that the SAA requires the adoption of the RoP and failure to do so is in direct breach of implementation of the SAA; urges the Bosnian delegation to work constructively in this respect towards the adoption of the RoP at the next meeting of the SAPC without delay; welcomes the first meetings of the SAC between BiH and the EU held on 11 December 2015;
10. Deplores the fact that corruption, including corruption at the highest level, continues to be widespread and that political commitments have not translated into concrete results; remains concerned about the weak legal and institutional framework to combat corruption, which allows engagement in corrupt practices with impunity, and about the low number of final convictions in corruption cases; calls for improvements in the track record of effective investigation and prosecution in high-profile corruption cases involving politicians, high-level officials and regulatory institutions, and in the framework of public procurement and privatisation; commends the adoption of the 2015-2019 anti-corruption strategy and action plan and urges the allocation of a sufficient budget for its implementation; calls for the significant enhancement of country-wide inter-agency cooperation; urges the establishment of dedicated corruption prevention and monitoring structures and the adoption of corruption prevention policy documents at all levels of government; urges full implementation of the GRECO recommendations without delay;
11. Emphasises that a functional and stable judiciary is of paramount importance for ensuring the rule of law in the country and for BiH's further progress towards the EU; is concerned about increased pressure on the judiciary by political actors; states the urgent need to strengthen the independence of the judiciary in BiH; is concerned in particular about cases of political interference in court proceedings, the politicisation of appointment procedures in the judiciary, the continued fragmentation into four different legal systems and the lack of an effective and objective system for assessing the professional qualities of judges; welcomes the updated 2014-2018 Justice Sector Reform Strategy and calls for an action plan for its implementation with a strong focus on country-wide harmonisation efforts; deems it essential to guarantee a more professional, independent and accountable judicial system, including the systematic application of objective criteria for appointments;

welcomes the protocol signed by Entity- and State-level justice ministers aiming at reforms of the State-level judiciary and the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council; welcomes the appointment of Ombudspersons, but is concerned about the ongoing financial and human resource difficulties faced by the Ombudsperson's Office; calls for rapid adoption of the law on the reform of the Ombudsperson;

12. Remains concerned that access to free legal aid is very limited; urges the competent authorities to adopt a law on free legal aid at State level as a prerequisite for guaranteeing equal, effective and non-discriminatory access to justice; believes that the implementation of such a law is crucial for strengthening the confidence of citizens in the rule of law;
13. Strongly condemns the still effective law on public order in the RS, which undermines the fundamental democratic rights of the freedom of assembly, freedom of association and freedom of media; urges full implementation of the Freedom of Access of Information Act, as this is still uneven and frequently limited when the right to privacy and the protection of the commercial interests of companies dealing with governments is invoked, thus depriving citizens of an efficient means of appeal when information is denied; commends the adoption of amendments to the BiH Criminal Code that bring its provisions on torture, enforced disappearance and rape into line with international standards; urges the authorities to incorporate criminal offences listed in the Additional Protocol to the International Convention on Cybercrime into the criminal code;
14. Considers it important to improve cooperation between the State-level, Entity-level and Brčko District parliaments and to hold joint meetings between them; takes note of the commitments made in the framework of the parliamentary twinning and calls for urgent implementation of the resulting recommendations, as well as the operationalisation of the agreed framework for cooperation; welcomes, in this context, the signing of the 'Concept of mechanism of cooperation of parliaments in BiH in activities related to the EU integration process'; calls for improvements in the overall coordination with cantonal assemblies;
15. Notes the role played by the Joint Parliamentary Committee for Security and Defence in ensuring democratic control over the armed forces of BiH; is concerned by the widespread presence of weapons held illegally by the population and the large stockpiles of ammunition and weapons still held under the responsibility of the armed forces; commends the progress made by the armed forces in disposing of the most unstable ammunition and in building sustainable capacity to manage the rest of the stockpiles; urges the adoption of a comprehensive approach to address the remaining challenges of clearing the country of mines by 2019; calls on the Commission and the VP/HR to enhance aid for these activities;
16. Urges the members of the working group for the preparation of amendments to the election law of Bosnia and Herzegovina to ensure that amendments to the law create the basis for genuine democratic elections as an expression of sovereignty; stresses that democratic elections cannot be achieved unless a wide range of other human rights and fundamental freedoms can be exercised on an ongoing basis without discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, gender, political and other opinion, property, birth or other status, and without arbitrary and unreasonable restrictions;
17. Is of the view that the fragmentation of public administration, its politicisation and weak policy coordination hamper institutional and legislative reforms and have an impact on the provision of public services to citizens; calls on the competent authorities at all levels to

enhance medium-term policy planning and to develop a comprehensive and country-wide strategic framework for public administration reform and a public financial management programme, in line with the European Principles for Public Administration that have been identified by OECD/SIGMA for candidates for EU membership;

18. Recognises that agriculture is a key economic sector for Bosnia and Herzegovina, as around 20 % of BiH's population is reliant directly or indirectly on the sector; welcomes, therefore, progress made in the field of food safety and veterinary policy and the Commission's decision to approve the export of BiH milk and dairy products to the EU; encourages greater efforts to align the official veterinary and phytosanitary control system with European standards and to establish the necessary institutional structures that would allow the use of the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance for Rural Development; calls on the government to support the establishment of a State-level ministry of agriculture and an accompanying development strategy;
19. Expresses its concern about insufficient mechanisms for cooperation between government and civil society organisations (CSOs), including their limited capacity to participate in policy dialogue on the Reform Agenda; considers it essential to enhance the role of civil society and to engage citizens in the EU accession process; reiterates its calls for the creation and implementation of transparent and inclusive public consultation mechanisms; calls on the competent authorities at all levels to improve the relevant legal and financial framework, to adopt a national strategy on CSOs and to ensure transparent public funding for CSOs in order to foster a more participatory and inclusive democracy across the country; calls on the CSOs and activists to significantly strengthen their capacities and structures and to engage with the authorities in BiH, the EU and the international community; calls on the latter bodies to assist them in these efforts;
20. Notes the uncoordinated implementation of the 2014-2016 strategy on combating organised crime; urges the adoption and implementation of a new strategy and action plan on money laundering in line with the MONEYVAL recommendations; stresses the need for a victim-centred approach and a multidisciplinary and comprehensive strategy to combat trafficking in drugs and human beings; calls on the EU and BiH authorities to work together to effectively combat human trafficking and to provide protection for the victims; welcomes the adoption of the 2016-2019 Action Plan for Fighting Human Trafficking in BiH, including its emphasis on problems related to migrant workers and the forced begging of children, and calls for its effective implementation; remains concerned about the large volume of illegal arms in Bosnia which are easily transferred to the EU; calls on the competent authorities to enhance their efforts to prosecute arms brokers and smugglers and to do more to combat the uncontrolled proliferation and illicit trafficking of weapons, notably small and light weapons, also through closer regional cooperation and cooperation between BiH and the EU;
21. Invites the authorities to develop an action plan for the implementation of the 2015-2020 strategy for the prevention and fight against terrorism; calls on the authorities to strengthen their efforts to ensure more effective country-wide cooperation between police, intelligence and security agencies in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism; calls for the strengthening of BiH's counter-terrorism capacity; urges the competent authorities to undertake greater efforts in the fight against terrorist financing, including the creation of a legal framework to allow for the freezing of assets of terrorist groups; considers it essential that security operations in BiH are coordinated and that data are shared within the country; stresses that closer cooperation between regional security services is also paramount, and encourages further cooperation in that respect;

22. Stresses that BiH has been seriously affected by the phenomenon of foreign fighters and radicalisation; is concerned about radicalisation among young people, a high number of whom – compared to other countries in the region – have joined Daesh; calls for the continuation and strengthening of measures against radicalisation and terrorism; welcomes efforts to strengthen inter-religious dialogue, including the joint statement by political and religious leaders condemning terrorism and violent extremism; welcomes the first judgments delivered on foreign fighters on the basis of the criminal offences of financing terrorist activities, public instigation of terrorist activities, and organising and joining Daesh; calls for the urgent development of effective de-radicalisation programmes and for urgent efforts to provide a better economic perspective for young people in BiH in line with the Positive Agenda for Youth in the Western Balkans, thus deterring them from associating themselves with radical and extreme ideologies; encourages efforts to engage the media, the academic community and civil society in helping to raise awareness of the risk factors that allow radicalisation to evolve into violent extremism; encourages the development of national and regional Radicalisation Awareness Networks based on best practices and tools available from the EU-wide Radicalisation Awareness Network; encourages closer cooperation with security services in the EU and neighbouring countries, including on the exchange of information; encourages police operations throughout BiH that result in the arrest of persons suspected of organising, supporting and financing terrorist activities;
23. Notes that the legal and institutional framework for the observance of human rights requires substantial improvements; calls for the development of a country-wide anti-discrimination strategy in cooperation with CSOs; urges once again the inclusion of a clear definition of gender identity, sexual orientation, age and disability as grounds for discrimination in the anti-discrimination law; calls for its effective implementation and for the role of the Human Rights Ombudsman to be strengthened; is concerned about discrimination against persons with disabilities in employment, education, access to health care and the provision of other services; is concerned about hate violence, hate speech and the reported increase in threats towards LGBTI persons; encourages the government to address this *inter alia* by implementing awareness-raising actions on the rights of LGBTI people among the judiciary, law enforcement agencies and the general public; notes significant progress in completion of the civil registration process for Roma, but remains concerned about limited action on improving their health, education and employment prospects; urges the authorities in particular to fight gender-based discrimination; urges the repeal of the provision on the death penalty in the RS entity Constitution;
24. Regrets that no progress has been made with regard to the implementation of the Sejdić-Finci and Zorić cases, and recalls that BiH remains in breach of the ECtHR rulings on these; stresses once again that the failure to implement these continues to result in discrimination against BiH citizens and may therefore hinder BiH's EU accession path;
25. Urges the more forceful and proper investigation and prosecution of cases of hate crime and hate speech, including on ethnic grounds, and of dissemination of extremist ideologies through social media; regrets that the Federation remains the only territory in the Western Balkans where the sanctioning of hate crime is not regulated by criminal law and urges the inclusion of such a provision; calls, similarly, for the inclusion of a hate speech provision in the criminal laws of all the entities;
26. Reiterates that electoral law and the electoral system must give all three constituent peoples and all other citizens the opportunity to freely and autonomously elect their own legitimate political representatives to the institutions and authorities;

27. Stresses the important role of civil society in protecting and promoting minority rights in the country, as well as in fostering social harmony and tolerance and increasing people's understanding of the benefits of diversity; calls for the further involvement of civil society in addressing challenges of ethnic division in order to help the country advance towards the EU; calls also for better coordination between the competent authorities and the CSOs in order to ensure better enforcement of the law on minorities;
28. Welcomes the adoption of the 2015-2018 strategy for implementing the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence; calls for the urgent adoption and application of the Framework Strategy for the Implementation of the Istanbul Convention; is concerned about the lack of a comprehensive State-level legal framework on sexual assault and of an appropriate compensation mechanism for victims; calls on the competent authorities to ensure the proper financing of, and better legislation on, 'safe houses' and to establish a harmonised system for monitoring and collecting data on cases of violence against women; calls also for every effort to be made to increase the participation of women in politics and employment, to improve their social and economic situation – especially regarding access to the right to maternity leave and benefits – and to promote, protect and strengthen women's rights; urges the governments at all levels to raise awareness of these issues, with the help of civil society, so that women make use of the protection available under the law;
29. Stresses the essential role of education in creating and promoting a tolerant and inclusive society, as well as in fostering cooperation and cohesion across cultural, religious and ethnic lines; notes with regret the slow progress made in addressing the issue of 'two schools under one roof' and other forms of segregation and discrimination in schools, and deplores the fact that a common core curriculum is still not being developed; urges the adoption of concrete measures to start the desegregation of the educational system; stresses the need for significant efforts to improve the efficiency of the fragmented education system, while guaranteeing the right to equal education opportunities in all official languages of BiH and the right of every community to education in its language; urges the authorities to ensure the effective implementation of inclusive education principles with regard to children with disabilities;
30. Welcomes BiH's active participation in the Western Balkans Platform on Education and Training, as well as its continuing participation in Erasmus+ and the Western Balkans Youth Window, which play a very important role in the battle against very high youth unemployment rates; welcomes also the commitment of BiH to take part in the 2018 OECD PISA study; regards this study as a useful instrument for debating the quality of education and necessary reforms; commends the expressed will of all 13 ministries of education and all related agencies to take part in this joint effort; calls on the Commission to consider financing BiH's participation in the study from pre-accession funds;
31. Stresses that independent and professional media institutions are one of the key components of a thriving democratic society; expresses its concern therefore about backsliding in the area of freedom of expression, cases of political pressure on and intimidation of journalists, including the subjection of some media outlets to bogus financial and other inspections by local and national authorities, and the continued polarisation of the media along political and ethnic lines; calls on the competent authorities to conduct a thorough investigation into attacks on journalists and to create a legal framework for the protection of journalists; calls, moreover, for urgent action to secure the political, institutional and financial independence of the Communications

Regulatory Authority and to ensure transparency in media ownership by closing all legislative loopholes which systematically hamper full transparency; notes that the implementation of these measures is crucial to ensuring the absence of all undue political influence; calls for action to ensure media pluralism and broadcasting in all official languages; calls also for the editorial independence and financial stability of the public service broadcasters to be enhanced in view of the significance of the existence of a public service broadcaster for the unity of BiH; is concerned that targeted cyber-attacks against information sites are not prosecuted;

32. Welcomes the progress made in reducing the backlog of war crimes cases; notes the ICTY's concerns regarding the insufficient follow-up by the State Prosecutor's Office on repeated requests to complete war crimes cases; calls for a revision of the National War Crimes Strategy, for more effective and better prosecution of acts of wartime sexual violence and for improvements in the protection of victims; calls for action to ensure their right to effective compensation;
33. Notes some action and calls for more progress on the sustainable return of internally displaced persons and refugees, including on employment, education, social protection, the return of property and healthcare at local level; reiterates the importance of encouraging their sustainable return to BiH, in particular to the RS; calls on all levels of government to protect them and to speed up the process of their return by introducing and implementing all necessary legislative and administrative measures; calls for the effective implementation of the revised strategy regarding Annex VII of the Dayton Peace Agreement; calls on the Commission to provide adequate financial and project assistance which would facilitate this process; notes the persistently high number of missing persons and calls on the competent authorities to embark on intensive cooperation and to strengthen their efforts to find the 7 019 persons still missing as a result of the war; stresses the need to further develop alternative approaches to justice, *inter alia* by building on the UNDP strategy on transitional justice; calls on the authorities in BiH to invest significant resources in relevant programmes;
34. Notes that while post-war rehabilitation and reconstruction in BiH has been largely successful and has brought the country closer towards the EU, challenges still remain concerning the sustainability of the reconciliation process; stresses therefore the importance of education on reconciliation and mutual understanding in society;
35. Welcomes the rise in registered employment, as well as the first steps taken to strengthen policy coordination and to improve the business climate; remains concerned about state influence on the economy, the quality of public finances, the high degree of dependence on funding from international loan investment, the unclear origin of international investment and the difficult labour market conditions; stresses the need to address the persistently high long-term unemployment rate (27,6 %), including very high youth unemployment (62,7 %), and the large informal economy and to improve the operation of the labour market;
36. Welcomes the adoption of new labour legislation by both entities; regrets the lack of a unified single economic area, which hampers the business environment; urges further improvement of the business environment by strengthening the rule of law, simplifying contract enforcement and fighting corruption; regrets that BiH has not developed a State-level SME strategy;

37. Stresses the need to reform and harmonise the fragmented social protection systems on the basis of citizens' needs in order to provide equal treatment for all; notes that trade union and labour rights, including health and safety laws, are still limited, and stresses the importance of further enhancing and harmonising these laws across the country;
38. Urges the adoption of country-wide sectoral strategies on transport, energy and the environment; stresses that these strategies are needed *inter alia* to benefit fully from EU pre-accession assistance;
39. Welcomes the participation of BiH in the Western Balkan 6 initiative; highlights the importance of two major investment projects – 'Stara Gradiška' and 'Svilaj' – which will facilitate trade, regional integration and sustainable growth; urges the authorities to ensure the full and swift implementation of technical standards and soft measures in transport which were agreed during the 2015 WB Summit in Vienna (e.g. aligning/ simplifying border crossing procedures, information systems, maintenance schemes, unbundling and third-party access to networks) before the upcoming 2016 Summit in Paris;
40. Calls for the results of the population and housing census to be published without further delay, because these are instrumental for economic and social planning; points out also that data from the 2013 census will be needed to fill in the questionnaire that BiH will receive from the Commission;
41. Urges the BiH statistical agencies to align their statistics with Eurostat standards;
42. Is concerned about backsliding in the field of the information society; calls for urgent implementation of the digital switchover; urges the establishment of the supervisory body for accreditation of the e-commerce and e-signature laws at State level, as the latter have yet to be implemented due to the absence of this body; calls on the authorities responsible to accelerate successful implementation of the European emergency number 112, which was established in 2009;
43. Notes the limited measures and activities carried out on adaptation to climate change and the initial steps taken to develop the Natura 2000 network on nature protection; calls on the competent authorities to establish a harmonised legal framework for environmental protection and climate action and to strengthen strategic planning and alignment with the *acquis* in these fields; calls on the competent authorities to prevent excessive air pollution in line with EU environmental standards, including pollution caused by the oil refinery in Bosanski Brod; reiterates the need for BiH to fully implement its obligations regarding the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo, 1991) and the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment (Kiev, 2003);
44. Calls on the BiH Government to regulate and monitor the development of hydropower plants in environmentally sensitive areas, as well as in protected and potentially protected areas, and to maintain the integrity of existing national parks, such as Sutjeska National Park and Una National Park; recommends that the quality of environmental impact assessments be improved to take into account EU standards as established by the Birds and Habitats Directives and the Water Framework Directive; encourages the BiH Government to increase transparency through public participation and consultation on planned projects with local communities, scientific experts and the civil sector;
45. Congratulates BiH on assuming the Presidency of the Energy Community in 2016; is, however, concerned about the imposition of Energy Community sanctions against BiH;

reiterates its call on BiH to take measures to connect to the energy infrastructures of neighbouring countries and to honour all its contractual obligations under the Energy Community Treaty;

46. Denounces the Law on Public Peace and Order adopted in the RS in February 2015 which criminalises social media postings that disturb the public order or contain indecent, offensive or insulting content, as this paves the way for legal restrictions on online free expression and free media and may create self-censorship among social media users;
47. Commends BiH's constructive and pro-active role in promoting regional cooperation; takes the view that concrete cooperation in areas of mutual interest can contribute to the stabilisation of the Western Balkans; welcomes the border agreement with Montenegro; calls for further efforts to resolve outstanding bilateral issues, including on border demarcation matters with Serbia and Croatia, and to address issues of transboundary environmental pollution; welcomes the first joint session of the BiH Council of Ministers with the Serbian Government that took place on 4 November 2015 in Sarajevo;
48. Welcomes the increase in the rate of alignment with CFSP decisions from 52 % to 62 %; considers it necessary, in the light of BiH's application to join the EU, to coordinate foreign policy to a great extent with the EU's CFSP;
49. Calls on the BiH authorities, in the context of the upcoming local elections, to implement the relevant recommendations made by international and local observers and OSCE/ODIHR in order to ensure the credibility and integrity of the electoral process; urges the authorities to regulate the local elections in Mostar as a matter of urgency;
50. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the VP/HR, the Council, the Commission, the Presidency of BiH, the Council of Ministers of BiH, the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH, the governments and parliaments of the Federation of BiH and the RS, and the governments of the 10 cantons.