



TEXTS ADOPTED

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2018 Report on Serbia

European Parliament resolution of 29 November 2018 on the 2018 Commission Report on Serbia (2018/2146(INI))

The European Parliament,

- 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 2018 and its ‘Sofia priority agenda’,
- having regard to Council Decision 2008/213/EC¹ of 18 February 2008 on the principles, priorities and conditions contained in the European Partnership with Serbia and repealing Decision 2006/56/EC,
- having regard to the Commission opinion of 12 October 2011 on Serbia’s application for membership of the European Union (SEC(2011)1208), the European Council’s decision of 2 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 Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) between the European Communities and their Member States and the Republic of Serbia, which entered into force on 1 September 2013,
- having regard to UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (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 Berlin Process launched on 28 August 2014,
- having regard to the declaration and recommendations adopted at the eighth EU-Serbia

¹ OJ L 80, 19.3.2008, p. 46.

Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee (SAPC) meeting of 13-14 June 2018,

- having regard to the final report of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE/ODHIR) on its limited election observation mission on the early parliamentary elections in Serbia of 29 July 2016,
- having regard to the OSCE/ODHIR election assessment mission report on the presidential elections in Serbia of 2 April 2017,
- having regard to the Commission’s 2018 report on Serbia of 17 April 2018 (SWD(2018)0152),
- having regard to the Commission communication on a credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans of 6 February 2018 (COM(2018)0065),
- having regard to the Joint Conclusions of the Economic and Financial Dialogue between the EU and the Western Balkans and Turkey of 23 May 2017 (9655/17),
- having regard to the fourth meeting of the EU-Serbia Stabilisation and Association Council held on 16 November 2017,
- having regard to the eighth meeting of the Accession Conference with Serbia at Ministerial level held on 25 June 2018,
- having regard to the report of July 2015 of the Council of Europe’s anti-corruption body – GRECO – on Serbia and GRECO’s Fourth Evaluation Round report of 20 October 2017 on ‘Corruption prevention in respect of members of parliament, judges and prosecutors’,
- having regard to the Commission assessment of 17 April 2018 on the Serbia 2018-2020 Economic Reform Programme (SWD(2018)0132) and to the joint conclusions of the Economic and Financial Dialogue between the EU and the Western Balkans adopted by the Council on 25 May 2018,
- having regard to the Venice Commission’s ‘Opinion on the draft amendments to the constitutional provisions on the judiciary’ of 25 June 2018,
- having regard to the outcome of the 2017 survey on marginalised Roma in the Western Balkans, supported by the Commission and conducted by the World Bank and the UN Development Programme,
- having regard to the joint staff working document entitled ‘Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020’,
- having regard to its resolution of 14 June 2017 on the 2016 Commission Report on

Serbia¹,

- having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (A8-0331/2018),
- A. whereas Serbia, like every country aspiring to EU membership, must be judged on its own merits in terms of fulfilling, implementing and complying with the same set of criteria and whereas the quality of and the dedication to the necessary reforms determines the timetable for accession; whereas accession is and will remain a merit-based process fully dependent on the objective progress achieved by each country, including Serbia;
 - B. whereas since the opening of negotiations with Serbia 14 chapters have been opened, two of which have been provisionally closed;
 - C. whereas Serbia has been continuously engaged in the normalisation of relations with Kosovo, resulting in the ‘First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalisation of Relations’ of 19 April 2013 and the agreements of August 2015; whereas Serbia has remained engaged in the dialogue;
 - D. whereas Serbia has contributed to strengthening regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations, as well as peace and stability, reconciliation and a climate conducive to addressing open bilateral issues from the past;
 - E. whereas Serbia has remained committed to creating a functioning market economy and has continued to build a track record in implementing the obligations of the SAA;
 - F. whereas rule of law is a fundamental value on which the EU is founded and is at the heart of both the enlargement process and the stabilisation and association process; whereas reforms are needed to tackle the important challenges that remain in this area, notably in ensuring an independent, impartial, accountable and efficient judiciary, and in the fight against corruption and organised crime, as well as in the protection of fundamental rights;
 - G. whereas Serbia has ratified all fundamental International Labour Organisation conventions, including in particular the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention of 1948 (No 87), the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention of 1949 (No 98) and the Forced Labour Convention of 1930 (No 29);
 - H. whereas the situation as regards freedom of expression and independence of the media remains a particularly serious concern which needs to be addressed in a determined and effective way as a matter of priority;
 - I. whereas Serbia benefits from pre-accession assistance under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II), with a total indicative allocation of EUR 1,5 billion for 2014-2020; whereas a revised indicative allocation of IPA II for Serbia for the period of 2018-2020 is EUR 722 million; whereas Serbia has been granted a mid-term

¹ OJ C 331, 18.9.2018, p. 71.

performance reward;

1. Welcomes Serbia's continued engagement on the path of integration into the European Union; calls on Serbia, with the support of the Commission, to actively promote this strategic decision among the Serbian public and to further increase timely and transparent information and visibility of the EU and its funded projects and programmes;
2. Underlines that thorough implementation of reforms and policies is a key indicator of a successful integration process; calls on Serbia to improve the planning, coordination and monitoring of the implementation of new legislation and policies; welcomes the adoption of a third revision of the national programme for the adoption of the EU *acquis* and warns against the consequences of inadequate transposition of important EU laws on alignment with the *acquis*; welcomes the Commission's assessment in its communication entitled 'A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans' that, with strong political will, the delivery of real and sustained reforms, and definitive solutions to disputes with neighbours, Serbia could become a member of the EU; calls on the Council and the Commission, provided that the necessary progress warrants this, in particular in the fundamental area of rule of law, to support the opening of the technically prepared chapters and to accelerate the overall accession negotiation process;
3. Welcomes the successful completion of the IPA 2018 programming process and the signing of the Financing Agreement for IPARD II; calls on the Commission, in designing the new Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA III), to include adequate provisions to cater for a possible accession of Serbia to the EU;
4. Welcomes the progress made by Serbia in developing a functioning market economy, ensuring economic growth and preserving macroeconomic and monetary stability; stresses that Serbia has made good progress in addressing some of the policy weaknesses that have been an issue in the past, in particular through budget consolidation; stresses, however, that unemployment, brain-drain and economic inactivity are still high; calls on Serbia to develop a sustainable plan for the future of state-owned enterprises; stresses the paramount importance to Serbia's economy of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and calls for a more transparent and less burdensome business environment; supports Serbia's accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO);
5. Expresses concern about persistent unemployment and underlines the importance of training and developing entrepreneurial skills among young people; calls on Serbia to improve the position of women on the labour market; calls on Serbia to strengthen tripartite dialogue; calls for an amendment to the Law on Contributions for Compulsory Social Insurance and the Law on Health Insurance in order to prevent discrimination against small agricultural producers;
6. Takes note of the presidential elections of 2 April 2017; welcomes the general conduct of the elections and calls on the authorities to ensure that international standards are applied; calls on the authorities to fully address and implement the recommendations of the OSCE/ODIHR election observation mission, in particular to ensure a level playing field during the campaigning period, and to engage in a dialogue with independent domestic election observation missions; calls on the authorities to properly investigate

claims of irregularities, violence and intimidation that arose during past electoral processes; notes with concern the lack of transparency in the financing of political parties and election campaigns; points out that funding of political parties needs to be transparent and in accordance with international standards;

7. Calls on Serbia to increase its alignment with the EU's foreign and security policy, including its policy on Russia, also within the United Nations; welcomes Serbia's important contribution and continued participation in a number of EU common security and defence policy (CSDP) missions and operations (EUTM Mali, EUTM Somalia, EUNAVFOR Atalanta, EUTM RCA), with Serbia taking part in 4 of the 6 military missions or operations currently being carried out by the Union; is concerned, however, about Serbia's continuing military cooperation with Russia and Belarus;
8. Commends Serbia's constructive approach in managing the effects of the migration and refugee crisis, and the substantial efforts the country has made to provide shelter and humanitarian supplies, primarily with EU support; welcomes Serbia's adoption of the new Asylum Law, the Law on Foreigners and the Border Control Law; urges Serbia to progressively align its visa policy with that of the EU; notes with concern that Serbia's nonaligned visa policy opened a possibility for illegal migration and smuggling towards EU countries, as well as neighbouring non-EU countries; urges Serbia to put in place a return mechanism for irregular migrants which is in line with the EU *acquis* and to further improve its capacity to address the needs of unaccompanied minors; calls on Serbia to find a viable solution for refugees from neighbouring countries, including as regards their housing needs and access to work and education;

Rule of law

9. Urges Serbia to step up its reform efforts in the area of rule of law, and in particular to ensure the independence and overall efficiency of the judicial system; stresses that special focus should be put on implementing effective reform in this area; notes that while some progress has been made in reducing the backlog of old enforcement cases, and in putting in place measures to harmonise court practice, judicial independence in Serbia is not fully assured and the scope for political influence over the judiciary remains a concern; calls on Serbia to strengthen the accountability, impartiality, professionalism and overall efficiency of the judiciary, and to establish a free legal aid system ensuring a broad range of free legal aid providers; calls for the implementation of all rulings of the European Court of Human Rights;
10. Reiterates the importance of intensifying the fight against corruption and urges Serbia to show a clear commitment to tackling this issue; welcomes the implementation of the Law on Organisation and Jurisdiction of Government Authorities in the Suppression of Organised Crime, Terrorism and Corruption; welcomes the adoption of the amendments made in the economic crimes section of the country's criminal code and encourages Serbia to fully implement these, including the amendment on abuse of office, so as to prevent any misuse; calls for continued implementation of the national anti-corruption strategy and action plan; reiterates its call for Serbia to swiftly adopt a new law on its Anti-Corruption Agency to improve the planning, coordination and monitoring of the implementation of new and existing legislation and policies; stresses that it is critical that the Agency receives and maintains the human and financial resources it needs to carry out its mandate in an independent manner; stresses that the members of the Anti-Corruption Agency must be elected according to the principles of transparency, absence

of conflict of interest or political affiliation; calls on the authorities to fill all open positions in the Agency; calls on Serbia to further improve its track record on investigations, indictments and final convictions in high-level corruption cases and to publish statistics on a regular basis about the results of investigations in all cases of alleged corruption of public officials;

11. Calls on the Serbian authorities to implement the recommendations of the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO); calls on the Serbian Parliament to address in particular the recommendations with regard to corruption prevention and conflicts of interest, and to adopt the Code of Conduct;
12. Acknowledges that some progress has been made in the fight against corruption and organised crime and welcomes Serbia's active role in international and regional police and judicial cooperation; calls on Serbia to show further commitment and deliver tangible results in this fight, notably through a convincing track record of investigations, prosecutions and convictions in organised crime cases, including illegal trafficking and smuggling of migrants from Serbia to the EU and to non-EU countries, organised crime related murders, cybercrime, financial flows supporting terrorist activities and money laundering; calls on Serbia to continue with the full implementation of the action plan agreed with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF); draws attention to the rising number of criminal assaults and calls for their resolution through full cooperation with the judicial authorities;

Democracy and social dialogue

13. Stresses that the Serbian Parliament still does not exercise effective oversight of the executive, and that the transparency, inclusiveness and quality of the legislative process need to be further improved; welcomes the declining use of urgent procedures to adopt legislation; stresses, however, that the still-frequent use of urgent procedures undermines parliamentary and public scrutiny; stresses that all actions that limit the ability of the Serbian Parliament to conduct an effective debate on, and scrutiny of, legislation should be avoided; stresses the importance of the work of the opposition in a democracy and underlines that its politicians should not be subject to slander and libel; expresses concern that some politicians are misusing public discourse to fuel the rise of radicalism; calls for additional measures to ensure cross-party dialogue and effective involvement of civil society; calls on the Serbian Parliament to review the practice of filibustering and whether it stifles democratic debate; welcomes the Serbian Parliament's continued efforts to improve transparency through debates on Serbia's negotiating positions on EU accession chapters, and through exchanges with the core negotiating team and with the National Convention on the European Union; stresses that the role of independent regulatory bodies, including the country's Ombudsperson, the Anti-Corruption Agency, the National Audit Authority and the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection, needs to be fully acknowledged and supported; calls for the Serbian Parliament to engage in the implementation of independent regulatory bodies' findings and recommendations, notably those of the Ombudsperson; recalls that one of the pillars of the European social model is social dialogue and that regular consultation between the government and social partners is instrumental in the prevention of social tension and conflict; underlines that it is essential for social dialogue to go beyond the exchange of information and that interested parties should be consulted on important laws before they are subject to parliamentary procedure;

14. Welcomes the presentation of the draft constitutional reform of the country's judiciary submitted to the Venice Commission for opinion; stresses the importance of fully implementing the recommendations of the Venice Commission; encourages the Serbian authorities to enter into an inclusive and meaningful public debate conducted in a constructive manner in order to raise awareness of the constitutional reform process in the country; calls for a comprehensive public consultation before the final draft is submitted to the Serbian Parliament;
15. Welcomes Serbia's progress in reforming its public administration, notably through the adoption of several new laws on public service salaries and employment relations, on local government and salaries in autonomous provinces, and on the national training academy; stresses that political influence on senior managerial appointments remains an issue of concern; calls on Serbia to amend the civil service law to guarantee the neutrality of the public administration; notes that strengthening administrative capacities at all levels is important for the successful implementation of key reforms; welcomes the creation of a Ministry for European Integration, incorporating the structures of the former Serbian European Integration Office, which has continued to provide political guidance for European integration;

Human rights

16. Underlines that the legislative and institutional framework for upholding human rights is in place; stresses that consistent and efficient implementation across the whole country is needed; calls on Serbia to adopt the new Law on Data Protection and ensure that it is fully in line with EU standards and best practices; notes that further sustained efforts are necessary to improve the situation of persons belonging to vulnerable groups, including children, persons with disabilities, persons with HIV/AIDS, and LGBTI persons; condemns the continued occurrence of hate crimes against Roma and LGBTI persons; calls on Serbia to actively pursue investigations, prosecutions and convictions of hate-motivated crimes; calls on the Serbian authorities to promote a climate of tolerance and to condemn all forms of hate speech, public approval and denial of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes;
17. Urges Serbia to strengthen the role and capacity of its authorities concerning the protection of vulnerable groups, including women, children and people with disabilities and to ensure better cooperation between the police, public prosecutors and social services in this regard; welcomes Serbia's ratification of the Istanbul Convention and the recent developments as regards measures for the protection of children from violence, including the government's announcement of the creation of an Ombudsperson for children, and calls on the authorities to monitor the effect of legislation and other measures; underlines that shortcomings in upholding the human rights of people with disabilities still persist, and urges the government to adopt a national strategy on persons with disabilities;
18. Strongly encourages the Serbian authorities to step up their efforts to improve the situation regarding freedom of expression and of the media; welcomes the establishment of the new working group dedicated to development of the Draft Media Strategy; stresses that threats, violence and intimidation against journalists and media outlets, including administrative harassment and intimidation through court procedures, remain an issue of concern; calls on officials to be consistent in publicly condemning any form of intimidation of journalists and to refrain from interference in activities of media and

journalists, including in the context of elections; notes, in this regard, that while several cases have been solved and some criminal charges have been filed, convictions are still rare; welcomes the effort of the standing working group that was established through the Agreement on Cooperation and Measures for Increasing the Safety of Journalists and calls on the authorities to demonstrate their full commitment to investigate and prosecute any cases of attacks against journalists and media outlets; calls for the full implementation of media laws and the strengthening of the independence of the country's Regulatory Body for Electronic Media; welcomes the renewed efforts to adopt a media strategy to create a pluralistic media environment, and stresses, in this regard, the importance of a transparent and inclusive consultation with stakeholders; underlines the need for complete transparency in media ownership and funding; calls for the adoption of policies that will protect media and programmes in languages of national minorities living in Serbia;

19. Calls on the Serbian authorities to enhance cooperation with civil society organisations, including women's organisations and human rights groups, whose role is key for a well-functioning democracy; condemns the negative campaigns and restrictions against certain CSOs; calls for the adoption of a national strategy and related action plan to regulate the environment in which CSOs operate; believes that further efforts are required to ensure systematic cooperation between the government and civil society and calls for increased attention when drafting and implementing legislation in areas affecting civil society;
20. Notes some progress in the case of the unlawful demolition of private property and the deprivation of the freedom of movement in the Belgrade neighbourhood of Savamala in April 2016; calls for it to be resolved and for full cooperation with the judicial authorities in the investigations to bring the perpetrators to justice;

Respect for and protection of minorities

21. Welcomes the adoption of an action plan for the realisation of the rights of national minorities, and the adoption of a decree establishing a fund for national minorities; invites the Serbian Government to fully implement all international treaties concerning minority rights; stresses that progress in the field of guaranteeing the rights of national minorities is not satisfactory and calls for full implementation of the action plan and for improved coordination and inclusion of stakeholders, including neighbouring countries for transport and communication needs; notes that the fund for national minorities is operational and that its funding has been increased; welcomes the adoption of crucial laws on the framework of minority rights; reiterates its call on Serbia to ensure consistent implementation of legislation on the protection of minorities, including in relation to education and culture, the use of minority languages, representation in public administration and the judiciary, and continued access to media and religious services in minority languages; acknowledges the active participation of the country's national minorities election cycles and calls for the adoption of policies that will guarantee their just political representation in the Serbian national assembly; calls for full implementation of the right to timely birth registration; stresses that the promotion and protection of human rights, including the rights of national minorities, is a precondition for joining the EU;
22. Notes that Vojvodina's cultural diversity contributes to Serbia's identity; stresses that the autonomy of Vojvodina should be preserved and that the law on Vojvodina's

financing resources should be adopted without further delay, as provided for in the Constitution;

23. Welcomes the adoption of the new Roma social inclusion strategy for the period 2016-2025 along with an action plan covering education, health, housing and employment; welcomes the strategy's recognition that Roma women face particular discrimination; urges Serbia to set clear targets and indicators to monitor the implementation of the new strategy; is concerned about the high rate of Roma girls dropping out of school; notes that the majority of Roma suffer from social exclusion and face systematic violations of their rights; calls for full implementation of the new strategy for Roma inclusion and the action plan; highlights the importance of formulating policies that will combat discrimination against Roma and anti-Gypsism; calls for meaningful public and political participation of Roma to be enabled at all levels;

Regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations

24. Welcomes the fact that Serbia remains committed to constructive bilateral relations with other enlargement countries and neighbouring Member States; welcomes the fact that Serbia has maintained its engagement in a number of regional cooperation initiatives such as the South-East European Cooperation Process, the Regional Cooperation Council, the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA), the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative, the EU Macro-Regional Strategies for the Danube Region (EUSDR), the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR), the Brdo-Brijuni Process, the Western Balkan Six initiative and its connectivity agenda, and the Berlin Process; welcomes the results of the Western Balkans Six initiative so far and calls for the further development of the Regional Economic Area (REA); reiterates its call on Serbia to implement the connectivity reform measures associated with the connectivity agenda; welcomes Serbia's efforts to prioritise infrastructure investments and underlines the importance of increased connectivity in the region; notes that more efforts need to be put in the economic and social development of the border regions in order to prevent them from depopulation; supports the proposal to reduce roaming charges in the Western Balkans; stresses that outstanding bilateral disputes should not have a detrimental effect on the accession process; strongly supports the Western Balkans partners' pledge to continue strengthening good neighbourly relations, regional stability and mutual cooperation; recalls that the EU is determined to strengthen and intensify its engagement to support the region's transformation;
25. Welcomes the adoption of a national strategy for the investigation and prosecution of war crimes; takes note of the adoption of a prosecutorial strategy for the investigation and prosecution of war crimes and urges Serbia to carry out all foreseen activities; welcomes the appointment in May 2017 of a new war crimes prosecutor; reiterates its call for the implementation of this strategy, in particular by means of bringing forward indictments, and for the adoption of an operational prosecutorial strategy; calls on Serbia to effectively investigate all war crimes cases, in particular those that are high profile, and to cooperate with its regional partners in these cases; calls on the Commission and the Member States to make further efforts to resolve these issues in the EU-Serbia negotiation process; urges the authorities to continue to address the problem of missing persons during the wars of the 1990s; calls on Serbia to again cooperate fully with the current International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals; urges the Serbian authorities to continue working on the issue of the fate of missing persons, including opening state archives related to the war period; urges Serbia to prepare a

reparations scheme for victims and their families; reiterates its support for the initiative to establish the Regional Commission for the establishment of facts about war crimes and other gross human rights violations on the territory of the former Yugoslavia; highlights the importance of the work carried out by the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) and its local branches in promoting reconciliation among young people; calls for further amendments to the Law on Restitution and stresses the importance of non-discriminatory treatment of restitution claimants in comparison with other beneficiaries, in particular in the area of registration of public property;

26. Regrets the reiterated denial of the Srebrenica genocide by some Serbian authorities; reminds them that fully cooperating with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, and its successor the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, also implies fully accepting and implementing its rulings and decisions; stresses that the recognition of the Srebrenica genocide is a fundamental step in Serbia's path towards joining the European Union;
27. Welcomes Serbia's continued engagement in the normalisation process with Kosovo, and its commitment to the implementation of the agreements reached in the EU-facilitated dialogue; welcomes the fact that the Serbian President has launched an internal dialogue on Kosovo; reiterates its call to move forward with the full implementation, in good faith and in a timely manner, of all the agreements already reached, including the ones on energy, and encourages both sides to determinedly continue the normalisation process; highlights the importance of creating an association / community of Serb majority municipalities; stresses that the work on a new phase of the dialogue with a view to a comprehensive normalisation of relations between Serbia and Kosovo, to be defined in a legally binding agreement, needs to be accelerated; reiterates its call on the EEAS to carry out an evaluation of the performance of the sides in fulfilling their obligations; unequivocally condemns the killing of Kosovo Serb politician Oliver Ivanović and stresses the need for genuine cooperation between Kosovan and Serbian investigators and for international support, so that the perpetrators are brought to justice;
28. Notes the ongoing debate and public statements concerning possible adjustments of the border between Serbia and Kosovo, including exchanges of territories; underlines the multi-ethnic nature of both Kosovo and Serbia and that ethnically homogeneous states should not be the objective in the region; supports the dialogue facilitated by the EU as the framework to reach a comprehensive normalisation agreement between Serbia and Kosovo; considers that any agreement could only be acceptable if mutually agreed, taking into account the overall stability in the region and international law;
29. Expresses its concern over repeated statements by high-ranking politicians putting into question the territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina and condemns any form of nationalist rhetoric aimed at encouraging its disintegration;

Energy and transport

30. Calls on Serbia to fully implement the connectivity reform measures in the energy sector; encourages Serbia to develop competition in the gas market and to fulfil the corresponding obligations regarding unbundling as provided for by the Third Energy Package; calls on Serbia to develop its energy policy in order to decrease dependence on Russian gas imports; welcomes the country's efforts to promote investments in the

fields of energy efficiency and renewable energy; recalls that the legislation on efficient use of energy is not fully in line with the corresponding EU directives; calls on Serbia to diversify its energy sources towards other renewables;

31. Calls on the Serbian Government to adopt the necessary measures to preserve protected areas with regard, in particular, to the development of hydroelectricity plants in environmentally sensitive areas such as Stara Planina Nature Park; calls, in this context, for thorough environmental impact assessments based on EU standards as established by the Birds and Habitats Directives and the Water Framework Directive; encourages the Serbian Government to increase transparency on planned projects through public participation and consultation involving all the stakeholders;
32. Welcomes the joint commitment signed by Serbia and Bulgaria on 17 May 2018, on the occasion of the Western Balkans summit of Leaders in Sofia, to build the gas interconnector between the two countries and the adoption of the IPA 2018 package, which includes the strategically important infrastructure project ‘Nis-Merdare-Pristina highway of peace’, which will enable a better transport connection between central Serbia and Kosovo and has symbolic significance for relations in the region;
33. Expresses its deep concern at the alarming level of air pollution in Serbia on account of which, according to World Health Organisation data, in 2016 some 6 500 people died of respiratory ailments; calls, in this regard, on the Serbian authorities to adopt the necessary short-term measures to tackle this situation and to reform effectively in the medium and long term transport and mobility policies in the big cities;

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34. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the Government and Parliament of Serbia.