The European Parliament,

– having regard to the Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community, of the one part, and Kosovo, of the other part, which entered into force on 1 April 2016¹,

– having regard to the framework agreement between the European Union and Kosovo on the general principles for the participation of Kosovo in Union programmes, in force since 1 August 2017²,

– having regard to the Presidency conclusions of the Thessaloniki European Council meeting of 19 and 20 June 2003,

– having regard to the Sofia Declaration of the EU-Western Balkans summit of 17 May 2018,

– having regard to the Zagreb Declaration of the EU-Western Balkans summit on 6 May 2020,

– having regard to the Brdo Declaration of the EU-Western Balkans summit of 6 October 2021,

– having regard to the Berlin Process launched on 28 August 2014 and to the eighth Berlin Process Summit of 5 July 2021,

– having regard to the Sofia Summit of 10 November 2020, the Western Balkan Leaders Declaration on Common Regional Market of 9 November 2020 and the Sofia Declaration on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans of 10 November 2020,

– having regard to UN Security Council Resolution 1244 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

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¹ OJ L 71, 16.3.2016, p. 3.
² OJ L 195, 27.7.2017, p. 3.
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 Council Decision (CFSP) 2021/904 of 3 June 2021 amending Joint Action 2008/124/CFSP on the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX Kosovo)\(^1\), which extended the mission’s mandate until 14 June 2023,

– 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 the Commission communication of 6 October 2020 entitled ‘An Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans’ (COM(2020)0641), and to 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 2021 on the Kosovo 2021-2023 economic reform programme (SWD(2021)0093), and to the joint conclusions of the economic and financial dialogue between the EU and the Western Balkans and Turkey adopted by the Council on 12 July 2021,

– 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 Commission proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EC) No 539/2001 listing the third countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing the external borders and those whose nationals are exempt from that requirement (Kosovo) (COM(2016)0277), and to its position of 28 March 2019 on the Commission proposal\(^3\),

– having regard to the final report of the European Union Election Observation Mission on the 2021 municipal elections in Kosovo,

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\(^1\) OJ L 197, 4.6.2021, p. 114.
having regard to the fourth meeting of the Stabilisation and Association Council between the European Union and Kosovo held in Brussels on 7 December 2021,

having regard to the Council conclusions on enlargement and stabilisation and association process of 14 December 2021,

having regard to the European Court of Auditors Special Report of 10 January 2022 entitled ‘EU support for the rule of law in the Western Balkans: despite efforts, fundamental problems persist’,

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 summit¹,

having regard to the declaration and recommendations adopted at the seventh and eighth meetings of the EU-Kosovo Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee, held on 4 and 5 November 2021 and 9 and 10 March 2022,

having regard to the joint declaration of the Second European Parliament-Western Balkans Speakers’ Summit of 28 June 2021, convened by the President of the European Parliament with the leaders of the Western Balkan parliaments,

having regard to its previous resolutions on the country,

having regard to its resolution of 25 March 2021 on the 2019-2020 Commission Reports on Kosovo²,

having regard to its resolution of 15 December 2021 on cooperation on the fight against organised crime in the Western Balkans³,

having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure,

having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (A9-0179/2022),

A. whereas each enlargement country is judged on its own merits and whereas it is the implementation of necessary reforms determines the timetable and progress of accession;

B. whereas Kosovo has not been recognised as independent state by five Member States;

C. whereas democracy and the rule of law are the fundamental values on which the EU is founded; whereas deep and comprehensive reforms are needed to tackle the challenges that remain in these areas;

D. whereas a comprehensive legally binding normalisation agreement between Serbia and Kosovo is crucial for both countries to advance on their respective European paths;

¹ OJ C 362, 8.9.2021, p. 129.
whereas such an agreement would greatly contribute to enhancing the overall stability of the region;

E. whereas Kosovo has not been granted visa liberalisation, although all benchmarks have been fulfilled since 2018;

F. whereas Kosovo has made substantial progress in fighting corruption and organised crime;

G. whereas the European Union is Kosovo’s biggest trading partner, accounting for 33% of total exports and 50% of total imports in 2020;

H. whereas the EU remains Kosovo's main strategic partner and supports Kosovo’s commitment to European integration, notably through the IPA III, the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans and macro-financial assistance;

I. whereas the EU is the largest provider of financial assistance to Kosovo and whereas Kosovo benefits from pre-accession assistance under the IPA, having received a total of EUR 1.21 billion between 2007 and 2020;

J. whereas the Commission adopted a package of EUR 70 million under IPA II to help fund Western Balkan countries’ access to COVID-19 vaccines procured by EU Member States;

K. whereas the assistance under IPA III is based on strict conditionality and provides for modulation and suspension of assistance if there is backtracking on democracy, human rights and the rule of law;

**Commitment to enlargement**

1. Welcomes Kosovo’s continued commitment to advance on EU-related reforms and the overwhelming consensus among political parties on and public support for European integration and embracing a European identity; notes the government’s strong majority in the Kosovo Parliament following the general elections and calls on the government to make use of its stable majority to urgently advance the necessary reforms;

2. Calls on the EU Member States to prioritise enlargement and to deliver the promised benefits once the conditions have been met, as well as to improve the exchange of information with EU citizens on enlargement;

3. Welcomes the increased political stability and the government’s strong commitment to further advance on its European path, as demonstrated by the adoption of the Action Plan of the European Reform Agenda II and the National Programme for the Implementation of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement 2022-2026; underlines the need to strengthen the administrative capacities and to put in place a coherent coordination structure within the Kosovo institutions for their effective implementation;

4. Commends the peaceful and orderly conduct of the early legislative elections of 14 February 2021 and the municipal elections of 17 October and 14 November 2021; regrets, however, the low representation of women on the ballots and limited political competition and freedom of choice and expression in the Kosovo-Serb municipalities, as noted in the EU election observation mission reports;
5. Welcomes the Assembly of Kosovo’s establishment of an ad hoc Commission for electoral reform on 13 April 2021; calls on Kosovo to urgently address the long-standing deficiencies in the electoral process, in particular with regard to campaign rules, voting by citizens abroad and the accuracy of voter lists; regrets the fact that many of the recommendations issued by previous EU election observation missions since 2013 remain unaddressed and underlines that these long overdue reforms need strong a political commitment from and the meaningful involvement of political parties and civil society;

6. Deeply regrets that the Council has failed to deliver on the visa-free regime for Kosovo; emphasises its full solidarity and sympathies with the country’s citizens; reiterates its call on the Member States in the Council to proceed urgently with the adoption of a visa-free regime for the citizens of Kosovo, as Kosovo remains the only country in the Western Balkans without a visa liberalisation regime, despite fulfilling all the benchmarks since 2018;

7. Underlines that the lack of visa liberalisation hinders the implementation of EU programmes and directly affects Kosovo citizens while emboldening criminal networks; notes that further delay undermines the EU's credibility and reputation as a reliable partner and serious geopolitical actor, and thus could also impact the dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia; emphasises that visa liberalisation has the potential to bring Kosovo closer to the EU by facilitating travel, cultural and educational exchanges, as well as business;

8. Fully supports Kosovo’s application for membership of the Council of Europe and calls on all the EU Member States to support its bid, as well as its bids to join other international organisations;

9. Notes also Kosovo’s intention to apply for membership of the European Union in 2022, with the aim of achieving candidate status, but stresses that there is no fast-track procedure for any candidate or potential candidate country and recalls that all countries aspiring to become Member States will be judged on their own merits in terms of fulfilling, implementing and complying with the set of criteria and common European values;

10. Underlines that progress in normalising relations with Serbia based on mutual recognition is a necessary precondition for both countries to advance on their European path; recognises that Kosovo is fully committed to making progress in negotiations with Serbia on resolving outstanding issues in a mutually beneficial manner and encourages Kosovo’s authorities to refocus their efforts on advancing and delivering on the Pristina-Belgrade dialogue process, and not to create another source of disappointment for its citizens by prematurely applying for EU membership;

11. Stresses that the independence of Kosovo is irreversible; welcomes the fact that Israel recognised Kosovo on 4 September 2020; regrets, however, the fact that five EU Member States have not yet recognised Kosovo and reiterates its call for them to do so immediately and reaffirm Kosovo’s EU perspective; notes that the EU is Kosovo's biggest donor, trading partner and investor;

12. Notes that the Russian invasion of Ukraine is a source of utmost concern for the Western Balkans, in particular for Kosovo citizens; welcomes the adoption of the
resolution of the Assembly of Kosovo strongly condemning the military aggression and the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, and commends Kosovo for its speedy alignment with the EU by adopting sanctions against Russia and for the strong solidarity it expressed with Ukraine, which position it as a very reliable partner, deeply anchored in the European and transatlantic alliance; welcomes Kosovo's readiness to host Ukrainian refugees and the adoption of measures to support them, including the implementation of the 'Journalists in Residence' programme, which enables Ukrainian journalists to live and work in Kosovo; notes with relief that no serious threats to the security and the territorial integrity of Kosovo have been reported recently; underlines that a successful integration of the north and further efforts to improve the daily life of Kosovo Serbs can make essential contributions to the overall stability and security situation in the country;

13. Welcomes the granting of EU candidate status to Ukraine and Moldova at the European Council meeting of 23 and 24 June 2022; recalls, however, that in order to retain the credibility of the EU enlargement process, the long-standing commitment to all six Western Balkan countries, including Kosovo, must be maintained and their parallel track needs to continue unaffected on the basis of merit, political alignment, solidarity on international matters and agreed commitments; calls for more dynamism in the enlargement process;

**Democracy and the rule of law**

14. Welcomes the increased efforts to fight corruption, including through the adoption of the rule of law strategy and action plan for 2021-2026 and underlines that implementation is key; commends Kosovo for having moved up 17 places on Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index for 2021; encourages Kosovo to continue improving its track record in the fight against high-level corruption and organised crime and to fully investigate all possible links with political power; calls on the Kosovar authorities to continue strengthening their investigation and prosecution of organised crime cases, including cases of trafficking in human beings and drug trafficking, and to be more active in the fight against money laundering;

15. Commends Kosovo’s efforts in fighting terrorism and violent extremism and in repatriating and integrating foreign fighters; encourages Kosovo to adopt a new strategy for the prevention of violent extremism and radicalism leading to terrorism, bearing in mind that the implementation of the previous strategy faced a lack of institutional coordination and financial tools; calls for active regional cooperation in countering potential terrorist activities and disrupting financial flows destined for terrorist financing, as well as for greater coordination and exchange of information between the relevant security services and agencies of the Republic of Kosovo and the EU;

16. Is concerned that the judiciary continues to be inefficient and vulnerable to political interference; welcomes, in this respect, the proposals for the reform of the prosecutorial system and underlines that the opinion of the Venice Commission should be fully taken into account in their implementation; emphasises that this is of the utmost importance to ensure the irreversible political independence and integrity of the judiciary and to improve the accountability and transparency of Kosovo’s judicial system;

17. Encourages Kosovo to step up efforts to increase law enforcement agencies’ capacities, enforce assets declarations and confiscate criminal assets; notes, in this context, the
proposal for a new agency on civil confiscation of assets and reiterates the necessity of fully taking the Venice Commission’s opinion into account before proceeding with the legislation;

18. Takes note of the government’s plans for the vetting of judges and prosecutors, and underlines the importance of the Venice Commission’s opinion; stresses that vetting should be used as a last resort and insists that the EU and the US reservations about a possible paralysis of the justice system should not be disregarded; strongly encourages Kosovar authorities to make full use of already existing mechanisms and instruments to immediately improve the independence, professionalism, effectiveness and integrity of the country’s justice system; welcomes the cooperation of Kosovar authorities with the EU in this regard;

19. Regrets that, despite the EU’s repeated calls for a fair, transparent and merit-based selection of the Chief State Prosecutor, the Kosovo Prosecutorial Council disregarded these principles when concluding the selection process;

20. Welcomes the efforts to depoliticise and professionalise Kosovo’s civil service and public administration, and calls on Kosovo to step up its reforms of the public administration and public finances in a progressive and proportionate manner; reiterates the importance of a sound, depoliticised and citizen-oriented public administration appointed through a competitive, merit-based, transparent and fair process; welcomes the progress on the establishment of the National Centralised Criminal Records Registry, supported by the EU, and calls on Kosovo to address the remaining challenges;

21. Welcomes the Assembly of Kosovo’s long overdue adoption of the laws on political party financing and the disclosure of assets and calls for their rigorous implementation; deplores the Srpska Lista representatives’ continued boycotts of the Presidency of the Assembly of Kosovo and the high absenteeism of deputies in the Assembly sessions, leading to blockages of some agenda points; welcomes the first-reading adoption of the new Regulation of the Assembly introducing financial sanctions against parliamentarians who do not justify their absence and calls for its speedy final adoption and implementation;

22. Commends Kosovo’s vibrant and constructive civil society for its work and engagement; encourages the government to establish cooperative working relations with them, based on mutual trust, while respecting their independence, and to ensure their meaningful involvement in the respective reform projects, in particular for key legislation;

23. Urges the government to address concerns appropriately and implement the 2016 ruling of the Constitutional Court granting parcels of land to the Visoki Dečani Monastery; is concerned that the authorities have still not implemented this court decision, thereby undermining the government’s commitment to enforcing the rule of law and its respect for an independent judiciary, as well as the country’s international reputation; underlines the importance of implementing all Constitutional Court decisions; calls on the government to apply a non-selective approach to the concept of rule of law;

24. Commends the work of the European Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), which has been assisting Kosovar authorities in establishing sustainable and independent rule
of law institutions; welcomes the prolongation of the EULEX mandate, as well as the recent deployment of a temporary unit to strengthen the capacities of the EULEX Formed Police Unit; encourages Kosovo to continue its cooperation with EULEX and with the Specialist Chambers and the Specialist Prosecutor’s Office, as an important demonstration of its commitment to the rule of law;

25. Welcomes the working arrangement between the Kosovo Police and Europol of July 2020, which will constitute the basis for enhanced cooperation in fighting organised crime, terrorism and extremism, and calls on Kosovar authorities to make full use of this potential; underlines, in this context, that Interpol is an important instrument in the fight against organised crime; regrets that Kosovo is not yet a member of Interpol, despite its multiple attempts to join and calls for Kosovo’s inclusion in Interpol and on the EU Member States to proactively support Kosovo's bid to join this organisation;

26. Urges the Commission to implement the recommendations of the European Court of Auditors Special Report 01/2022, in order to ensure an effective rule-of-law impact of EU financial assistance in the Western Balkans, in particular by developing guidelines on the application of IPA III provisions on modulation and stricter parliamentary scrutiny over the funds; calls on the Commission to link funding more closely to progress on the rule of law, to increase support to civil society organisations (CSOs) and independent media outlets, and to improve project reporting and monitoring, as repeatedly called for by Parliament; calls in this respect for better coordination of rule of law programmes supported by international donors to be ensured;

27. Calls for the EU and the Western Balkan countries to establish a framework for fruitful cooperation between the European Public Prosecutor’s Office (EPPO) and the Western Balkan countries, in order to ensure that the EPPO can effectively exert its competences in the area of EU funds, in particular IPA III funds;

Respect for fundamental freedoms and human rights

28. Notes that Kosovo’s legal and institutional framework broadly guarantees the protection of human, minority and fundamental rights, but that implementation is key; calls on Kosovo to better integrate children with disabilities into educational institutions; stresses that more effort is required to provide children with disabilities access to quality education;

29. Regrets the Kosovo Assembly’s failure to adopt the draft Civil Code at the first reading, and calls for its adoption once the Civil Code is again submitted to the plenary, which would bring much-needed progress for Kosovo citizens, in particular in improving the conditions of the most vulnerable parts of Kosovo society, especially women, children and LGBTI+ persons, and would have a positive impact on the economic development of Kosovo; expresses its support for the inclusion of same-sex partnerships in the legislation, in line with the Kosovo constitution;

30. Is concerned that while legislation and policies for LGBTI+ persons have progressed, implementation is lacking; condemns all discriminatory and degrading speech against the LGBTI+ community, including by some high-level politicians; calls, in this regard, for the Kosovar leadership to more publicly promote fundamental human rights for all citizens, including LGBTI+ people;
31. Regrets the fact that the initiatives to involve the Serb community in Kosovo’s political, social and economic structures are only very limited; calls on the Kosovo Government and the representatives of Kosovo Serbs to fulfil their promise to commit to the internal dialogue and genuinely engage with independent civil society organisations in Serbian communities, in particular in the north, with the aim of successfully integrating them; calls on the EU to further facilitate and support inter-community programmes; welcomes the Kosovo authorities’ efforts to fight racism and address inter-ethnic incidents;

32. Reiterates that the institutionalisation of the learning of official languages in Kosovo and equal access to services and information in the official languages are essential; welcomes, in this respect, the establishment of the Department of Balkan Studies at the University of Pristina and the decision to open a language centre for learning Kosovo’s official languages;

33. Reiterates its call for greater inclusion of persons belonging to minorities, including the Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian, Bosniak, Turkish and Gorani communities, as well as persons with disabilities and displaced persons, by providing them with access to adequate healthcare, social protection, education, justice, housing, employment opportunities and other social and public services, and by ensuring their access to political and social decision-making, while efficiently tackling the intersectional forms of discrimination that these groups face through a systemic institutional approach; urges greater efforts to fight anti-Gypsyism; encourages the government to accelerate work on a new 2021-2026 strategy and action plan for the inclusion of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in Kosovo;

34. Calls for the urgent revision of high school textbooks, which provide misinformation and use discriminatory language and descriptions for ethnic minorities, sexual minorities and women; encourages government authorities to pursue the EU supported initiative ‘European Union Support to Basic and Secondary Education’, which was started in late 2021 and aims to update these textbooks;

35. Commends Kosovo for the peaceful co-existence of religious communities and calls for it to intensify its efforts in providing minority groups with equal opportunities, adequate representation in political and cultural life and the protection and promotion of the cultural heritage, languages and traditions of its national and religious minorities; welcomes the Government of Kosovo’s initiative to regularly consult and meet with all communities living in Kosovo as part of internal dialogue and welcomes the creation of the new government position of Deputy Prime Minister for Minority Issues and Human Rights;

36. Acknowledges that Kosovo’s constitution is very progressive in terms of minority rights; notes, in that respect, that the petition signed by nearly 500 people who have historically self-identified as Bulgarian, which was registered at the Assembly of Kosovo in May 2018, has still not been considered and recommends that those rights be enshrined in law and ensured in practice;

37. Underlines that the free media are one of the essential pillars of democracy and that journalists must be protected from political pressure; condemns the political pressure to which they are subjected and the use of strategic lawsuits against public participation to intimidate them, which also leads to self-censorship; stresses that the use of defamatory
language against journalists is unacceptable; warns against any statements stigmatising media, in particular from officials and public figures who should lead by example;

38. Notes that the media landscape has been distorted in recent years, with large-scale investments leading to increased private sector influence over major media outlets and online media being frequently used for commercial and political blackmail; reiterates the need to guarantee media transparency, including on media ownership; welcomes the appointment of the new board of public broadcaster RTK through a transparent and merit-based process; calls for the finding of a sustainable solution to secure RTK’s editorial independence;

39. Is deeply concerned about the continuing high level of domestic and gender-based violence, as well as violence against children, in Kosovo, the number of femicide cases and the unsatisfactory performance of the judiciary in efficiently prosecuting femicide and gender-based violence cases; calls for the effective implementation of the national strategy against domestic and gender-based violence; underlines that education is key in order to fight gender-based discrimination; highlights the need to ensure the proper functioning of the system of protection, prevention and adjudication of all forms of gender-based violence, including through an increase in the number of gender-sensitive law enforcement agents and judges, support to women’s shelters, legal aid to victims and public awareness raising campaigns;

40. Welcomes the adoption of the national strategy on protection against domestic violence and violence against women, the draft law on crime victim compensation and the adoption of the revisions on free legal aid, which guarantees free legal aid to victims of domestic violence, gender-based violence and sexual violence; welcomes Kosovo's efforts to improve overall coordination on gender equality, but calls for Kosovo to make further progress in achieving gender equality and advancing women’s rights, including by prioritising gender mainstreaming and increased cooperation with civil society, in particular women’s organisations;

41. Is highly alarmed that the EU accession countries in the Western Balkans are being hit particularly hard by foreign interference and disinformation campaigns originating from Russia and China; is alarmed that Hungary and Serbia are helping China and Russia with their geopolitical objectives; condemns, in particular, the long running disinformation campaigns by Russia’s state-owned Serbian-language outlet Sputnik Serbia, which regularly spreads misinformation to sow ethnic tensions, attempt to delegitimise Kosovo’s statehood, destabilise its governance and undermine Kosovo’s relations with the EU;

42. Recommends convening dialogues with Western Balkan civil society and the private sector to coordinate anti-disinformation efforts in the region, with an emphasis on research and analysis and the inclusion of regional expertise; calls on the Commission to build up the infrastructure required to produce evidence-based responses to both short-term and long-term disinformation threats in the Western Balkans; calls on the European External Action Service (EEAS) to pivot to a more proactive stance, focusing on building the EU’s credibility in the region, rather than defending it, and on expanding monitoring by the EEAS Strategic Communications Task Force (StratCom) to focus on cross-border disinformation threats emanating from Western Balkan countries and their neighbours;
43. Calls, against this backdrop, for the EU to urgently strengthen its support for and cooperation with Kosovo in addressing disinformation and fighting malign hybrid activities that seek to undermine the EU perspective of the region, in particular those from Russia and China;

Reconciliation and good neighbourly relations

44. Welcomes Kosovo’s active participation in the regional cooperation mechanisms, including the Common Regional Market (CRM) and the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans; welcomes the various bilateral cooperation agreements between Kosovo and North Macedonia and Albania;

45. Welcomes the cooperation of the six Western Balkan countries within the CRM; notes that the CRM is creating an integrated market of 18 million people and is highly competitive; calls on the Government of Kosovo to engage constructively in the implementation of the roadmap for the CRM, particularly as regards unresolved negotiations on four agreements on mobility and diploma recognition;

46. Emphasises that all regional economic cooperation in the Western Balkans should be inclusive and acceptable to all six countries, establishing cooperation on an equal footing, while strengthening further alignment with EU standards and the acquis; expresses, in this context, its cautious view towards the Open Balkan Initiative, which does not encompass all six countries, and expresses its conviction that it should be based on EU rules and bring only positive impacts on the EU integration process;

47. Reconfirms its unequivocal support for the EU-facilitated Belgrade-Pristina dialogue and commends the work of the EU Special Representative for the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue, Miroslav Lajčák; reiterates the importance of constructive engagement on the part of the authorities of both Serbia and Kosovo in order to achieve a comprehensive legally binding normalisation agreement, based on mutual recognition, which is crucial for both countries to advance on their respective European paths and will contribute to regional stability and prosperity; expects the EU to more effectively mediate between the parties, with the aim of overcoming the current stalemate and calls for all past Belgrade-Pristina agreements to be respected and fully implemented in good faith and in a timely manner, including the Association/Community of Serb-Majority Municipalities, which is an important part of the full normalisation process in addressing the needs of the Serbian community, but which should not undermine the functioning of Kosovo’s institutions;

48. Calls on the EEAS to set up a mechanism to monitor and verify the implementation of all the agreements so far reached and to report periodically to the European Parliament about the state of play; calls on EU actors to support Kosovo’s authorities, including by providing concrete security guarantees and opportunities for socioeconomic integration, when working towards the Association/Community of Serb-Majority Municipalities, consistent with Kosovo’s constitution, and as part of a mutual agreement;

49. Calls for active, constructive and more genuine engagement from the Kosovo representatives in the EU-facilitated dialogue led by the EU Special Representative, seeking a comprehensive, sustainable and legally binding agreement in accordance with international law; reiterates its call to improve the quality of the dialogue process
through the participation of women, including in the negotiation team, increased transparency towards the public and meaningful involvement of civil society;

50. Reiterates its regret that the Mitrovica Bridge has not yet been opened to all traffic, in spite of the completion of the renovation works; underlines that the reopening of the bridge is of the utmost importance for the free movement of citizens and in order to overcome intercommunal divisions and foster the process of reconciliation; calls on the Commission to increase efforts towards the finalisation and full implementation of the EU-funded project; calls on the Serbian and Kosovar authorities to promote people-to-people contacts between local communities in order to strengthen dialogue, including at a non-governmental level;

51. Regrets the decision of the Government of Kosovo to reject a proposal by international mediators enabling the collection of the ballots of eligible voters to allow them to vote in the territory of Kosovo in the 3 April 2022 Serbian elections, as had been the practice previously, thereby undermining the government’s commitment to protecting the civil and political rights of all its citizens, including members of minority groups;

52. Calls on both Serbia and Kosovo to step up efforts and the delivery of solutions on the issues of missing persons and justice for war crimes, as well as allowing access to relevant locations where the remains of missing persons are located; calls on the Government of Kosovo to also address these topics as part of the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue and to establish cooperation between Kosovo and Serbia; stresses that the creation of a special post-war crimes court and cooperation with it should be a priority; expresses its deep sympathy to the families of the missing persons and urges the government to pay particular attention to keeping them informed and to apply a more sensitive mode of communication;

53. Regrets the destabilisation activities on the border in the north of Kosovo in September 2021; strongly condemns Serbia’s show of military threats, and calls on Kosovo and Serbia to address all issues through dialogue; deplores several instances of officials not being allowed to enter the territories of Kosovo or Serbia; calls on both parties to treat all visits in a way that is beneficial to the normalisation process;

54. Recalls the need to open up Yugoslav secret service (UDBA) and Yugoslav People’s Army secret service (KOS) archives across the region in order to allow communist-era crimes and criminal organisations to be thoroughly investigated and addressed; notes that a transparent handling of the past is a step towards further democratisation, accountability and institutional strength in the Western Balkan region as a whole;

55. Reiterates its support for the initiative to set up the Regional Commission for Establishing the Facts about War Crimes and Other Gross Violations of Human Rights Committed on the Territory of the former Yugoslavia (RECOM); highlights the importance of the work carried out by the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) and welcomes Kosovo’s active participation; welcomes the recent successful start of RYCO’s programme of bilateral exchanges between school classes in the Western Balkans; reiterates the need to reach out to young people from the northern municipalities and integrate them in the socioeconomic structures of the country;
56. Warmly welcomes the fact that Kosovo and Serbia have adopted the Energy Agreements’ Implementation Roadmap, which is an important step forward in the EU-facilitated dialogue with a view to delivering concrete results for all citizens;

57. Welcomes the start of the implementation of a roaming-free zone in the entire Western Balkans, involving Kosovo, as of 1 July 2021, which is improving connectivity and bringing tangible and concrete benefits to citizens and businesses in the region; urges the Council and the Commission to work with the authorities of the Western Balkan countries in order to eliminate roaming charges between the Western Balkans and the European Union;

58. Commends cultural and youth initiatives, such as the annual cross-border art festival ‘Mirëdita, Dobar Dan!’; which promotes cooperation between artists and activists in Kosovo and Serbia; encourages Kosovar and Serbian authorities, including at the local level, to further build upon such positive initiatives and use cultural heritage as means of bringing different communities together; encourages the establishment of a multinational and multilingual public broadcaster that would promote peace and reconciliation among Western Balkan countries, following the example of ARTE;

59. Calls for the EU to further strengthen foreign policy and security cooperation, public diplomacy and international partnerships in order to achieve progress in reconciliation; welcomes the renewed engagement of the EU allies, in particular the appointment of US, UK and German special envoys for the Western Balkans; calls for them to engage in close cooperation and coordination with the EU envoy with a view to strengthening leverage and providing coherent advice and support;

60. Acknowledges the important contribution of the Kosovo Force (KFOR) and the participating states in building and maintaining a safe and secure environment for all citizens in Kosovo and in facilitating the Euro-Atlantic integration of the Western Balkans; recalls KFOR’s importance to the ongoing development of the Kosovo Security Force by providing advice, training and capacity building;

61. Calls on the Commission and the EU Office in Kosovo to step up their efforts in enhancing visibility and promoting the role, efforts and benefits of the closer partnership between the EU and Kosovo;

**Socioeconomic reforms**

62. Welcomes positive developments in Kosovo’s economic growth; welcomes that Kosovo will also benefit from the EU digital single market, given the great potential of digitalisation for the development of Kosovo’s economy;

63. Welcomes the steps undertaken by the government aiming to reduce the informal economy; regrets, however, the fact that Kosovo’s large informal economy continues to hinder the development of its private sector; notes the existence of a strategy and a corresponding action plan to address the underlying causes of informality, but calls for more effective implementation; notes the large percentage of personal remittance inflows in Kosovo’s GDP;

64. Commends Kosovo for its successful management of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the vaccination process; welcomes that Kosovo has only purchased COVID-
19 vaccines produced and certified by the EU, UK and the US and that work is progressing for Kosovo to qualify for the European digital COVID certificate;

65. Welcomes the government’s emergency measures and the creation of 25 000 new jobs through its recovery package; underlines, however, that assistance for the groups most affected by the pandemic was limited; encourages Kosovo to provide well-targeted and temporary pandemic-related fiscal support to vulnerable households and businesses; stresses that the post-pandemic recovery will significantly depend on the authorities’ ability to address structural challenges and on the effective implementation of the economic support packages;

66. Welcomes the disbursement of a COVID-19 macro-financial assistance package aimed at mitigating economic impacts of the pandemic and preserving macroeconomic stability, as well as the mobilisation of EUR 14.2 billion from IPA III to support Western Balkans partners in meeting the requirements for European Union membership;

67. Underlines that the implementation of both fundamental and structural reforms remains essential for economic recovery and social development, as efforts to tackle corruption, improve the rule of law, enhance transparency and strengthen institutions and social dialogue will also contribute to attracting foreign direct investments to the country; calls on Kosovo to further align with the EU single market acquis and calls on Kosovo’s authorities and the Commission to further support small and medium-sized enterprises in order to develop a stronger and more resilient economy;

68. Underlines that the inadequate and unreliable supply of electricity is one of the constraints on Kosovo’s competitiveness and that the lack of energy security gives rise to significant costs for business and represents a major obstacle to attracting high-quality foreign direct investment; urges Kosovo to step up efforts to make use of the potential for energy efficiency;

69. Urges the authorities to continue their efforts to reform the education system so that it provides students with the skills and knowledge required by the labour market; underlines the necessity of improving the quality and relevance of the education system to increase employment and mitigate skills mismatches; calls on the relevant actors to include persons belonging to minority groups in the design and implementation of employment measures and to provide equal and non-discriminatory state education in minority languages;

70. Calls for increased efforts to integrate women into the labour market, in particular to address the lack of progress on implementing women’s labour rights, gender stereotyping, gender imbalances and the gender pay gap in the labour market; points to significant gender differences in labour market participation and quality of work, insufficient action on sexual harassment in the workplace, discrimination in legal provisions related to maternity leave and the lack of childcare and pre-school capacity; welcomes the growing number of scholarships for female students in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) subjects;

71. Is concerned about continued emigration and demographic decline, which are depriving Kosovo of much-needed highly skilled workers, including healthcare workers, which has a detrimental impact on the healthcare system, and calls on Kosovo to introduce
comprehensive socioeconomic measures to address these challenges; welcomes the launch of reforms to improve the capacity of Kosovo’s employment services and the implementation of relevant active labour market policies, including upskilling and on-the-job training;

72. Reiterates its calls on the Commission to develop a regional strategy to address persistent youth unemployment and increasing emigration by tackling the skills mismatch between the education system and the labour market, improving the quality of teaching and ensuring adequate funding for active labour market measures and vocational training schemes, along with adequate childcare and pre-school education facilities; encourages the extension of the scholarship programme of the College of Europe to also include students from the Western Balkans countries, alongside those from European Neighbourhood countries;

73. Emphasises the need to invest in digitalisation as a way of minimising the digital divide and ensuring equal access to the internet, including for the most vulnerable groups and people living in rural areas; notes the great potential of Kosovo's youth population and of digitalisation for the development of Kosovo's economy; appreciates that Kosovo's youth population has advanced knowledge in information and communications technology and that Kosovo could therefore become Europe's next Silicon Valley;

74. Encourages Kosovo to transform its agricultural sector in order to increase local food production and reduce imports of basic food items;

75. Stresses the need to streamline the social security system and establish a coherent, fair and fiscally affordable compensation system for public employment; welcomes the Government of Kosovo’s intention to deal with the revision of the war veteran pension scheme;

76. Will closely monitor the agreement on the transfer of convicts from Denmark to serve their sentences in Kosovar correctional centres, which takes effect in 2023; calls for the terms and management of this agreement to be made fully transparent and encourages Kosovar facilities to ensure that the detention conditions in Kosovar facilities between Danish and Kosovar convicts are comparable;

The environment, energy and transport

77. Underlines the need to tackle climate change in line with the EU’s climate-related ambitions and to speed up the transition to a climate-neutral, resilient, sustainable, circular and resource-efficient economy, as progress in these areas and alignment with EU standards has remained low;

78. Calls on the government to speed up its work on the 2022-2030 energy strategy, in cooperation with civil society, with a particular focus on a sustainable and affordable energy supply, increased energy efficiency and the further diversification of energy sources in line with the Green Deal Agenda and the Paris Agreement; regrets the continued delay in the publication of the strategy;

79. Reiterates its concern that the overwhelming majority of Kosovo’s energy is derived from coal and calls for the removal of all non-compliant coal subsidies, the
decentralisation of energy production and a transition towards renewables; recognises the need to fully integrate the northern part of Kosovo into the country’s billing system;

80. Encourages Kosovo to reform and open its energy market, including retail electricity, in order to allow choice for consumers and to break up the existing monopoly in the sector; welcomes the opening of a new district heating plant in Gjakova, financed by EU funds, which is the only plant in Kosovo operating using biomass, and which is expected to reduce pollution in the area by over 90%;

81. Expresses its deep concern at the quality of air in most of Kosovo’s urban areas; underlines, in particular, that Kosovo, in recent years, has been in breach of ceilings for air pollutants that pose severe threats to the health of Kosovo citizens; calls on Kosovo to stick to its national emission reduction plan, which complies with the requirements of the Industrial Emissions Directive1;

82. Stresses the need for a healthy environment and the protection of water resources and ecosystems, with a particular focus on rivers for the development of agriculture and the strengthening of food and water security; commends the efforts to improve the quality of water basin management and the related permits; welcomes the Kosovo Supreme Court’s verdict suspending the water permit of a hydropower plant in Shtërpeca; calls for all dam projects inside protected areas to be stopped, including future Natura 2000 sites (Emerald);

83. Stresses the need for improvements in waste management, in particular in waste separation and recycling, as well as the need to introduce circular economy measures in order to reduce waste;

84. Reiterates its call to implement sustainable public transport and mobility policies and address long-standing infrastructure deficiencies; welcomes plans for the modernisation of railways with loans from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and EU grants;

85. Welcomes the adoption of the EUR 3.2 billion Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans and calls on Kosovo to make effective use of it; welcomes the ongoing preparation of five flagship projects on energy, infrastructure and clean water and air, including the Pristina-Merdare section of the ‘Peace Highway’ and the preparation for new investments in the water supply and wastewater treatment;

86. Welcomes the operations undertaken by Kosovo Police in cooperation with EULEX to disrupt illegal logging throughout Kosovo; encourages the relevant authorities and law enforcement agencies in the north and south of the country to increase their cooperation in order to combat this and other crimes;

87. 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 to the President, the Government and Parliament of Kosovo.