



TEXTS ADOPTED

P8_TA(2017)0261

2016 Report on Serbia

European Parliament resolution of 14 June 2017 on the 2016 Commission Report on Serbia (2016/2311(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Presidency conclusions of the Thessaloniki European Council meeting of 19 and 20 June 2003 concerning the prospect of the Western Balkan countries joining the European Union,
- having regard to Council Decision 2008/213/EC of 18 February 2008 on the principles, priorities and conditions contained in the European Partnership with Serbia and repealing Decision 2006/56/EC¹,
- 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 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 declaration and recommendations adopted at the fifth EU-Serbia Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee meeting of 22-23 September 2016,
- having regard to the Report on Enterprise and Industry Policy adopted on 7 October

¹ OJ L 80, 19.3.2008, p. 46.

2016 by the EU-Serbia Civil Society Joint Consultative Committee,

- having regard to the OSCE/ODHIR limited election observation mission final report on early parliamentary elections in Serbia of 29 July 2016,
 - having regard to the Commission’s 2016 report on Serbia of 9 November 2016 (SWD(2016)0361),
 - having regard to the Commission’s assessment on the Economic Reform Programme of Serbia (2016-2018) (SWD(2016)0137),
 - having regard to the Joint Conclusions of the Economic and Financial Dialogue between the EU and the Western Balkans and Turkey of 26 May 2016 (9500/2016),
 - having regard to the Presidency conclusions of 13 December 2016,
 - having regard to the third meeting of the EU-Serbia Stabilisation and Association Council held on 13 December 2016,
 - having regard to its resolution of 4 February 2016 on the 2015 Report on Serbia¹,
 - having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (A8-0063/2017),
- 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;
- B. whereas Serbia’s progress under rule of law chapters 23 and 24 and in the process of normalisation of relations with Kosovo under chapter 35 remains essential for the overall pace of the negotiating process, in line with the Negotiating Framework;
- C. whereas Serbia has taken important steps towards the normalisation of relations with Kosovo, resulting in the First Agreement on the Principles of Normalisation of Relations of 19 April 2013 and the August 2015 agreements, but there is still a lot to be done in this regard; whereas further steps are urgently needed in order to deal with, move forward on and solve all pending issues between the two countries;
- D. whereas Serbia has remained committed to creating a functioning market economy and has continued to implement the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA);
- E. whereas the implementation of the legal framework on the protection of minorities needs to be fully ensured, notably in the areas of education, use of language, access to media and religious services in minority languages, and adequate political representation of national minorities at local, regional and national levels;
1. Welcomes the opening of negotiations on Chapters 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights) and 24 (Justice, Freedom and Security) as the key chapters in the EU approach

¹ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0046.

to enlargement based on the rule of law, as progress on these chapters remains essential for the overall pace of the negotiation process; welcomes the opening of Chapters 32 (Financial Control) and 35 (Other Issues), the opening of negotiations on Chapter 5 (Public Procurement) and the opening and provisional closure of Chapter 25 (Science and Research), the opening of negotiations on Chapter 20 (Enterprise and Industrial Policy) and the opening and provisional closure of Chapter 26 (Education and Culture); looks forward to the opening of additional chapters that have been technically prepared;

2. Welcomes the continued engagement of Serbia on the path of integration into the EU and its constructive and well-prepared approach to the negotiations, which is a clear sign of determination and political will; calls on Serbia to continue to actively promote and communicate this strategic decision among the Serbian population, including by promoting enhanced awareness of Serbian citizens about funding from the EU budget directed to Serbia; invites the Serbian authorities to refrain from anti-EU rhetoric and messages directed at the public; underlines the need for informed, transparent and constructive debates on the EU, its institutions and the implications of membership; takes note of improvements in dialogue and public consultations with relevant stakeholders and civil society as well as their engagement in the EU integration process;
3. Underlines that the thorough implementation of reforms and policies remains a key indicator of a successful integration process; commends the adoption of the revised National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis (NPAA); calls on Serbia to improve the planning, coordination and monitoring of the implementation of new legislation and policies, setting up an adequate and efficient administrative capacity, and to undertake further efforts to ensure the systematic inclusion of civil society in policy dialogues, including in the accession process, as a tool to improve the standards of democratic governance; welcomes the continued initiatives by the Government Office for Cooperation with Civil Society aimed at improving cooperation between the state and the civil sector;
4. Notes delays in the absorption of pre-accession aid, also due to the inadequate institutional framework; urges the authorities to seek positive examples and best practices among the Member States; underlines the need to establish a more effective and comprehensive institutional system at national, regional and local level, for the absorption of IPA (Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance) and other available funds;
5. Welcomes the progress made by Serbia in developing a functioning market economy and the improvement of the overall economic situation in the country; stresses that Serbia has made good progress in addressing some of its policy weaknesses, in particular with regard to the budget deficit which is now below the level set in the Maastricht criteria; highlights that growth prospects have improved and domestic and external imbalances have been reduced; welcomes the fact that the restructuring of publicly owned enterprises has advanced, particularly in the field of energy and railway transportation, and underlines the importance of their professional management in order to make them more effective, competitive and economic; underlines the significance of public sector employment in Serbia and the importance of respecting the rights of workers;
6. Takes note of the results of the presidential elections held on 2 April 2017; strongly condemns the rhetoric used during the presidential campaign by government officials and pro-government media against other presidential candidates; regrets the uneven

access of candidates to the media during the election campaign as well as the parliament recess during the campaign, denying opposition politicians a public forum; calls on the authorities to properly investigate claims of various types of irregularities, violence and intimidation during the elections; recognises the protests which were taking place at that time in various Serbian cities and encourages the authorities to consider their demands in line with democratic standards and the spirit of democracy;

7. Underlines the paramount role of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) for Serbia's economy and invites Serbia to further improve the business environment for the private sector; calls for the Serbian Government and the EU institutions to expand their funding opportunities for SMEs, especially in the field of IT and the digital economy; commends Serbia's efforts concerning dual and vocational education in order to address youth unemployment and underlines the importance of organising training more in keeping with labour market demand; encourages Serbia to promote entrepreneurship, particularly among young people; notes the unfavourable demographic trends and the 'brain drain' phenomenon and calls on Serbia to introduce national programmes to promote youth employment;
8. Welcomes the conduct of the parliamentary elections on 24 April 2016 which were assessed positively by the international observers; calls on the authorities to fully address the recommendations of the OSCE/ODIHR election observation mission, in particular with regard to biased media coverage, an undue advantage for incumbents, a blurring of the distinction between state and party activities, the registration process and the lack of transparency of the financing of political parties and of the election campaign; stresses that the funding of political parties must be in accordance with the highest international standards; calls on the authorities to properly investigate claims of irregularities, violence and intimidation that arose during the electoral process; calls on Serbia to ensure fair and free elections in April 2017;
9. Notes that Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić received 55.08 % of the vote in the presidential election of 2 April 2017; stresses that a multiparty delegation from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) observed the election, and that the OSCE/ODIHR deployed an election assessment mission (EAM);
10. Reiterates its call on Serbia, in line with the requirements of its candidate status, to progressively align its foreign and security policy with that of the EU, including its policy on Russia; considers the conduct of joint Serbia-Russia military exercises regrettable; is concerned about the presence of Russian air facilities in Nis; regrets that in December 2016 Serbia was one of 26 countries that did not support the resolution on Crimea at the United Nations calling for an international observation mission on the human rights situation in the peninsula; welcomes Serbia's important contribution to several EU CSDP missions and operations (EUTM Mali, EUTM Somalia, EUNAVFOR Atalanta, EUTM RCA) and its continued participation in international peacekeeping operations; strongly encourages and supports Serbia in negotiating WTO accession;
11. Commends Serbia's constructive and humanitarian approach in dealing with the migration crisis; invites Serbia to foster this constructive approach also with neighbouring countries; takes positive note of the fact that Serbia has made substantial efforts to ensure that third country nationals receive shelter and humanitarian supplies with EU and international support; stresses that Serbia should adopt and implement the new asylum law; calls on the Serbian authorities to continue to provide all refugees and

migrants with basic services such as adequate housing, food, sanitation and healthcare; calls on the Commission and the Council to provide continued support for Serbia in addressing migration challenges and to closely monitor the application of financial subsidies for the organisation and handling of migration flows; encourages Serbia to sustain the decreasing trend of asylum seekers coming into the EU from Serbia; calls on Serbia to fully respect the rights of asylum applicants in Serbia and to ensure that unaccompanied and separated minors are identified and protected; calls on the Commission to continue the work on migration with all the countries of the Western Balkans in order to ensure that European and international norms and standards are followed;

Rule of law

12. Notes that, while some progress has been made in the area relating to the judiciary, in particular by taking steps to harmonise jurisprudence and further promoting a merit-based recruitment system, judicial independence is not assured in practice, and this prevents judges and prosecutors from implementing the adopted legislation; calls on the authorities to bring the constitutional and legislative framework into line with European standards in order to reduce political influence in the recruitment and appointment of judges and prosecutors; stresses that the quality and efficiency of the judiciary and access to justice remain under constraints due to an uneven distribution of the workload, a burdensome case backlog and the lack of a free legal aid system, which needs to be established; calls for the implementation of the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights;
13. Is concerned by the lack of progress in the fight against corruption and urges Serbia to show clear political will and commitment in tackling this issue, also by enhancing and fully enforcing the legal framework; calls on Serbia to step up the implementation of the national anti-corruption strategy and action plan, and calls for the establishment of an initial track record on investigations, prosecutions and convictions for high-level corruption; welcomes the progress on the finalisation of the draft law on the Anti-Corruption Agency and the implementation of the activities on the prevention of and fight against corruption envisaged through the newly established EU twinning project; urges Serbia to amend and implement the economic and corruption crimes section of the criminal code with a view to providing a credible and predictable criminal law framework; is concerned about repeated leaks to the media regarding ongoing investigations; calls on the Serbian authorities to investigate seriously several high-profile cases where evidence of alleged wrongdoings has been presented by journalists; reiterates its call for proper reform of the offence of abuse of office and abuse of responsible position so as to prevent possible misuse or arbitrary interpretation; stresses that the excessive recourse to the provision on abuse of office in the private sector is harmful to the business climate and hampers legal certainty; calls on Serbia to guarantee the neutrality and continuity of the public administration;
14. Welcomes Serbia's active role in international and regional police and judicial cooperation, the progress made in the fight against organised crime and the adoption of Serbia's first national serious and organised crime threat assessment (SOCTA); calls on Serbia to step up efforts to investigate wider criminal networks, improve financial investigations and intelligence-led policing and develop a solid track record of final convictions; calls on Serbia to fully implement the law of February 2016 on the police, to align with EU rules on the confiscation of criminal assets and to establish a secure

platform to exchange intelligence between law enforcement agencies; welcomes the recent changes to the law on public property and stresses that its transparent and non-discriminatory implementation must be ensured, and that further measures must be adopted to fully establish legal clarity over property rights; calls for additional efforts in addressing the issue of the scope, implementation and implications of the Law on the Organisation and Competences of State Authorities in War Crime Proceedings; calls on the authorities to address cases of excessive use of power by police against citizens; has taken note, with concern, of the controversial events in Belgrade's Savamala district, with regard in particular to the demolition of private property; expresses concern that one full year has passed without any advances in the investigation, and calls for its swift resolution and for full cooperation with the judicial authorities in the investigations to bring perpetrators to justice; calls on the Serbian Ministry of Interior and the Belgrade city authorities to fully cooperate with the public prosecutor in this case; calls on the authorities to refrain from accusations, pressure and attacks directed at members of the 'Let's not drown Belgrade' civil movement;

15. Welcomes Serbia's active role in the fight against terrorism, and recalls that Serbia criminalised already in 2014 the activities of foreign fighters in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2178 (2014); urges the adoption of the national strategy to prevent and fight terrorism finalised in March 2016; calls on Serbia to fully implement the recommendations of the evaluation report of the Council of Europe's Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism (Moneyval), and in particular the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) recommendations on terrorist financing and money laundering; welcomes Serbia's continued international and regional cooperation in the fight against drugs but stresses that further efforts are needed in order to track down and prosecute criminal networks involved in trafficking of human beings; considers that a regional strategy and enhanced cooperation in the region are essential to tackle corruption and organised crime;

Democracy

16. Welcomes the measures taken to improve transparency and the consultation process within the parliament, including public hearings and regular meetings and consultations with the National Convent on European Integration, especially as they are important parts of the negotiation procedure; remains concerned about the extensive use of urgent procedures in adopting legislation; stresses that the frequent use of urgent procedures and last minute changes to the parliamentary agenda undermine parliamentary effectiveness, quality and transparency of the law-making process, while not always allowing for sufficient stakeholder and wider public consultation; underlines that the parliament's oversight of the executive needs to be strengthened; calls for better coordination at all levels and immediate adoption of the parliament's code of conduct; regrets that, due to disruption, the Head of the EU Delegation to Serbia was not able to present the Commission's report in the European Integrations Committee of the Serbian Parliament; stresses that the Head of the EU Delegation should be able to present this report without undue obstacles and that this will also enable proper oversight of the accession process by the Serbian Parliament;
17. Notes that the constitution needs to be revised so as to fully reflect the recommendations of the Venice Commission, notably with regard to the parliament's role in judicial appointments, the control of political parties over the mandate of Members of Parliament, the independence of key institutions and the protection of

fundamental rights;

18. Welcomes the adoption of the public financial management reform programme, e-government strategy, a strategy on regulatory reform and policy-making, new laws on general administrative procedures, public salaries and civil servants at provincial and local government level; notes that the implementation of the public administration reform action plan has been slow in some areas, and that no progress has been made in amending the legal framework for central government civil servants; underlines that more effort is needed to further professionalise and depoliticise the administration and make recruitment and dismissal procedures more transparent;
19. Reiterates the importance of independent regulatory bodies such as the Ombudsman, the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection, the State Audit Institution, the Anti-Corruption Agency and the Anti-Corruption Council in ensuring oversight and accountability of the executive; stresses the need for transparency and accountability of state institutions; calls on the authorities to fully protect the independence of these regulatory bodies, to provide full political and administrative support for their work and to ensure proper follow-up of their recommendations; calls on the authorities to refrain from accusations and unfounded political attacks directed at the Ombudsman;
20. Underlines the necessity of ensuring an accessible education system with a full and balanced curriculum, including on the importance of human rights and anti-discrimination, and work and training opportunities for young people, and of promoting European study programmes, such as the Erasmus programme;

Human rights

21. Underlines that the legislative and institutional framework for observance of international human rights law is in place; stresses that consistent implementation across the whole country is needed; notes that further sustained efforts are needed to improve the situation of persons belonging to vulnerable groups, including Roma, persons with disabilities, persons with HIV/AIDS, LGBTI persons, migrants and asylum seekers, and ethnic minorities; underlines the need for the Serbian authorities, all political parties and public figures to promote a climate of tolerance and inclusion in Serbia; calls on the authorities to ensure proper implementation of the adopted anti-discrimination legislation, especially with regard to hate crimes; expresses its concerns on the Law on Rights of Civilian Victims of War, which excludes some groups of victims of violence during the conflict, and calls on the authorities to review this law;
22. Reiterates its concern that no progress has been made to improve the situation regarding freedom of expression and self-censorship of the media, which is a worsening phenomenon; stresses that political interference, threats, violence and intimidation against journalists, including physical assaults, verbal and written threats and attacks on property, remain an issue of concern; calls on the authorities to publicly and unequivocally condemn all attacks, to provide adequate resources to investigate more proactively all cases of attacks against journalists and media outlets and to swiftly bring the perpetrators to justice; expresses concern for the fact that civil defamation lawsuits and smear campaigns are disproportionately targeting critical media outlets and journalists and for the possible impact on media freedom of decisions of the judiciary with regard to defamation; expresses concern at a negative campaign against

investigative journalists reporting about corruption, and calls on government officials to refrain from engaging in such campaigns; calls for the full implementation of media laws; welcomes the signing of the agreement on cooperation and protection of journalists between prosecutors, police and journalists and media associations and looks forward to its implementation; underlines the need for complete transparency in media ownership and funding of media; encourages the government to guarantee the independence and financial sustainability of both public service media organisations and the financial viability of media content in minority languages, and to increase the role of public broadcasters in this area;

23. Is concerned that the Law on Advertising was adopted in 2015 without proper public consultation, abolishing important provisions such as the ones related to the prohibition of the advertising of public authorities and of political advertising outside election campaigns;
24. Deplores the requirement for the use of IPA funds which demands that civil society organisations (CSOs) become partners with the state in order for their applications to be successful;
25. Condemns the government's and the government-managed media's negative campaign against CSOs; is concerned about the governmental setting up of fictitious CSO institutions in opposition to independent CSOs; finds it unacceptable that partnership with the government is needed in order for CSOs' applications for IPA funds to be successful;

Respect for and protection of minorities

26. Reiterates that the promotion and protection of human rights, including the rights of national minorities, is a basic precondition for joining the EU; 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, which needs to be made operational; calls for the full implementation of the action plan and its annex in a comprehensive and transparent manner, with the constructive engagement of all sides; reiterates its call on Serbia to ensure consistent implementation of legislation on protection of minorities and to pay particular attention to non-discriminatory treatment of national minorities throughout the country, including in relation to education, use of languages, adequate representation in the judiciary, public administration, the national parliament and local and regional bodies, and access to media and religious services in minority languages; welcomes the adoption of new educational standards for the teaching of Serbian as a non-mother tongue and the progress in translation of school textbooks into minority languages, and encourages the Serbian authorities to ensure the sustainability of these processes; invites Serbia to fully implement all international treaties concerning minority rights;
27. Notes that Vojvodina's multiethnic, multicultural and multiconfessional diversity also contributes to Serbia's identity; underlines that Vojvodina has maintained a high degree of protection for minorities and that the inter-ethnic situation has remained good; stresses that the autonomy of Vojvodina should not be weakened and that the law on Vojvodina's resources should be adopted without further delay, as prescribed by the constitution; welcomes the achievement of the Serbian city of Novi Sad selected to be a European Capital of Culture, in 2021;

28. Notes the adoption of the new Roma social inclusion strategy 2016-2025, which covers education, health, housing, employment, social protection, anti-discrimination and gender equality; calls for the full and swift implementation of the new strategy for Roma inclusion, as they are the weakest, most marginalised and most discriminated against group in Serbia, for urgent adoption of the action plan and for the establishment of a body to coordinate implementation of the action plan; condemns the demolition of informal Roma settlements by the authorities, without notification or offers of alternative accommodation; is extremely concerned about the non-issuance of personal documents to Roma people, which restricts their fundamental rights; is of the opinion that all the above-mentioned issues lead to a large number of Roma people from Serbia seeking asylum in the EU;

Regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations

29. Welcomes the fact that Serbia remains constructively committed to bilateral relations with other enlargement countries and neighbouring EU Member States; encourages Serbia to strengthen its proactive and positive engagement with its neighbours and the wider region, to promote good neighbourly relations and to intensify efforts with neighbouring countries to solve bilateral issues in accordance with international law; reiterates its call on the authorities to facilitate access to archives that concern the former republics of Yugoslavia; calls on Serbia to fully implement bilateral agreements with neighbouring countries; underlines that outstanding bilateral disputes should not have a detrimental effect on the accession process; encourages Serbia to enhance cooperation with the neighbouring EU Member States, in particular on border areas, in order to facilitate economic development;
30. Takes positive note of the fact that Serbia has shown an increasingly constructive engagement in regional cooperation initiatives such as the Danube Strategy, the South-East Europe Cooperation Process, the Regional Cooperation Council, the Central European Free Trade Agreement, the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative, the Brdo-Brijuni process, the Western Balkan Six initiative and its connectivity agenda and the Berlin process; welcomes the meeting of the Bulgarian, Romanian and Serbian Prime Ministers on energy and transport infrastructure cooperation and supports the idea of a permanent format of the 'Craiova Group' meetings; stresses the importance of the regional Youth Cooperation Office of the Western Balkans in promoting reconciliation; calls on Serbia to implement the connectivity reform measures associated with the connectivity agenda and the conclusions of the 2016 Paris conference on the Western Balkans and TEN-T regulation; commends the role of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia in promoting regional cooperation and contributing to setting up the Western Balkans Chamber Investment Forum;
31. Welcomes the adoption of a national strategy for the investigation and prosecution of war crimes; calls on Serbia to promote a climate of respect and tolerance and condemn all forms of hate speech, public approval and denial of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes; notes that the mandate of the former War Crimes Prosecutor expired in December 2015; stresses that the appointment of his successor is a matter of serious concern; calls for the implementation of this national strategy and the adoption of an operational prosecutorial strategy in line with the principles and rules of international law and international standards; calls for enhanced regional cooperation in handling war crimes and solving all outstanding issues in this respect, including through cooperation between the War Crimes Prosecutors' Offices in the region on issues of

mutual concern; calls for full cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), which remains essential; calls for war crimes to be handled without any discrimination, addressing impunity and ensuring accountability; urges the authorities to continue working on the issue of the fate of missing persons, locating mass graves and guaranteeing the rights of 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 serious violations of human rights committed in the former Yugoslavia and urges the Serbian Government to take the lead on its establishment;

32. Expresses its concern about the participation of some high-ranking Serbian officials in the 9 January 2017 celebrations of the Day of Republika Srpska, which were held in defiance of Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitutional Court decisions; stresses that both Serbia, as a candidate country, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as a potential candidate, should defend and promote the rule of law by their actions; calls on the Serbian authorities to support constitutional reforms in Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to strengthen the country's capacity to function and participate in EU accession talks;
33. Commends the opening of three new border-crossing points between Serbia and Romania as a positive development and recommends the opening of the three delayed border-crossing points with Bulgaria at Salash–Novo Korito, Bankya–Petachinci and Treklyano–Bosilegrad;
34. Commends both Serbia and Albania for their continued commitment to improving bilateral relations and strengthening regional cooperation on the political and societal level, for example through the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO), headquartered in Tirana; encourages both countries to continue their good cooperation in order to promote reconciliation in the region;
35. 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; reiterates that progress in the Dialogue should be measured in terms of its implementation on the ground; calls, therefore, on both parties to move forward with the full implementation, in good faith and in a timely manner, of all the agreements already reached and to determinedly continue the normalisation process, including the question of the Community of Serbian Municipalities; encourages Serbia and Kosovo to identify new areas of discussion for the dialogue, with the aim of improving the lives of people and comprehensively normalising relations; reiterates its call on the European External Action Service (EEAS) to carry out an evaluation of the performance of the sides in fulfilling their obligations;
36. Regrets, nevertheless, the decision taken by the Serbian authorities not to allow former President of Kosovo Atifete Jahjaga to attend the 'Mirëdita, Dobar Dan' festival in Belgrade, at which she had been invited to deliver a speech on victims of sexual violence during the war in Kosovo; regrets also the subsequent reciprocity measure adopted by the Kosovan authorities to ban Serbia's Minister of Labour Aleksandar Vulin from entering Kosovo; stresses that such decisions are in breach of the Brussels Agreement on freedom of movement concluded by Serbia and Kosovo within the framework of the process of normalisation of the relations between the two countries;
37. Expresses serious concern at the recent tensions between Serbia and Kosovo regarding

the first train journey from Belgrade to Mitrovica North, including warmongering statements and anti-EU rhetoric; stresses the need for both Belgrade and Pristina to refrain from any action that might jeopardise the progress achieved so far and to refrain from provocative steps and unhelpful rhetoric that could hamper the normalisation process;

38. Welcomes the Serbian authorities' support of Montenegro in its investigation into the failed attacks planned for the day of Montenegro's elections in 2016; notes that the Serbian authorities have arrested two suspects following the issuing of an arrest warrant by Montenegro; encourages the Serbian authorities to continue to cooperate with Montenegro to arrange for the suspects' extradition to Montenegro in accordance with the terms of the countries' bilateral agreement on extradition;
39. Calls on the Commission to make further efforts to support a true reconciliation process in the region, notably through support for cultural projects dealing with the recent past and promoting a common and shared understanding of history and a public and political culture of tolerance, inclusion and reconciliation;

Energy

40. 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 take measures to improve alignment with the acquis in the fields of energy efficiency, renewable energy and the fight against climate change, including the adoption of a comprehensive climate policy; calls for the ratification of the Paris climate agreement; calls for the development of a hydropower strategy for the Western Balkans as a whole in line with EU environmental legislation and calls on the authorities to use additional EU funding of EUR 50 million to develop the region's hydropower potential; commends Serbia for establishing the financing system for the environment via the Green Fund; stresses the need to develop Serbia's gas and electricity interconnections with its neighbours; encourages Serbia to speed up technical and budgetary preparations for the Bulgaria-Serbia gas interconnector;
41. Points out that Serbia has yet to adopt formally the Water Management Strategy and has not yet revised the Law on Waters and the National Danube River Basin Management Plan; stresses that these laws are of fundamental importance for further alignment with the EU acquis and for improving the implementation of the EU directives in the water sector;

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