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P9\_TA(2022)0284

## 2021 Report on Serbia

**European Parliament resolution of 6 July 2022 on the 2021 Commission Report on Serbia (2021/2249(INI))**

(2023/C 47/08)

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States of the one part, and the Republic of Serbia, of the other part, which entered into force on 1 September 2013 <sup>(1)</sup>,
- having regard to Serbia's application for membership of the European Union of 19 December 2009,
- having regard to the Commission opinion of 12 October 2011 on Serbia's application for membership of the European Union (COM(2011)0668), the European Council's decision of 1 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 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,
- 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 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 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 Regulation (EU) 2021/1529 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 September 2021 establishing the Instrument for Pre-Accession assistance (IPA III) <sup>(2)</sup>,

<sup>(1)</sup> OJ L 278, 18.10.2013, p. 16.

<sup>(2)</sup> OJ L 330, 20.9.2021, p. 1.

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- having regard to the Commission communication of 19 October 2021 entitled ‘2021 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy’ (COM(2021)0644), accompanied by the Commission staff working document entitled ‘Serbia 2021 Report’ (SWD(2021)0288),
- having regard to the Commission assessment of 22 April 2021 on the Economic Reform Programme of Serbia 2021-2023 (SWD(2021)0096), 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 12th and 13th meetings of the Accession Conference with Serbia at ministerial level, which took place on 22 June and 14 December 2021 and resulted in the opening of cluster 4 — the Green Agenda and sustainable connectivity,
- having regard to the measures to improve the conduct of the electoral process agreed on 18 September 2021 by the co-facilitators during the second phase of the Inter-Party Dialogue, facilitated by the European Parliament,
- having regard to the sixth meeting of the EU-Serbia Stabilisation and Association Council held in Brussels on 25 January 2022,
- having regard to the Council conclusions on Enlargement and Stabilisation and Association Process of 14 December 2021,
- having regard to the Council Regulation (EU) 2022/576 of 8 April 2022 amending Regulation (EU) No 833/2014 concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia’s actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine <sup>(3)</sup>,
- having regard to UN General Assembly resolution ES-11/1 on aggression against Ukraine, adopted on 2 March 2022,
- 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 the European Court of Auditors Special Report of 3 June 2021 entitled ‘Disinformation affecting the EU: tackled but not tamed’,
- having regard to the Council of Europe’s Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) Second Interim Compliance Report on the Fourth Evaluation Round on Serbia, adopted in March 2022,
- having regard to its previous resolutions on the country,
- 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 summit <sup>(4)</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 25 March 2021 on the 2019-2020 Commission Reports on Serbia <sup>(5)</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 15 December 2021 on cooperation on the fight against organised crime in the Western Balkans <sup>(6)</sup>,

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<sup>(3)</sup> OJ L 111, 8.4.2022, p. 1.

<sup>(4)</sup> OJ C 362, 8.9.2021, p. 129.

<sup>(5)</sup> OJ C 494, 8.12.2021, p. 172.

<sup>(6)</sup> Texts adopted, P9\_TA(2021)0506.

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- having regard to its resolution of 16 December 2021 on forced labour in the Linglong factory and environmental protests in Serbia <sup>(7)</sup>,
  - having regard to its resolution of 9 March 2022 on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation <sup>(8)</sup>,
  - having regard to the declaration and recommendations adopted at the 13th meeting of the EU-Serbia Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee, held on 28 October 2021 in Brussels and remotely,
  - 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 the statement of preliminary findings and conclusions of the OSCE/ODIHR international election observation mission to the early parliamentary and presidential elections of Serbia of 3 April 2022,
  - having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (A9-0178/2022),
- A. whereas each enlargement country is judged on its own merits and whereas it is the fulfilment of the enlargement criteria, implementation of the necessary reforms, in particular in the area of 'fundamentals' and legislative alignment that determine the timetable and progress of accession;
- B. whereas Serbia has accepted the gradual adoption of the European Union's objectives and policies during the negotiation process;
- C. whereas democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law are the fundamental values on which the EU is founded; whereas sustainable reforms and their implementation are needed to tackle the challenges that remain in these areas;
- D. whereas since the opening of negotiations with Serbia, 22 chapters have been opened, two of which have been provisionally closed; whereas the progress on various negotiating chapters has been rather slow in recent years; whereas Serbia opened cluster 4 on the Green Agenda and sustainable connectivity in December 2021;
- E. whereas Freedom House continues to list Serbia as a 'partly free' country and notes that the country's democracy scores have experienced one of the greatest downturns in the last 10 years globally; whereas the situation of press freedom in Serbia is worrying and in 2021 the country ranked 93rd out of 180 in Reporters Without Borders' press freedom index;
- F. whereas according to the GRECO Fourth Round Evaluation Report published on 30 March 2022, Serbia has satisfactorily implemented or dealt in a satisfactory manner with eight out of GRECO's 13 recommendations;
- G. whereas Serbia's progress and commitment in the negotiations on open issues with Kosovo remains an important benchmark for future progress in its EU accession negotiations;
- H. whereas Serbia must respect the full integrity and sovereignty of all neighbouring countries and must refrain from influencing their internal political affairs;
- I. whereas Serbia has not complied with the repeated calls to harmonise its foreign and security policy with that of EU, and has not imposed sanctions on Russia following the Russian invasion of Ukraine; whereas its position in international relations constitutes an impediment to its accession; whereas Serbia has a low level of alignment with the EU's common foreign and security policy (CFSP);

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<sup>(7)</sup> Texts adopted, P9\_TA(2021)0511.

<sup>(8)</sup> Texts adopted, P9\_TA(2022)0064.

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- J. whereas in the UN General Assembly Serbia has voted in favour of the resolutions condemning Russian aggression in Ukraine while strongly advocating for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine to be respected in accordance with international law;
- K. whereas the EU is the largest provider of financial assistance to Serbia through the IPA; whereas Serbia has benefited from the EU assistance under IPA II and has received in total EUR 1 539 billion since 2014;
- L. whereas the EU is Serbia's largest investor and trading partner, and the EU has the largest peer-to-peer relationship with Serbia, accounting for 65 % of total exports and 59 % of total imports in 2020;
- M. whereas the EU mobilised EUR 3,3 billion to immediately address the health crisis and mitigate the economic and social consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic; whereas the Commission adopted a EUR 70 million package under IPA II to help fund the access of Western Balkan countries to COVID-19 vaccines procured by EU Member States;
- N. whereas the assistance under IPA III is based on strict conditionality and provides for modulation and suspension of assistance in cases of backtracking on democracy, human rights and the rule of law; whereas the EU provided a total of EUR 2,79 billion between 2007 and 2020 under previous IPA programmes;
- O. whereas the situation of women in Serbia is a source of serious concern, as half of women have been subjected to some form of violence and more than 300 women have been killed in recent years as a result of gender-based violence;
- P. whereas Serbia has ratified all the fundamental conventions of the International Labour Organization;

### ***Commitment to EU accession***

1. Expresses support for Serbia's future membership of the EU and recalls that a credible enlargement perspective requires political will, sustainable efforts and irreversible reforms in all areas, particularly those linked to the rule of law, as well as unwavering commitment to European standards and values; calls on the Serbian authorities to genuinely undertake the necessary reforms and bring the country back on the right track towards EU integration, thus fulfilling Serbia's European aspirations;
2. Underscores that progress in the accession process is result- and reform-oriented and is based on further alignment on the rule of law, good governance, fundamental rights and respect for the European rights and values; emphasises the bonds that exist between the peoples of the European Union and the Serbian people;
3. Welcomes the opening of cluster 4 in December 2021; reiterates that the progress on the rule of law and fundamental rights chapters, full alignment with EU's foreign, security and defence policy, including sanctions against Russia, as well as on the normalisation of Serbia's relations with Kosovo, will determine the pace of accession;
4. Takes note of the preliminary conclusions of the statement of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE/ODIHR) international election observation mission that the 3 April 2022 parliamentary elections presented diverse political options, but a number of shortcomings resulted in an uneven playing field, favouring the incumbents; points out, in this regard, the role of state-sponsored disinformation campaigns aiming to shift opinions on these elections; calls on the Serbian authorities to fully address all ODIHR recommendations well ahead of the next elections; stresses that civil society organisations (CSOs) with expertise in elections should remain involved in this process;
5. Welcomes the increased voter turnout at the elections on 3 April 2022 and the return to a more pluralistic National Assembly, which now includes numerous parties representing national minorities; regrets the highly polarised political environment of the campaign, which was characterised by the absence of a level-playing field, limited media pluralism and widespread pressure on voters; regrets that the abuse of public office by ruling party members remained a persistent problem throughout the campaign;

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6. Condemns attacks on members of the opposition, journalists, members of CSOs and members of the different electoral monitoring missions, as well as other incidents that undermined the integrity of the election process; condemns the violent attack on Pavle Grbović, one of the opposition leaders and calls on the authorities to hold the perpetrators accountable;

7. Expresses concern over the absence of a more proactive role of the Republic Electoral Commission (REC) and the City Electoral Commission of Belgrade when it came to determining and communicating the election results; expresses concern that the complete preliminary results of the Belgrade local elections were not published until more than two weeks after the elections had taken place; deplores that three months after the parliamentary elections of 3 April 2022, the final results have not yet been made available and the National Assembly has not yet been convened; notes that this might cause the deterioration of trust of citizens in the independence of the election administration; regrets the unclear communication by the REC on preliminary election results following the closure of polling stations; underlines that the multiple instances of repeated voting at certain individual polling stations points to the insufficient legal and organisational framework of the electoral process as a whole, thereby diminishing the legitimacy of the elections and raising doubts about the results;

8. Regrets that the issues with the accuracy of the Single Electoral Roll had not been resolved in advance to this election cycle leaving room for its abuse;

9. Calls on the new majority to respect previously adopted political decisions on the EU accession process and to accelerate Serbia's alignment with European policies and values; calls for parliamentary positions to be allocated so as to reflect political pluralism in the National Assembly; notes that all but one Serbian parliaments in the past 10 years were dissolved early and that any further unnecessary snap elections would not contribute to political stability; underlines its readiness to work further with the National Assembly and its parliamentary groups in the context of the Inter-Party Dialogue, while stressing that clear political decisions are needed on Serbia's strategic direction;

10. Strongly regrets the fact that Serbia has still not aligned with EU sanctions following Russia's invasion of Ukraine; stresses that Serbia is one of the very few European countries not aligning with EU sanctions against Russia; calls on the newly elected authorities to swiftly show unambiguous commitment to EU values, standards and rules and to urgently align with the EU's decisions and positions in foreign and security policy, including swift and full alignment with restrictive measures against Russia and Belarus, including sanctions on individuals, groups and entities;

11. Notes Serbia's support for Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty and its vote in UN General Assembly condemning the Russian invasion as well as its support for the exclusion of Russia from the UN Human Rights Council on 7 April 2022; notes that at the same time that Serbian representatives avoided the vote on the exclusion of Russia from the Council of Europe;

12. Reiterates the importance of alignment with the EU's CFSP, which must progressively become an integral part of Serbia's foreign policy as a condition for the accession process; expresses concern about Serbia's low alignment rate, which is the lowest in the region; regrets occasional statements by political leaders that call into question Serbia's foreign policy orientation; underlines, nevertheless, that the momentum created by the new mandate following the 3 April 2022 elections in Serbia is an opportunity to make important progress towards the country's EU perspective; calls on political forces in Serbia to suspend their cooperative relations with authoritarian political parties in Russia;

13. Recommends that further negotiating chapters should only be opened when Serbia takes the necessary measures in this regard, including on the rule of law;

14. Calls on Serbia to reassess its economic cooperation with Russia and deplores continued flights between Belgrade and Moscow at a time when the EU airspace is closed for flights to and from Russia;

15. Notes that between 2015 and 2021, Serbia's military spending grew by 70 %, mainly owing to purchases from Belarus, Russia and China; expresses its concern at its close cooperation with the Russian Federation on military matters; urges Serbia to reconsider its relations with Russia on defence policy and to end all military cooperation with Russia, such as the 'regional humanitarian centre' in Niš; is also concerned about Serbia's growing cooperation with China, including the installation of a mass surveillance system in Belgrade purchased from China, the recent delivery of a surface-to-air missile system, the purchase of Chinese-made military weapons and equipment and joint exercises with Chinese security forces on Serbian territory;

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16. Expresses concern over allegations of wiretapping of members of the Russian opposition in Belgrade by the Serbian authorities and the alleged subsequent transfer of the material to Russian security services; stresses that any cooperation that would contribute to authoritarian and anti-democratic practices in either Russia or Serbia would be detrimental to the future EU-Serbia relations;

17. Expresses further concern over the establishment by the Serbian and Russian governments of the working group for the fight against 'colour revolutions', the purpose and goals of which remain unclear;

18. Welcomes the adoption of the measures improving the electoral conditions and media space ahead of the April 2022 elections as a result of the Inter-Party Dialogue facilitated by the European Parliament; notes progress in the implementation of measures agreed and calls for further strengthening of media pluralism and equal access to the media space; regrets the fact that many measures have been implemented with delays and without the participation of all relevant actors; regrets that more ambitious measures that could have led to more substantial improvements in the electoral conditions were not adopted;

19. Welcomes the decision of the non-parliamentary opposition to participate in the April 2022 elections; reiterates that the only way to guarantee political representation is to engage in political and electoral processes; invites all political actors to remain engaged in these processes and to work together to further improve electoral conditions and the implementation of electoral regulations; invites all political actors to act in accordance with the principles of transparency, accountability and inclusiveness; calls on the newly elected National Assembly to use the current momentum and start implementing fully-fledged legislative oversight of the government's work;

20. Reiterates its support for the work of European political foundations in strengthening Serbia's democratic processes and nurturing a new generation of political leaders;

21. Expresses concern over the very limited visibility in Serbia of European integration processes; reiterates its call on Serbia, the Commission, the European External Action Service (EEAS) and EU Member States to pursue a more active and effective communication strategy about the benefits of EU enlargement and about the support granted through EU funding, and to present the positive example of Serbia's neighbouring countries that are already EU Member States;

22. Expresses concern that public support for EU membership in Serbia has been significantly lower than in the rest of the region and that according to the latest polls a majority of Serbian citizens are against joining the European Union; calls on Serbian political leaders to more actively and unambiguously communicate their commitment to EU values in public debate and to engage with Serbian citizens beyond the major cities on the tangible benefits of EU accession; repeats concerns about the publicly funded media's role in the dissemination of anti-EU rhetoric; invites the new National Assembly to support Serbia's European future, inter alia through its own strategic communication; reiterates the European Parliament's readiness to take part in communication activities together with Serbian MPs in order to bring the EU and Serbia closer together; calls on certain government officials to stop supporting anti-EU disinformation campaigns;

23. Welcomes the fact that EU membership continues to be Serbia's strategic goal, regrets, however, that there has been a lack of progress in many areas of Serbia's reform agenda and that there has even been backsliding on issues that are fundamental for EU accession;

24. Notes that the adoption of the new accession methodology has not led to a substantial acceleration of Serbia's EU accession process and calls for its full implementation; urges the EU Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement to be more proactive about Serbia's accession process, in particular about fundamental freedoms, democracy and rule of law, and the fight against corruption and organised crime; expresses concern about public allegations that the EU Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement is downplaying some rule of law-related issues in accession countries and encourages the Commission to duly follow-up on Parliament's requests in this regard;

25. Regrets that the European integration process in Serbia is insufficiently transparent, as important documents, such as the reports on the implementation of the National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis, have not been published for years;



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26. Underlines that the EU is Serbia's biggest trading partner, reinforcing their mutual relationship based on trust and a membership perspective, and therefore regrets the fact that the Serbian Government has at times put a greater emphasis on its ties with China and Russia than on those with the EU;

27. Notes the initiative of the French Presidency of the EU Council to organise an EU-Western Balkans Conference and hopes that it will be used to invigorate the enlargement process and to give the Western Balkan countries a clear accession perspective; looks forward to the Czech Presidency of the EU Council and its further support to the EU's enlargement policy; welcomes Serbia's contribution to the Conference of the Future of Europe in the form of 52 recommendations;

### ***Democracy and the rule of law***

28. Urges the newly elected majority to focus on addressing structural shortcomings and delivering concrete and tangible results in the rule of law, fundamental rights, freedom of expression, media freedom, the fight against corruption, disinformation and the functioning of democratic institutions and public administration; is concerned that on several occasions the lack of oversight over the executive and the lack of meaningful public consultation affected the quality of legislation and led to distortions in the division of powers; calls on Serbia to fully implement the separation of powers in accordance with its Constitution and democratic standards; stresses that the establishment of checks and balances is a precondition for preventing excessive concentration of political power and recalls that independent media are a cornerstone of healthy democratic debate;

29. Welcomes the recent changes to the Constitution following the referendum in January 2022, which aim to enhance the independence of the justice system; stresses that the reform process to strengthen the independence of the judiciary should continue, in particular through legislative amendments to allow the effective implementation of these constitutional amendments, in line with European best practices and the Venice Commission recommendations and in a transparent and inclusive manner; regrets the continuous pressure on the judiciary and condemns public denials of international verdicts for war crimes; calls on the newly elected majority to strengthen the safeguards for the independence and efficiency of the judiciary as a matter of priority; emphasises the need for additional measures to fully guarantee the independence of the judiciary in line with recent constitutional changes;

30. Highlights the benefits of decentralisation process and calls for the competences of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina to be strengthened; recalls that under the Serbian Constitution, the law on the financing of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina should have been adopted by the end of 2008 and encourages the future government to submit the matter to the National Assembly without any further delay;

31. Acknowledges some improvements in the work of the National Assembly, in particular the reduced use of urgent procedures and the adoption of a new Code of Conduct for members of the National Assembly drawn up in cooperation with GRECO; is concerned, however, that inflammatory language against political opponents, civil society, media and representatives of other institutions expressing differing political views is still used during parliamentary discussions, including by government officials; calls on the new National Assembly not to tolerate such practices and to effectively enforce its Code of Conduct; hopes that the negative practices that have characterised previous National Assemblies, including the overuse of urgent legislative procedures and filibustering, will not resurface and encourages the government to attend the sessions of the National Assembly more regularly;

32. Regrets that the work of the National Assembly was hindered by the lack of genuine political debate between majority and opposition parties; underlines the importance of a cross-party consensus on EU-related reforms for ensuring the country's progress on its EU path; is concerned that the National Assembly is not exercising its oversight role and that the legislative agenda is exclusively dictated by the executive; calls on the new parliamentary leadership and parliamentary groups to focus on constructive debates in the National Assembly for the benefit of citizens;

33. Expresses satisfaction with the fact that the minority parties and coalitions in the new Serbian National Assembly will have a total of 13 representatives representing the Bosniak, Hungarian and Croat national communities; is concerned that Roma will not have their own representatives in the National Assembly;

34. Calls on the Serbian National Assembly to ensure that independent regulatory bodies are empowered to exercise their oversight roles effectively by supporting and monitoring the implementation of independent regulatory bodies' findings and recommendations;

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35. Reiterates its concern about limited progress in the fight against corruption and organised crime and about several high-profile corruption scandals pointing to probable links between state officials and organised crime; calls on Serbia to intensify its efforts to effectively address these issues; calls on the authorities to refrain from commenting ongoing investigations and trials, exercising pressure on the judiciary;

36. Welcomes GRECO's Second Interim Compliance Report on the Fourth Evaluation Round on Serbia, which deals with corruption prevention among members of the National Assembly, judges and prosecutors, and concludes that Serbia has implemented satisfactorily or dealt in a satisfactory manner with eight of the 13 recommendations contained in the Fourth Evaluation Round Report; calls for implementation of the outstanding recommendations; notes the adoption of a new Law on the Prevention of Corruption, recently amended in line with GRECO's recommendations;

37. Urges Serbia to deliver convincing results, including a convincing track record of effective investigations in the fight against corruption, especially in cases with a high level of public interest, and to improve its track record in investigations in high-level corruption cases, which should involve the seizure and confiscation of criminal assets; notes with concern that no information on formal investigations is available in the Krušik and Telekom Srbija cases; notes that the Jovanjica case is being tried in two separate indictments and that new cases of high-level corruption have come to light in investigative media, in particular the so-called Pandora Papers;

38. Reiterates its call for justice with regard to the unlawful demolition of private property in the Savamala neighbourhood in Belgrade; notes the allegations of the sentenced police officer forced to take sole responsibility for the entire case; reiterates its concern about the possibility that this case may lapse in the next few years; urges the authorities to fully investigate the case and prosecute all persons responsible;

39. Urges the authorities to investigate and to prosecute all alleged ties to the Belivuk criminal group; expresses concern about recent allegations that Darko Saric was running an international criminal organisation while in prison in Serbia;

40. Stresses that IPA III provides for modulation or even suspension of funds if there is significant regression or persistent lack of progress on fundamentals, including the fight against corruption and organised crime, as well as media freedom; calls in this context on 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 exercise its competences on IPA III funds in the Western Balkan countries;

41. Welcomes the adoption of changes to the Law on Free Access to Information of Public Importance, responding to the calls for improved transparency in public policy-making, which enables citizens to obtain information of public interest without unnecessary obstacles, and calls for its swift implementation;

42. Notes that the strategy for development of civil society was adopted but regrets that there is no accompanying action plan; invites the Commission and EEAS to continue close cooperation with civil society and the media in Serbia and to support their activities; recalls that a strong and independent civil society is an essential component of any democracy; calls on the Serbian authorities to include civil society in policy- and decision-making, to refrain from dismissing any criticism by civil society as foreign interference and to foster a climate conducive to the work of all CSOs so that they can work without fear of intimidation or even criminalisation;

43. 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 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;



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44. Deplores the fact that certain parts of the former Yugoslav historical archives are still inaccessible; reiterates its call on the authorities to facilitate access to these archives, especially those of the former Yugoslav Secret Services (UDBA) and the Yugoslav People's Army Secret Service (KOS), in order to allow communist-era crimes to be thoroughly investigated and addressed, to facilitate the reconciliation process and calls for these archives to be returned to the respective governments of the successor states if they so request;

45. Calls on Serbia to respect its obligations and fully cooperate with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT), and to implement all of their decisions;

### ***Fundamental freedoms and human rights***

46. Condemns the limitations on the freedom and independence of the media and the misuse of the media by the governing majority to gain an unfair political advantage, attack political opponents and spread disinformation; emphasises the negative impact of these restrictions on democratic processes in the country; notes that competition in the media sector improves media pluralism;

47. Welcomes the Government's efforts to implement its media strategy but at the same time regrets practices which indicate that the authorities are intentionally delaying its implementation; notes that additional steps should be made in order to further increase media freedom and calls on the Serbian authorities to take immediate measures to guarantee freedom of expression, the independence of the media and media pluralism;

48. Notes that the abuse of public money to acquire ownership of media outlets is considered to be one of the main mechanisms for media capture in Serbia; recalls that information on media ownership should be available to the public and calls for greater transparency of media ownership and financing, as well as for creation of an environment that allows independent and investigative media to access funding and operate safely; calls for increased transparency of public financing of media;

49. Notes that several recent elections of members of the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media (REM), as well of members of the Radio Television of Serbia governing board in June 2021, have been seen as controversial; notes with concern some public assessments that decision-making in REM is politically biased; notes the new open call for the allocation of national television frequencies and licences and underlines the importance of a fair and transparent process; remains concerned about issues linked to media concentration in the Telekom Srbija case; underlines the importance of improving the functioning and independence of REM as per Inter-Party Dialogue recommendations in order to strengthen media pluralism and implement the media strategy;

50. Notes the disproportionate visibility given to third countries by Serbia and that certain media outlets are the main source of anti-EU and pro-Russian narratives in Serbia;

51. Deplores the continuing physical attacks, intimidation, hate speech and political slurs against journalists and civil society, including by MPs and government officials; calls on the authorities to investigate all cases of such attacks, to punish the perpetrators appropriately and to improve the safety of journalists and human rights defenders; expresses concern about continuous discrediting and targeting of human rights defenders, investigative journalists, media outlets and CSOs which are critical of government policies; calls on Serbia to strengthen human rights institutions, guarantee their independence, allocate them the necessary financial and human resources and ensure timely follow-up on their recommendations;

52. Calls on the Serbian authorities to ensure the full financial and operational independence of the regulators for electronic communications and postal services (RATEL) and for electronic media (REM), in compliance with the EU *acquis*; calls for further progress on the implementation of the action plan based on the media strategy, without delays and in a transparent and inclusive manner;

53. Calls for general respect for the basic right to peaceful gatherings and for law-enforcement officials to refrain from the use of excessive force; condemns violence by groups of extremists and hooligans during peaceful protests, such as the November 2021 protests against the Ratko Mladić mural in Belgrade and the December 2021 environmental protests in Šabac and Belgrade; remains concerned about the reports that the police did not perform its protective function during these environmental protests; calls on the Government to ensure the removal of the murals glorifying convicted war

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criminals, and for an effective investigation of attacks against protesters, including of any public officials involved; calls for a full investigation into any links between hooligans and the police; regrets that a number of citizens faced misdemeanour charges; calls for an end to these disproportionate limitations on the right to peaceful assembly;

54. Welcomes the adoption of the Law on Gender Equality and the amendments to the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination and calls on government to ensure that these laws are promptly implemented; reiterates that coordination, an effective institutional structure and cooperation with civil society are necessary in order to improve the situation of human rights and political freedoms for women and vulnerable groups; calls on Serbia to improve gender equality and the women's rights situation, including by prioritising gender mainstreaming and increased cooperation with civil society, in particular women's organisations;

55. Welcomes the adoption of a new strategy on violence against women and against domestic violence; stresses, however, that implementation and improvements are needed, and calls for a coherent policy approach on the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, based on prioritising and allocating sufficient resources to prevent gender-based violence, protect victims of crime and prosecute perpetrators;

56. Regrets that in the previous parliamentary term, the National Assembly failed to adopt the Law on Same-Sex Partnerships which was drafted by the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue; calls on the new and more pluralistic National Assembly to do so;

57. Calls on the Serbian authorities to step up efforts to ensure the non-discriminatory treatment of ethnic, religious and sexual minorities and other vulnerable groups, and to continue the implementation of a positive agenda on this issue, in full conformity with EU principles and legislation; urges the authorities to actively pursue investigations and convictions for hate-motivated crimes; condemns the ethnic hatred spread by some government officials and politicians;

58. Calls on Serbia to ensure that minority groups have equal opportunities, especially in education, the use of minority languages, access to the media and religious services in minority languages, adequate representation in political and cultural life, publicly-owned media, the administration and the judiciary, to create a positive atmosphere for education in minority languages and to intensify the printing of textbooks in minority languages; calls on Serbia to protect and promote the cultural heritage, languages and traditions of its national minorities; calls on Serbia to take all necessary measures to ensure that the composition of all levels of government reflects the national composition of the population in their respective territories;

59. Condemns the manipulation of the fragmentation of minority groups and expresses its concern at the unwillingness of the Serbian authorities to consistently and fully implement the intergovernmental agreement on the protection of minorities; notes that more has to be done to actively implement anti-discrimination legislation;

60. Welcomes the commitment of the Serbian authorities to support the organisation of EuroPride in Belgrade as a key moment for the LGBTI+ community in Serbia and the region; calls on the Government and police forces to ensure smooth planning and organisation of the programme, as well as the safety and well-being of participants; calls for increased measures to combat harassment, hate propaganda and hate crimes against LGBTI + people;

61. Reiterates its condemnation of the alleged use of forced labour and violation of human rights and trafficking in the case of around 500 Vietnamese citizens in the Chinese Linglong factory construction site in Serbia; notes that initial steps were taken and inspections conducted, and calls on Serbian authorities to investigate the case and to ensure that the labour rights of citizens and residents are respected; calls on Serbia to improve alignment with EU labour law and to comply with relevant International Labour Organization conventions which it has ratified; stresses that Serbian labour and environmental legislation should also apply to Chinese companies operating in the country;

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62. Deplores the deportation of a Bahraini national to his home country despite an interim measure by the European Court of Human Rights stating that the extradition should be postponed; recalls that Serbia must uphold the fundamental rights of all people on its territory; urges Serbian authorities to respect its international obligations, and to fully enforce and implement all rulings of the European Court of Human Rights;

63. Notes the importance of cooperating with the EU in the fight against trafficking in human beings and migrant smuggling through the 'Balkan route'; welcomes Serbia's cooperation on managing migration with its neighbours and EU Member States, stressing the need to fully respect human rights and international standards and principles;

64. Is deeply concerned about the spread of disinformation about Russian aggression against Ukraine, including by media outlets close to the government; calls on the Serbian authorities to take decisive steps to tackle disinformation and to discredit the most widely circulated fake news; calls on Serbia and the Commission to bolster infrastructure for fighting disinformation, Russian propaganda and other hybrid threats, and to support evidence-based responses to both short-term and long-term disinformation threats in the Western Balkans; stresses that all political leaders have the responsibility to stop the spread of malicious disinformation about Russian aggression against Ukraine; notes that a tolerant attitude towards malign external influences may have serious negative consequences on Serbia's prospects for EU accession;

65. Is particularly concerned about the disinformation narratives emanating from the Kremlin and distributed through Sputnik Serbia and other domestic actors; calls on the Serbian authorities to align with the EU sanctions and to take measures to prevent Russia Today and Sputnik Serbia from disseminating fake news and disinformation; is deeply concerned that the main sources of disinformation include government-funded or supported tabloid newspapers and some television channels with national coverage; deplores that the public broadcaster has been using Russian propaganda language, such as 'special military operation', since the start of the unprovoked Russian invasion of Ukraine;

66. 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 concerned that Serbia and Hungary are helping Russia and China with their geopolitical objectives; calls on the EEAS to pivot to a more proactive stance, focusing on building the EU's credibility in the region and expanding monitoring activities by the EEAS Strategic Communications Task Force (StratCom) to focus on cross-border disinformation threats emanating from Western Balkan countries and their neighbours;

67. Underlines the importance of dialogue with Serbian civil society and the private sector to coordinate anti-disinformation efforts in both Serbia and the region; notes, in this regard, that Serbia would benefit from further involvement in expert groups of the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA);

68. Appreciates the work of the EEAS StratCom Task Force for the Western Balkans tasked with ensuring coordinated and consistent EU communication, building resilience and dealing with disinformation and information manipulation against the EU; calls for reinforcement of strategic communication actions and staff increase, including the possibility of setting up a regional strategic communication post located in the Western Balkans region;

### ***Reconciliation and good neighbourly relations;***

69. Welcomes Serbia's participation in regional cooperation mechanisms and encourages it to devote more effort to improving bilateral relations with other enlargement countries and neighbouring EU Member States; commends its decision to donate around 600 000 COVID-19 vaccines to the region, including to North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina; encourages it to work on all levels to promote reconciliation and improve good neighbourly relations, implement bilateral agreements and resolve outstanding bilateral issues with its neighbours, in particular border demarcation, succession, the return of cultural property and the opening of military archives;

70. Emphasises Serbia's commitment to work with neighbouring countries to address the issue of missing persons and emphasises that reconciliation with neighbouring countries is a precondition for the normalisation of regional relations; expresses its concern at the adoption of the Law on Cultural Heritage; calls for full respect for cultural heritage and for the promotion of cultural cooperation and reiterates the importance of protecting the languages of national minorities in Serbia in accordance with laws and bilateral agreements with neighbouring countries;

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71. Welcomes the calls of the Serbian authorities for the return of Bosnian Serbs to the work of the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina;

72. 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; 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;

73. 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 the local authorities when working towards the Association/Community of Serb-Majority Municipalities as part of a mutual agreement;

74. Calls for further active and constructive engagement in the EU-facilitated dialogue; urges the Serbian and Kosovo Governments to refrain from any action that could undermine trust between the parties and put the constructive continuation of the dialogue at risk; reiterates its call to improve the quality of the dialogue process through the participation of women, increased transparency towards the public and meaningful involvement of civil society;

75. 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; commends cultural and youth initiatives such the annual cross-border arts festival 'Mirëdita, Dobar Dan!', which promote collaboration between Kosovo Albanians and Serbs;

76. Welcomes the fact that Serbia and Kosovo 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; calls on both Serbia and Kosovo for the stepping up of efforts and the delivery of solutions on the issues of missing persons and justice for war crimes committed during the Yugoslav wars in the 1990s; calls on the government to also address these topics as part of the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue and to establish cooperation between Serbia and Kosovo;

77. 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 16 January 2022 constitutional referendum and in the 3 April 2022 Serbian elections, as had been the practice previously;

78. Regrets the destabilisation activities on the border in the north of Kosovo in September 2021 and calls on Belgrade and Pristina to address all issues through dialogue; regrets the fact that there was no agreement reached in the working group tasked with finding a solution on the use of vehicle licence plates; calls on both parties to find a permanent solution promoting the normalisation of economic and political relations within the framework of the EU-facilitated dialogue as soon as possible; 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;

79. Notes the complaints of ethnic Albanians from the Presevo valley who were denied the right to vote and apparently deleted from the civil registry at their place of residence, thus being deprived of their fundamental and political rights by the Serbian authorities; is deeply worried about the allegations and studies indicating that the Serbian authorities are abusing the law on the residence of citizens and about the 'passivisation' of residential addresses of Albanian ethnicity citizens living in southern Serbia in a systematic and discriminatory manner; calls for independent and thorough investigations into these allegations and on the Serbian authorities to cease all discriminatory practices and targeting;

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80. Welcomes the adoption of the National Strategy for War Crimes Prosecution for the period 2021-2026 and the recent start of the work of various bodies and reporting mechanisms linked to its work; underlines the importance of transparent and inclusive implementation of the Strategy; urges the Serbian authorities to act decisively against the glorification of convicted war criminals and to cease all divisive rhetoric and actions that undermine the integrity of countries in the neighbourhood and threaten regional stability and reconciliation; urges the Serbian authorities to show a genuine commitment to investigating and bring to court war crimes cases; reiterates that there is no place in Europe for genocide denial;

81. Stresses the importance of regional cooperation on war crimes and missing persons, calls on the Serbian authorities to condemn all forms of hate speech, intimidation campaigns and public approval and denial of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes; regrets that some Serbian authorities and some Serbian politicians continue to deny the Srebrenica genocide; calls on Serbian authorities to ensure the continuation of war crimes trials, including at local level, and achieve justice for victims by recognising and respecting court verdicts on war crimes, fighting against impunity for wartime crimes, investigating cases of missing persons, investigating grave sites, and supporting domestic prosecutors in bringing perpetrators to justice;

82. Condemns the growing presence of convicted war criminals, such as Veselin Šljivančanin, Dragoljub Ojdanić and Nikola Šainović, in the media space, which they use to spread hatred and intolerance towards national minorities in Serbia;

83. Calls for the EU and its allies to further strengthen the work on 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;

84. 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 (RECOM);

85. Welcomes the start of implementation of a roaming-free zone in the entire Western Balkans as of 1 July 2021, improving connectivity and bringing tangible and concrete benefits to citizens and businesses in the region; welcomes the adoption of the Brdo Declaration signed by EU officials and leaders of Western Balkan countries recognising the importance of this achievement; 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;

86. Urges the Serbian authorities to unambiguously support setting up of a common regional market within the Berlin Process framework as a stepping stone on its EU accession path; emphasises that all regional economic cooperation schemes in the Western Balkans should be inclusive and acceptable to all six countries, establishing cooperation on an equal footing among all six countries, while strengthening further alignment with EU standards and the *acquis*;

### ***Socio-economic reforms***

87. Welcomes the progress made in developing a functioning market economy, although the state retains a strong footprint, and the fact that the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the economy was successfully mitigated by, inter alia, timely fiscal and monetary support measures; calls nonetheless on Serbian authorities to provide for targeted pandemic-related support for vulnerable households and businesses; notes that the EU has continued to provide essential support to Serbia for its socio-economic recovery and for immediate medical needs, including additional support of EUR 10 million;

88. Notes with concern that none of the allegations mentioned in the previous report made by investigative journalists about government manipulation of COVID-19 statistics for political purposes have been investigated; stresses that trust and transparency are of particular importance in the government's efforts against COVID-19 and therefore urges the Serbian government to provide all relevant statistics to citizens;

89. Notes that despite improvements, the labour market still suffers from structural problems and demographic and migration challenges; calls on Serbia to improve women's position in the labour market and further tailor education and training to labour market needs, in particular in the area of vocational education and training and linked to the green and digital transition;



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90. Is deeply concerned by the socio-economic situation in several districts of southern Serbia; calls on the Serbian Government to investigate all allegations about the use of social assistance instruments to put pressure on voters, especially vulnerable groups and members of the Roma minority; calls on the Serbian Government to respond to the challenges of poverty and unemployment in these and other parts of the country and to ensure that social and employment policies have sufficient financial and institutional resources;

91. Calls on Serbia to improve its capacities to provide statistics and to carry out the population census, in compliance with the highest international standards and with the involvement of independent observers;

92. Is deeply concerned by the depopulation and continuing emigration of Serbia's human capital; welcomes Serbian governments initiatives and innovative approaches to counter these trends, including demographic change, by working with international organisations through a series of targeted policies across sectors to address demographic threats, as the steady population decline remains a key challenge for economic development; calls on the new government to pay more attention to youth policies; notes that additional efforts need to be invested in the socio-economic development of the border regions in order to prevent them from depopulation; recalls that IPA III cross-border cooperation programmes could be utilised for this purpose;

93. Welcomes the implementation of programmes to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in particular the reduction of the cost of borrowing for SMEs; calls on Serbia to address the remaining shortcomings, including a volatile business environment and unfair competition; welcomes the engagement of Serbia in the process of regional market integration in the Western Balkans, which followed by further economic integration with EU single market will attract the investments needed and generate new opportunities for citizens and the business community;

94. Reiterates its concern about Serbia's growing dependence on Chinese investments and the scale of loans that Serbia will have to pay back to China; urges the Serbian authorities to improve the transparency of and strengthen the legal compliance with environmental impact assessment requirements in highly polluting industries for Chinese, Russian and other non-democratic foreign investments stemming from bilateral agreements on strategic cooperation; regrets the recent delivery Chinese missile systems to Serbia;

95. Stresses that the countries of the Western Balkans must be put at the heart of the EU's Global Gateway initiative and provide a transparent and sustainable investment alternative to the investments and loans from China and other authoritarian regimes;

96. Notes the withdrawal of the amendments to the Law on Expropriation and calls for a broader public debate on this issue;

97. Welcomes the improvements in fighting money laundering and terrorist financing but calls for an improved track record in investigations in cases of money laundering; notes that infrastructure and construction are significant sources of illicit money and encourages Serbia to minimise the risk of illicit financial flows in the construction industry and to reduce tax evasion and corruption in the infrastructure sector; calls on Serbia to ensure that Financial Action Task Force (FATF) recommendations are used in good faith;

98. Expresses concerns about the lack of progress on the 'List' case, which constitutes an abuse of the legal framework by state authorities in order to target particular CSOs and media critical of government policies; recalls the call on the Serbian Administration for the Prevention of Money Laundering of the Serbian Ministry of Finance to fully investigate these issues;

99. Recalls the conditionality of funding under IPA III and the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans (EIP); recognises the importance of IPA III and the EIP for supporting the reform process, green transition, sustainable connectivity, human capital, competitiveness and inclusive growth, as well in reinforcing regional and cross-border cooperation;

### ***The environment, energy and transport***

100. Welcomes the concrete steps taken in order to phase out coal power plants; expresses serious concern that despite current climate and environmental challenges, Serbia is still investing in a new coal power plant; urges the authorities to adopt a national integrated energy and climate plan consistent with the European Green Deal's zero emissions target for 2050 and the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans;



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101. Calls on national authorities to swiftly implement the Law on the Use of Renewable Energy Sources and for broader public debate on the energy transition and the ongoing construction of dozens of small hydropower plants;

102. Calls on Serbia to step up efforts to diversify its energy supply and overall energy mix, in particular to reduce its dependency on Russia, as well as to increase investments and modernise energy infrastructure in order to implement the necessary transition from fossil fuels to renewable sources of energy; underlines, in this respect, the importance of the construction of the interconnector with Bulgaria; urges the Commission to ensure that IPA funds contribute to building a climate neutral economy in Serbia, fully in line with the Paris Agreements and the EU decarbonisation targets, and to give the necessary technical support to achieve this goal;

103. Underlines the fact that lack of efficiency in the energy sector critically impacts the country's overall economic competitiveness and calls on the country to work purposefully towards the transition to a green and circular economy by phasing out fossil energy sources and greatly increasing the recycling rate of resources and materials;

104. Notes with concern the consistent lack of compliance with and the consequent breach of the Energy Community Treaty (ECT) and calls on Serbia to follow the recommendations of the ECT and bring its activities in the energy sphere in line the Third Energy Package and in compliance with the EU energy policy;

105. Reiterates its concern at the high levels of air pollution and urges the authorities to speed up the implementation of air quality plans; regrets the fact that several places in Serbia, notably Belgrade, Smederevo, Bor and the Kolubara and Tamnava valleys, are often on the list of the most polluted areas in the world in terms of air quality; urges the authorities to swiftly take measures to improve air quality, especially in large cities and industrial areas; stresses the importance of finding sustainable solutions and limiting the use of lignite and other low-calorie coal in energy production and heating;

106. Is deeply concerned by Chinese-financed coal power generation projects and their impact on the environment and air quality; notes the fact that the adoption process for the programme on air protection is currently ongoing and welcomes small-scale grants to municipalities for air quality and waste management improvements and funding the implementation of projects to reduce air pollution in Serbia;

107. Reiterates its regret over the lack of action on the pollution of the river Dragovishtitsa by mines operating in the region and its detrimental effect on the health of local people and the environment;

108. Underlines the need for improvements in waste management legislation, implementation, enforcement and to accelerate introducing and implementing waste hierarchy and circular economy measures;

109. Notes the withdrawal of the exploration licences for the lithium extraction and processing project in Western Serbia; calls on the Serbian authorities to be fully transparent in this process and for a comprehensive impact assessment to be conducted, including public consultations with concerned local communities when issuing licences;

110. Expresses deep concern about serious problems of corruption and rule of law on the environmental issues and the general lack of transparency and environmental and social impact assessments for infrastructure projects; notes in this context the opening of cluster 4 (Green Agenda and Sustainable Connectivity) in the EU accession negotiations; calls for follow-up on the legitimate concerns expressed in environmental protests and for these to be addressed during the negotiations;

111. Calls for an increase in the total area of the territory of Serbia under protection and for the implementation of measures and adequate financing of nature protection to be ensured; calls for the consistent application of the Law on Nature Protection and the Law on the Use of Renewable Energy Sources with a view to stopping any harmful projects in protected areas;

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112. Welcomes the adoption of the Waste Management Programme and notes that the public presentation process for the Waste Management Programme action plan for the period from 2022 to 2024 is ongoing; notes that the Ecological Information System was put into operation, allowing citizens to report environmental problems;

113. Calls for a review of all small hydro projects (SHPPs) built so far to identify whether the law and procedures were duly respected when permits were issued; calls for immediate measures to return the rivers to the state they were in before the construction of SHPPs in all cases where the law was clearly violated, such as in the Rakita case; calls for the removal of facilities that endanger shores, lakes, watercourses and groundwater; highlights the need for supervision of any project endangering water resources, which should be put on the list of projects for which an environmental impact assessment study is required; calls for the privatisation of the Jaroslav Cerni Institute for Water Management to be reconsidered;

114. Welcomes Serbia's progress in the reform of its railway system; encourages it to ensure that investments in its transport infrastructure are compliant with the EU's sustainable and smart mobility strategy and that they provide maximum benefit to Serbia's economy;

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115. 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, and the Government and National Assembly of Serbia.

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