

Uniting Europe: Shared responsibility for EU integration of the Western Balkans



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1. Introduction

Europe's Western Balkan region, throughout history, has been **home to rich culture and civilization, to many nations, ethnicities, religions and beliefs**. Yet at the end of the twentieth century, it was one of the least peaceful regions in the world, experiencing violent conflicts, war, crimes and even genocide. The history, customs and equality — of these multiple religions, beliefs, nations and ethnicities — must be firmly upheld.

The countries of the Western Balkan, located at the very heart of our continent, are **our closest partners**: geographically, historically, economically, and strategically. They are 100% European, surrounded by European Union Member States. The region is in fact often, and regrettably, referred to as the 'European backyard', although it could be named more accurately the 'inner courtyard', the 'European patio'. It doesn't get any more European than this. The countries of the Western Balkans have only one conceivable perspective; and, therefore, the European Union must continue reinforcing the **European perspective** of the region. Democratic consolidation, sustainable peace and sustainable economic growth are essential both for the region and for the whole of Europe.

The European future of the Western Balkans, therefore, is imperative as a **geostrategic investment** in a stable, strong and reunited Europe based on common values. The credibility of the enlargement policy firmly relies on the commitment of candidates to these values. **The European Union is not complete without the Western Balkan region.**

The **European integration** project continues to be the **best guarantee for peace, democracy, and prosperity** on our continent. For over 70 years, it has helped us to overcome differences and increase the unity of our continent. EU enlargement has been one of the most successful European policies and has helped reinforce the EU's presence and influence, and in that way also of its Member States, on the global stage — and, as such, should continue to be a leading policy in our engagement with the Western Balkans.

Russia's most recent aggression and war in Ukraine has struck a very sobering chord with many in the Western Balkans, reminding them of the horror of the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s. This new crisis, demanding the closest cooperation and solidarity within the EPP family, is a wake-up call for the EU regarding the additional efforts needed for the Western Balkans' EU integration; without prejudice to the integration standards applied by the European Union for all candidate countries, it should serve as a catalyst for the ultimate unification of Europe — only a more strategic, and more urgent, geopolitical necessity now given the spillover threat of insecurity to the entire region. Our European and transatlantic unity is unprecedented; we ask all our partners and friends to align with our joint efforts and assist in the full implementation of sanctions.

2. The way we've come

The 2000 **Zagreb Summit** — convened by France and co-hosted by Croatia, where EU foreign ministers and heads of state or government opened a process aimed at boosting regional integration and rewarding pro-democracy reforms — paved the way for a turning point and milestone: the **Thessaloniki** declaration, signed by EU Member States in 2003, which offered South-East European countries unequivocal support for their European perspective and for their future within the European Union. Eighteen years have passed since this strategic decision, and it is still relevant today. EU integration remains the best choice for the Western Balkans: offering democracy, prosperity and peace.

The Union and its Member States have essential experience in order to assist the Western Balkans on the right course for EU membership. As the EPP, we adopted at our 2017 **Malta Congress** our '**Emergency Resolution on the Western Balkans**'¹, and we reaffirmed these strong messages in 2018 in **Sofia** in the framework of our **EPP EU-Western Balkan declaration**.² The virtual **Zagreb 2020 EPP EU-Western Balkan Leaders Meeting**, which followed the 2019 Zagreb EPP Congress, as well as the October 2021 **EPP EU-Western Balkans Brdo Summit**³, was the latest of a series of high-level meetings on and in the region.

Nevertheless, EU-Western Balkan relations have encountered **serious obstacles**: The failure to honour commitments is eroding trust in the EU across the region currently, especially in Albania and the Republic of North Macedonia, which are still awaiting the opening of accession negotiations, while visa liberalisation for Kosovo remains long overdue and the urgent need for political and economic reforms in other countries of the region, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina, remain of great concern. The erosion of trust weakens the EU's political leverage, credibility and popularity in the region and diminishes the impact of EU actions and communication on the ground. At the same time, the region still lacks progress in areas such as establishing an independent judiciary, ensuring the rule of law, eradicating corruption and guaranteeing media freedom, pluralism and deliberative support for democratisation processes, as well as civil society's needed oversight function over governance.

The EPP believes EU-Western Balkan **relations must be based on sincere cooperation, reciprocity, conditionality, predictability, solidarity and subsidiarity — and on trust**, based in the realisation of assumed commitments and the demonstrated acceptance of European values. While enlargement remains the EU's most successful foreign-policy instrument for sustainable, democratic, political and economic transformation in the respective societies, this process should become less bureaucratic and more politically guided: more dynamic, more outreach-oriented, more attainable, more measurable and more appealing to the youth of the region.

In addition to the enlargement process and its **renewed methodology**, the EU has initiated numerous political projects for enhancing democracy and good neighbourly relations and for improving the economic situation: in particular, in the framework of the **EU-Western Balkan Summits**, the **Berlin Process**, the EU-facilitated **Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue**, the European

¹ <https://www.epp.eu/files/uploads/2017/04/Western-Balkans.pdf>

² <https://www.epp.eu/files/uploads/2018/05/EU-Western-Balkan-Summit-Declaration-Adop.pdf>

³ https://www.epp.eu/files/uploads/2021/10/WB_Declaration_Paper_5_October.pdf

Parliament's **Jean-Monnet Dialogue** and the **Inter-Party Dialogue** in Serbia, the creation of the **Regional Cooperation Council** (RCC) under the political guidance of the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECp) and **Regional Youth Cooperation Office** (RYCO), the extension of the **EU Youth Guarantee** schemes to the Western Balkan region, and many others. The Berlin Process has become an essential complement of EU policy and has contributed significantly to the region's economic and political development.

All of this has sent — and reiterated — a clear signal: that the **EU remains committed** to the Western Balkans and will continue to prioritise EU accession of the Western Balkan countries.

3. Chances & Challenges

Enlargement fatigue

The EU enlargement process has been one of the most successful European policies, especially in promoting democratic reforms, rule of law, peace, stability and prosperity. One of the ways to promote enlargement is through projecting fundamental European values to candidate and applicant countries. The principle of conditionality — mandatory for moving along the path of accession — makes enlargement policy a powerful EU foreign-policy tool.

The **renewed, and revised, enlargement methodology**, published by the European Commission in 2020, aims to strengthen the accession process of Western Balkan partners by enhancing the method of negotiating and evaluating applicant and aspiring countries' progress, focusing even more on 'fundamental' areas such as strengthening the rule of law, fighting corruption and enhancing the proper functioning of democratic institutions. Each country's progress towards the European Union also depends on its individual efforts to comply with the criteria of the *acquis communautaire* defined in each negotiating framework for candidate and potential candidates as well as via the Stabilization and Association (SAA) Process.

The obvious absence of significant progress in integrating Western Balkan countries could seriously undermine regional and European security. The fact that we have thus far been unable to agree on the opening of accession negotiations with the Republic of North Macedonia and with Albania has caused disappointment and frustration and sends a signal of weakness to those who would challenge the EU. It is important that we as the EPP show a clear sign of support and encourage further efforts of both countries. We have again to introduce sustainable positive momentum. The priorities of the last Slovenian EU Council Presidency have given us reason for optimism; but we must work together to deliver on them.

The EU should make a strategic analysis and clarify the obstacles of stalling accession negotiations with the Western Balkan countries. It should also identify their most important causes to allow the whole process to overcome the impasse of today. In order to address this situation, the EU should take a two-fold approach.

In parallel, on the one hand, the EU should undertake a thorough assessment of its capacity to enlarge. This assessment should include the political considerations prevailing in some of the EU Member States regarding enlargement as well as address their root causes. If needed, the EPP

family should be ready to engage and organise separate missions to the major EU capitals to engage in more deep discussions with decision-makers, experts and politicians in those capitals. In addition, the EU should also have a clear longer-term institutional reforms strategy to unlock the next wave of enlargement, so its institutions are well prepared to take new members on board.

On the other hand, the EU in this assessment should take a more realistic approach, as it has already endeavoured to do in its revised methodology of enlargement, endorsed by Western Balkan partners. The EU should propose a meaningful strategy of accelerated integration, which could include a two-stage approach to integration, starting with the accelerated integration into the EU Single Market and other sectors and then ending with the full accession to the EU institutions and full EU membership. Both stages would be conditional upon the progress made. The citizens of the candidate and potential candidate countries should experience the advantages of EU integration throughout the entire process.

COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has been challenging everywhere, including in the European Union and the Western Balkans — and with reference not only to physical but to political health, as the functioning of democratic institutions has been tested. The pandemic has shown that the EU and Western Balkan countries must continue working together on the basis of solidarity, mutual trust, joint efforts and accurate exchanges of information in order to tackle common challenges.

Since the onset of the pandemic, global security and responsibility have been crucial for the EU, especially vis-à-vis the EU's closest neighbours. The EU has demonstrated its commitment and engagement with Western Balkan countries through enhanced coordination in the fight against COVID-19. Cooperation in the field of public health has been significantly strengthened to support the region during the pandemic, and privileged access to several EU mechanisms and programmes has been provided.

The EU has made EUR 70 million in grants available to Western Balkan countries to help them in their purchase and roll-out of vaccines, in addition to direct vaccine donations from EU Member States. Despite being heavily affected itself, the European Union has provided **unprecedented, essential and unparalleled support** to the Western Balkans, including in far-reaching areas of research and innovation and education, as a matter of European solidarity. At the same time, we appreciate all measures of solidarity which came during the pandemic from Western Balkan partners and the region.

We welcomed the establishment of **green lanes** within the region, enabling unobstructed flow of essential goods and medicines in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic — yet another testimony that regional cooperation delivers.

Economy and Trade

The GDP of the Western Balkans region is less than 1% — and its population around 4% — of the European Union's. The EU is the leading trade partner for all Western Balkan countries, accounting for almost 70% of the region's total trade (China accounts for only 6.5%; Turkey, 4.6%; Russia, 4.3%).

A comprehensive **Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans**, adopted by the Commission in October 2020 — focusing on green and digital transition investments, smart mobility links, sustainable energy and digital infrastructure — is one example of renewed EU commitment and has brought significant new investment opportunities. We also welcome the Sofia Declaration on the **Green Agenda for the Western Balkans**, endorsed by the regional leaders, which outlines incentives for the transition towards a more circular economy and for the adoption of measures needed to preserve and protect environmentally sensitive areas. Swift progress is further needed as regards the **Western Balkans Agenda on innovation**, research, education, culture, youth and sport. These areas are key drivers for the inclusive, green and digital economically as well as socially sustainable transitions, and for tackling global challenges.

The EU's commitment to greater 'open strategic autonomy' has put a strong emphasis on 'technological autonomy' and constitutes another crucial aspect in the context of shifting global value chains, also referred to as '**nearshoring**', as a result of the pandemic. The Western Balkans region has enormous potential, particularly in young and skilled people, for becoming an **investment hub for European companies** trying to reconfigure their value chains; we must help the region and our European SMEs adapt to make the most of these opportunities.

The **Common Regional Market** action plan, including all six Western Balkan partners in the framework of the Berlin Process, should function as a catalyst for deeper regional economic integration and as a stepping-stone towards the EU Single Market. Mobility benefits all, bringing people together and boosting prosperity. The EU must therefore engage in making this plan a reality. Opening the EU's internal market — as an *interim step* towards full EU membership, and not as an alternative — so that the Western Balkan region can enjoy the four freedoms of goods, capital, services and people is a concept which should be more closely followed up and examined.

In July 2021, the **Regional Roaming Agreement**, supported by the Commission and the Regional Cooperation Council, entered fully into force. The abolition of roaming charges throughout the region has been a true achievement and a success story, perceived as a clear benefit for all citizens and showing what can be accomplished by joining efforts. The agreement has improved mobility and integration.

The European Union must support the value of its strategic autonomy with adequate financial resources devoted to the Western Balkans. Since 2007, the **Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance** (IPA) has been the means by which the EU has supported enlargement-related reforms, in the form of financial and technical assistance. EPP leaders and representatives have fought hard and successfully for strong financial contributions to this instrument. As the respect for democracy, human rights and the rule of law is essential for sound financial management and effective EU funding, it should become possible to suspend assistance in the event of degradation in democracy, human rights or rule of law. We welcome the new IPA III perspective (2021-2027), recently approved by the European Parliament, which will help to provide a clear framework for the IPA instrument as a key support tool of sustainable reforms in different areas.

As the EPP, we believe that these many initiatives should not discourage EU Member States from continuing with their **own national or regional initiatives** and contributions. At the same time, initiatives on the part of individual Member States **cannot be seen as a substitute for full EU integration**, but rather as tools for more quickly realising this ultimate goal. Regional cooperation

and initiatives, equally, are not a substitute for full EU integration, but the catalyst for more successful integration; such initiatives benefit citizens most of all and should receive greater support.

Migration, regional security and brain drain

Migration is a **common challenge** for the EU and Western Balkans. It is a transnational phenomenon which no single administration can manage on its own.

Estimates show that as much as a quarter of the population in the Western Balkans has migrated to the EU over the last twenty years. Only if corruption and criminal networks are beaten and the independence of the judiciary and rule of law is strengthened will more investors enter the market to create jobs for future generations and the corrosive trend of brain drain be reversed.

Conflicts, persecution, climate change, hybrid threats and a lack of security and opportunity in countries of origin have contributed to a significant rise of refugee numbers, but even more in illegal migration in recent years. Migration pressure via the Western Balkans continues to be high. The EPP, therefore, welcomes the proposed **Pact on Migration and Asylum**, which aims to balance responsibility with flexible solidarity. We call for solidarity and mutual cooperation with transit and origin countries; they must be included, on equal footing, in the concept of this Pact by using different measures such as capacity-building and operational and technical support also in third countries that effectively contribute to combating and preventing irregular migration to the European Union. The Joint Coordination Platform serves as a best-practice example to support Western Balkan partners with their border protection and offer support when it comes to returning migrants who are not entitled to stay in Europe. Given the seriousness of the situation in Afghanistan, we have to work closely together to tackle the developing challenges and coordinate common responses, as necessary, especially after the recent events at the Greek, Polish, Lithuanian and other EU external borders.

Increasing involvement of third actors

While the EU track remains the overall priority for the region, closer partnerships with other, third actors have come to seem attractive and viable pillars to local elites. This trend is of concern to us, especially with respect to actors seeking to undermine the European project. **Competition in the region among great powers** can easily result in *systemic* competition: in which values, norms and regulatory standards are put to the test. The EU, since it grants, rightly, high importance to compliance with values and norms — even as others often deliberately omit any such concerns — therefore needs to promote individual responsibility in the region more strongly and must challenge the attractiveness of Eastern actors, raising local awareness of their interests and strategies. The shift of US resources to the Indo-Pacific and the US's increasing withdrawal from Europe should motivate the EU even more strongly to fill in this gap. The **EU-US partnership**, nevertheless, representing a crucial and experienced tandem, is still key for significantly moving the region forward and therefore requires more coordination and attention. The US has to be seen as an important player and ally in the Western Balkans.

Stronger regional resilience is needed vis-à-vis those third actors whose interests and actions are often opposed to EU values and EU integration policies. **EU engagement and enlargement** are

vital to ensure no political vacuum develops. If we turn the back on the region, others — in particular, China, Russia, Turkey or any of several Gulf States — fill the void: this process is in fact progressing.

While uneven across the region, **China's** activities in the Western Balkans have deepened. Both within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as well through other means, China has extended its regional influence. One common tool has come in the form of easily accessible loans to governments in support of large, mainly infrastructure projects — projects sometimes deemed environmentally or commercially unsustainable. Contracts are often awarded without going to tender and under Chinese terms that remain confidential, opening room for corruption and non-transparency. Tough, unfavourable, one-sided provisions have been often applied in the event that governments fail in servicing their debt to China, thus rendering them victims to an infamous 'debt-trap diplomacy'. The so-called 16+1 (originally 17+1) format — the result of a Chinese initiative to enhance cooperation with countries from Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe — represents an additional platform enabling China to increase its economic influence and diplomatic grip in the region; this impact will become political as well if nothing changes.

Russia, too, continues to play an intensified spoiler and destabilising role: attempting to derail EU and NATO integration processes by spreading propaganda, sowing manipulative disinformation and supporting ethno-nationalism. Russia's economic support to the Western Balkans is negligible and lags far behind EU investment; but for political rhetoric, public perception and manipulative media reporting, Moscow is playing out its hybrid strength — notably in Serbia, Montenegro or Bosnia and Herzegovina (in Republika Srpska). The EPP remains concerned by Russia's close political and military involvement in the region.

The **European Union must engage more**, especially in the areas of economy and political governance, to counter geostrategic competition. In this respect, our strategies must constantly be revised and tested to become ever more flexible, adaptive and efficient.

Reconciliation, regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations

Although reconciliation is not a part of the *acquis communautaire*, we as the EPP continue to emphasise the importance and urgency of the reconciliation process. Though past events make part of our European history, overcoming the negative legacies of the past is an essential aspect of reconciliation, together with the fundamental importance of the proper investigation of war crimes and the full delivery of justice. Yet reconciliation is a wide-ranging and long-term process going far beyond war crimes; a proactive **holistic approach** is needed. It is crucial to preserve the multi-ethnic and multi-religious character of the region within a peaceful, fruitful and cooperative framework. Good neighbourly relations, regional cooperation and acting in good faith are indispensable.

4. Country perspectives

Albania

Albania is still recovering from the damage caused by the November 2019 earthquake and the current COVID-19 pandemic. But Albanian **democracy and statehood** have also been confronted with serious challenges. Public distrust and the failure of government to deliver equitable and sustainable economic and political progress has fuelled polarisation in society and continues to undermine democratic norms and institutions. This has weakened state capacity and has resulted in a fragile rule of law, high inequality and endemic corruption. To enhance democracy, it is essential that the European Union engage in a **vital ‘cross-check’** on how democracy works in Albania and how democracy can improve people’s lives in tangible ways. The EU must set a clear agenda and take prudent note of the situation, **opening the door to accession to show** that together we can address the most pressing crises of our times.

On 25 March 2020, the General Affairs Council’s conclusions on Albania were made public. On 19 June of that same year, the European Parliament made public its own recommendation concerning the Western Balkans. The EU has mandated for Albania several **conditions** to be met before the first Intergovernmental Conference (IGC). We consider these conditions a prerequisite for democracy and rule of law, and for future EU-Albania relations; but we consider them in particular to be an investment towards the direct improvement of the lives of Albanian citizens. Starting accession negotiations at last would serve as a catalyst for implementing current reforms, for introducing much-needed new ones and for underpinning domestic support vis-à-vis accession to the EU.

Recent reports and international NGOs have sounded the alarm bell on Albania’s critical need to fight **corruption** and strengthen the **rule of law**: to prevent the state capture facilitating corruption, laws tailored to vested interests and insufficient criminal prosecution. Albania must fight corruption at all levels of society, government and administration, dismantling local and international criminal networks and tackling money laundering. Recent problems with **media law**, and particularly with the election of the chairperson of the Media Authority, have underscored the need for strengthening media independence and freedom — as requested by the March 2020 Council, on the basis of the Venice Commission recommendations, important to fulfil before the first IGC. We condemn violence, intimidation, smear campaigns and indirect political and financial pressure directed at journalists. Moreover, we condemn any intimidation of, and any verbal or physical attacks against, members of national minorities; and we ask the Albanian authorities to thoroughly investigate all such incidents.

On 25 April 2021, Albania held the 9th general **elections** of its democratic, post-communist history. We in the EPP have recognised the fundamental importance of implementing free and fair general elections, vital for further EU integration. We have urged the Parliament of Albania to abide by, and to implement, the relevant opinion of the Venice Commission. Proceeding with the prosecution of these suspects, including ruling party officials, implicated in vote-buying and -rigging has been an important step. And yet, despite this, the 25 April elections were marred by interventions, use of public funds, use of state resources and vote-buying — as noted in the final ODIHR report — including the campaign scandal involving the database leak of personal information, including likely voting preferences, pertaining to some 900,000 Albanians.

We as the EPP believe that the maladministration of elections; the lack of stringent efforts to combat corruption, organised crime and money laundering; the blurring of state and party boundaries; and the current state of the media have all impeded Albanian's success in advancing along the EU accession process. Nonetheless, needed reforms require the joint engagement of all political stakeholders. We firmly believe the Albanian Parliament's involvement in the country's EU integration process must be reinforced.

The EPP fully supports the **Berlin Process**, including the Common Regional Market, as a voluntary initiative for integration and cooperation between Western Balkan countries. We believe the Berlin Process will have a transformative effect by putting the region on the map for global investors, thereby creating jobs and offering greater choices, at lower prices, for consumers, and enabling people to work freely throughout the region.

We strongly believe Albania's path should be one of **full EU accession**. In terms of strategic orientation, Albania's continued full alignment with the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) is commendable. The European Parliament and European Commission must, on the one hand, push forward the EU's integration agenda and, on the other, scrutinise and foster Albania's democratic standards. We strongly support a positive decision for the opening of accession negotiations with Albania. It is in the interest of all Albanians, including the government, that the opposition can — and will — play a crucial role in this process. Supporting the start of this process is crucial for Albanian democracy; and we firmly support the convening of the first Intergovernmental Conference, without further delay, following the comprehensive fulfilment of conditions. We strongly believe there is no better catalyst for change and accountability than through a transparent, thorough, comprehensive and accelerated EU accession process.

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)

The EPP continues to be a strong **partner and supporter of BiH's European integration**; we call on the Council to demonstrate resolute and continuous support for the EU perspective of the country, per a merit-based approach. We reconfirm our unwavering support for BiH's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and for the peace legacy of the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA) and its principle: one country, two entities and three constituent peoples, Others and all citizens. We **strongly condemn** the most recent **unacceptable incitement calling into question the country's territorial integrity, unity and sovereignty**. Any unconstitutional secessionist actions, departing from the constitutional and legal framework, must cease, while the current blockade of institutions must be ended immediately, to allow Bosnia and Herzegovina to tackle necessary reforms and further pursue its EU perspective.

Despite progress, BiH continues to face numerous **challenges** related to the rule of law, democratic institutions, human rights, governance, accountability, media freedom, the functioning of a market economy and the fight against corruption and organised crime. In strengthening the rule of law, it is crucial to pay necessary respect for EU principles as well as international and constitutional court decisions. Bosnia and Herzegovina's process in **European and Euro-Atlantic integration** shall significantly contribute to its security, stability and economic prosperity. This ongoing process depends very much on the implementation of the **14 key priorities** outlined by the European Commission in May 2019 as well as on bringing the country's constitution into line with the European Convention on Human Rights: by addressing electoral reforms in an inclusive

manner while complying with the requirements of EU membership. **Electoral and constitutional reforms**, in line with both EU principles and international and constitutional court decisions, which includes the equality of its three constituent people, Others and all citizens, shall move the country forward towards candidate status. Electoral legislation reform must also improve transparency of the election process. Electoral and constitutional reforms should be completed in a timely manner, to ensure implementation of principles of equality and non-discrimination. Those reforms have to furthermore ensure free and fair elections whereas the use of modern technologies could reduce fraud. We welcome the steps undertaken by BiH leaders and lawmakers to reach political agreements and adopt legislative amendments which allowed local elections in **Mostar** to take place in December 2020, underlining the multicultural reality of BiH. This shows that BiH can close political divisions and move forward with difficult reforms when political will and mutual respect exist.

In compliance with the Dayton Peace Agreement and on ‘the way towards Brussels’, we support the role of the **Office of the High Representative (OHR)**, responsible for overseeing implementation of civilian aspects of the Dayton Peace Agreement ending the war in BiH; and we call for continuous international monitoring of anti-constitutional political rhetoric that hinders the compromise on necessary reforms, as well as the country’s internal stability and even its very foundations.

We welcome the renewed mandate for the **European Union Force in BiH (EUFOR Althea)**. The institutions and instruments of the European and international communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina — such as the OHR, EUFOR Althea, the EU’s Special Representative for BiH (EUSR), as well as the meetings of the EU’s Foreign Affairs (FAC) and General Affairs Councils (GAC), in close cooperation and coordination with the United States — should use all available and necessary tools to preserve territorial integrity and stability of the country. These instruments, however, cannot replace the **urgent need to create an appropriate space for solution-based dialogue** in order to advance on its European path. Upholding reached agreements and dialogue is an obligation and a matter of political responsibility.

The situation on **migration** also requires a renewed approach and action on the ground. After the humanitarian crisis of the last winter break 2020/21, the situation is now more stable — and yet not more sustainable, due to the security concerns of local communities. Bosnia and Herzegovina needs a more effective migration management and asylum policy: external borders must be protected and border procedures strengthened and applied to all arrivals while at the same time returns to countries of origin should be supported. The EU must continue to be a strong partner in this.

As regards the country’s state as well as regional **reconciliation** processes, all joint efforts — including from all political and religious stakeholders — must be seriously and urgently undertaken in order to rebuild inter-ethnic mutual trust and achieve lasting unity and stability, on the basis of the Dayton Peace Agreement. We strongly condemn any and all kinds of historical revisionism, nationalistic and inflammatory rhetoric. The EPP condemns unilateral moves that would jeopardize the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the competencies of state institutions, as well as the constitutionally defined internal structure of BiH, which includes three constituent peoples - Croats, Bosniaks, Serbs, Others and citizens, and two entities, cantons

and Brčko District. We condemn both the denial and the glorification of any and all war crimes, including the Srebrenica genocide.

In order for the reconciliation process to be sustainable, it is highly important for the relevant actors to properly designate, respect and safeguard all places of suffering and their symbols, as well as publicly condemn and sanction incidents of their verbal or physical disrespect and desecration. Sincere reconciliation relies on quality and non-discriminatory education for all children while simultaneously respecting the multicultural character of BiH. We call upon a comprehensive reconciliation process based on the equal treatment of all victims: serving truth, justice and the transparency of facts concerning each and every crime committed during the war. We strongly condemn all acts that provoke fears of a new conflict, and jointly call upon Bosnia and Herzegovina and its authorities to uphold peace and achieve progress.

Kosovo

It has been 12 years since North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia were granted **visa-free travel**, and 11 years since Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina followed suit. In 2016 and 2017, the European Union further lifted visa requirements for three Eastern Partnership countries, namely, Ukraine, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova. In the Western Balkans, only Kosovars need visas to travel to the European Union — despite the fact that already in 2018, the European Commission concluded that Kosovo had fulfilled all outstanding visa-liberalisation benchmarks and the fact that the European Parliament has already on many occasions given its approval. Acknowledging the support for Kosovo's accession by both institutions — the European Commission and the European Parliament, and in particular by the EPP Group in the European Parliament — and acknowledging in particular these institutions' role in Kosovo's visa-liberalisation process, it is clear the decision now lies with Member States.

Granting visa liberalisation to Kosovars will establish a new dynamic pending the country's accession to the European Union. It will also set Kosovo on equal footing with others in the Western Balkans region. While some Member States have been very supportive, others have been sceptical. This has hampered Kosovo's EU prospects.

We as the EPP must continue to find effective ways to convince Member States to finally grant visa-free travel. Europe is not whole until and unless all Western Balkan countries become full members of the European Union. Successful conclusion of the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue would benefit both EU prospects.

The **Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue**, which started in 2011, urgently needs a final and comprehensive agreement. Following the United Nations International Court of Justice (ICJ) opinion, on 22 July 2010, on Kosovo's declaration of independence, which concluded that the declaration of independence did not violate international law, the dialogue on the normalisation of Belgrade-Pristina relations began — initially at a technical level, with political dialogue following starting in 2012. Since that time, over 30 agreements have been reached. And yet despite all this, implementation remains insufficient from both sides.

All sides must understand that dialogue is beneficial, and must respect past agreements. As regards the continuation of the Dialogue, a dedicated team has to work with full transparency and must ensure good communication between the ruling party and the opposition.

Pristina and Belgrade must responsibly and constructively work together with the EU to tackle all issues deriving from the agreements reached in the EU-facilitated Dialogue in Brussels including the most urgent outstanding political issues⁴. The commitment by both Belgrade and Pristina to a timely completion of the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue, facilitated by the EU and supported by the United States, is necessary for the successful finalisation of the process. A final, comprehensive and legally binding agreement between Serbia and Kosovo should ensure long-lasting peace and regional stability, paving the way for both sides to finally join the EU. The long-term stability and prosperity of Kosovo and the region remains dependant on the positive development of relations between ethnic communities, based on tolerance, inclusion, mutual understanding and respect.

As regards the formation of the most recent government and the subsequent election of President Vjosa Osmani, we in the EPP welcome the responsible role played by the biggest opposition party, the Democratic League of Kosovo, in allowing a new president to be elected. We furthermore praise the good work of the government of Prime Minister Avdullah Hoti and its decision to lift tariffs on imports from Serbia and from Bosnia and Herzegovina, allowing the resumption of the EU-facilitated Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue.

As the EPP family, we will continue to support Kosovo in making **needed reforms**, especially to strengthen the rule of law, to fight corruption and organised crime, to enhance the functioning of democratic institutions and of public administration and to foster economic development and competitiveness.

We reiterate our full support for the work of the **Kosovo Specialist Chambers** (KSC) and the Specialist Prosecutor's Office. We condemn any disinformation campaigns to delegitimise Kosovo's statehood, and we call for stronger European cooperation with Kosovo in addressing disinformation and hybrid threats.

At a time when most of Europe is ageing rapidly, Kosovo's biggest asset is its **youth**. About half the country's population is under the age of 25. Kosovo's young people — despite isolation and barriers, including the ongoing lack of visa liberalisation — are educated and skilled. As such, the country's youth represent not only Kosovo's most important resource, in the form of human capital, but should be seen as a tremendous European resource as well. EU investment in Kosovo's youth will therefore yield positive, long-term effects both for the region and for the continent as a whole.

Concerns have been raised concerning the mass emigration of highly skilled workers, as is the case with other regional countries. Employment and student mobility programmes and skills and vocational training institutes, supported by pan-EU labour mobility for Kosovo's youth, are essential for helping Kosovo address one of its crucial problems: **high unemployment**. We consider helping Kosovo resolve this problem a worthwhile EU investment.

⁴ See Annex

Any regional initiatives, conducted on an equal basis, granting freedom of movement are further welcome. Such has been the case with the Common Regional Market under the **Berlin Process**, which foresees the freedom of movement, goods, services and capital.

Finally, we support the NATO **Kosovo Force (KFOR)**: currently deployed to maintain a safe and secure environment and to facilitate the Euro-Atlantic integration of the Western Balkans. All international actors must continue to support the development of a stable, democratic, multi-ethnic and peaceful Kosovo.

Montenegro

Montenegro is currently technically the most advanced country in the Western Balkans and the farthest along its **EU accession** process. But as with all countries in the region, Montenegro must be judged individually according to its own merits. We as the EPP underline the importance of — and we welcome — Montenegro's June 2017 accession to **NATO**, as a cornerstone both for the country's Euro-Atlantic path and for regional stability. Furthermore, we call for firm and clear alignment with the EU's CFSP, as an important part of the accession process, and we welcome Montenegro's ongoing strong commitment. We welcome Montenegro's acceptance of the **revised enlargement methodology**, and we reiterate the critical importance of reforms based on these principles.

We welcome, as a good example in the region for how the past can be overcome, the adoption in the Montenegrin Parliament, initiated by the Bosniak Party, of the resolution on the Srebrenica Genocide. The vote on this resolution brought about a high degree of harmonisation and consensus among the political actors of both the government and opposition. We believe this has given a new impetus to the reconciliation process and to the strengthening of good neighbourly relations.

On the other hand, instead of the previous government's promised **de-politicisation and meritocracy**, it has been following previous patterns using partitocracy which has driven its recruitment for, and appointment to, public positions. And it is revanchism which has driven the government's relations vis-à-vis the opposition, manifesting itself in the form of manufactured scandal allegations and media spin targeted against minority leaders. The rise of nationalism, disinformation, anti-Western and anti-EU rhetoric is alarming, in traditional as well as on social media, where minority communities have been targeted. We call on the new government to consider in all relevant budgets the necessary concerns of minorities.

Furthermore, all sides and actors should refrain from the abuse and politicisation of religious institutions. We underline the importance of adopting **sensitive legislation linked to religious freedoms** in line with best European practices and in consultation with specialised international institutions, such as the Council of Europe's Venice Commission. Montenegro is a secular state where all churches have all their freedom and rights, but church involvement in political processes remains disturbing. When religion is used for political purposes, it is emptied of its meaning and can become merely a method for acquiring power.

We welcome the current initiatives to reform the **judiciary**; and we ask all parties, including the opposition, to participate in this process — a process which should be guided by dialogue,

compromise and consensus. More must be done to strengthen the independence and professionalism of the judiciary. Combatting **corruption** and **organised crime** must remain high on Montenegro's agenda. A robust criminal justice system must effectively respond to high-level corruption.

We are concerned at the high degree of **media** polarisation and the growing amount of **disinformation**, which also aims at aggravating ethnic tensions. We strongly condemn any intimidation of, and any verbal or physical attacks against, members of **national minorities**; and we ask the Montenegrin authorities to comprehensively investigate all such incidents.

In the context of China's infamous '**debt-trap diplomacy**', referred to earlier, the Montenegrin leadership must find solutions for its most recent infrastructure projects.

While we welcome Montenegro's first transition of power in a democratic setting since the introduction of the multi-party system, we express our concern regarding reports of external influence in the most recent **elections**. We condemn any intimidation of, and any verbal and physical attacks against, national minorities in the aftermath of the 2020 general elections. We welcome the opposition's decision not to boycott the work of the Parliament; and we reiterate that a functioning parliamentary democracy must be based on the participation of both the government and opposition.

Republic of North Macedonia

We in the EPP strongly support the **opening of EU accession negotiations** with the Republic of North Macedonia, including reconciliation with its past, on the basis of EU criteria and values. We firmly believe that good neighbourly relations are key in resolving pending issues. The Treaty on Good Neighbourly Relations with Bulgaria and the Prespa Agreement with Greece were important steps on North Macedonia's path of Euro-Atlantic integration, paved the way to its NATO membership in March 2020 and need to be respected. North Macedonia has invested significant political capital on enlargement — including changing its name.

We have praised the European Council's March 2020 decision to open accession negotiations with North Macedonia. At the same time, we regret the fact that, thus far, no Negotiating Framework has been agreed upon to enable the organisation of the first Intergovernmental Conference and that the Council Conclusions from March 2020 were not followed through on, as no tangible results were achieved as regards the implementation of bilateral agreements with Bulgaria. We call on both sides and on the EU to achieve a mutually acceptable road map which can in good faith guarantee implementation of the bilateral agreement. Non-discrimination, respect for human rights and freedom of speech are underlying EU values to be championed by any aspiring accession country. We believe all must be done to resolve remaining issues — and not to hinder progress — on a step of such fundamental geopolitical importance both for the EU and for the Western Balkans as a whole.

In this respect, we support the setting up of an institutionalised **youth dialogue** between North Macedonia and Bulgaria to invest in a prosperous joint future, based on the model of the Franco-German Youth Office (FGYO). The EPP's youth and student organisations could play a leading role. Moreover, we firmly encourage civil society and governing authorities to take appropriate

measures for **historical reconciliation**: to overcome the divides between different ethnic and national groups, including citizens of Bulgarian identity and origin.

In the meanwhile, we expect tangible results in the country's necessary **reform process**, especially as regards rule of law, the fight against corruption and organised crime and the independence of the judiciary. Critical EU-related reforms will require the joint engagement of ruling parties and opposition. We commend engagement by governing as well as opposition parties in the Parliament on key questions of national interest. Declarative statements by those in power cannot replace sincere and transparent implementation. In this respect, we underline the importance of the **Jean Monnet Dialogue** (JMD) facilitated by the European Parliament for confidence-building and to strengthen a culture of democracy.

Also deeply concerning is the **misuse of institutions** in order to attack opposition parties, groups or individuals. An accountable system is one where judicial services are de-politicised and cases judged on the basis of individual merit rather than the political interests of various groups.

Further credible steps must be taken in fighting **fake news** and malign **foreign influence** in North Macedonia. Such steps must include a **more visible EU presence** — above all, by starting as soon as possible to organise the first Intergovernmental Conference.

Last but not least, we highlight the fact that North Macedonia remains on one of the main transit routes for irregular **migration**, and we declare our appreciation as the EPP for solidarity measures and continued border protection efforts. The **COVID-19** pandemic and regional **wildfires** have only underscored the fact that only together and in solidarity can we tackle such challenges.

Serbia

The EPP welcomes the fact that **EU membership continues to be Serbia's strategic goal**, as underlined by the government, and is once again among its priorities. We therefore encourage Serbia to continue more actively and decidedly its commitment to common values, including the benefits of EU accession and of EU-funded projects, while at the same time combating the propagation of anti-EU rhetoric. We strongly believe that a credible EU integration process is based on shared responsibilities: this includes open communication regarding the integration process as well as the genuine, mutual commitment and legal harmonisation which that process entails for all acceding countries. We honour the strong female representation as well as the representation of national minorities in the formation of the last parliament and government, and call on Belgrade to protect throughout the entire country the rights of all persons belonging to national minorities and to continue working on further improvement of the situation.

As with all the other Western Balkan aspirants to EU membership, Serbia must be judged **on its own merits** in terms of its adherence to essential European values and its fulfilment of accession criteria. In this respect, we endorse Serbia's decision to accept the **new EU enlargement methodology**.

We welcome the **initiative to amend the Serbian constitution**: to strengthen the independence and the efficacy of the **judiciary**, after a long and inclusive debate, as well as in close cooperation

with the Venice Commission; and we ask Serbia to continue its sincere implementation of this agenda.

Serbia shall remain committed to regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations. Normalisation of **Belgrade-Pristina relations** must continue to be a high priority, as a precondition for the EU accession of both as well as for securing the stability and prosperity of the entire region. New efforts between Belgrade and Pristina resulted in a new round of dialogue during Summer 2021. Both sides must responsibly and constructively work together to tackle issues such as resolving the topic of missing persons, including, in general, the opening of wartime archives in the region, as well as cooperating on energy. We underline the fact that dialogue is the only possible framework for resolving this frozen conflict — a conflict which has the potential to *unfreeze* at any time. Only a comprehensive, sustainable and legally binding agreement — in accordance with international law, the EU Negotiating Framework for Serbia and the EU-facilitated Dialogue — should form the basis of any compromise. All sides must refrain from any action which could undermine trust between parties or put at risk the constructive continuation of dialogue. As the EPP, we reiterate the importance of a multi-ethnic Western Balkans region. Ethnically homogeneous states cannot be the objective. Nobody should discourage Kosovo-Serbs from integrating into Kosovo institutions.

The EPP will continue to support Serbia in its efforts to better prevent the **corruption** of legislators, judges and prosecutors, as corruption in general continues to hamper economic development.

Media independence must be strengthened. We welcome the adoption of a new **action plan for a media strategy** and the envisaged monitoring of this strategy's implementation. All efforts must be made to widen space for **civil society** to be able to work properly.

As regards the **Inter-Party Dialogue** on Improving the Conditions for Holding Parliamentary Elections (IPD) — **between the ruling majority and the non-parliamentary opposition**, and facilitated by the European Parliament — we appreciate all efforts undertaken having created a better level playing field for the last elections in April. The IPD provided a unique platform for reaching broad reforms to improve electoral conditions and to address the OSCE/ODIHR recommendations.

We underline that the **EU is the biggest assistance and aid provider** for Serbia, in addition to the EU's being Serbia's biggest trade partner. Disproportionate visibility should not be given to third countries. We express concern, in particular, regarding China's increasing influence in the entire Western Balkans region, including in Serbia. This influence is too often characterised by lack of transparency; lack of environmental, social and security impact assessments; and lack of proper evaluation of Chinese investments. Further alignment with **EU trade and investment policies** should be reinforced. In this context, we commend — as a possible game-changer — Serbia's initiative and agreement for EU funding for the high-speed Belgrade-Nis railway, along the pan-European corridor X.

Serbia's close military cooperation with Russia has to be seen in relation to Serbia's need to more closely align its foreign policy with the EU's CFSP. While we welcome Serbia's alignment with the EU's position regarding the recent presidential elections in Belarus, Serbia's continued

participation in crisis-management missions and operations under the CSDP, Serbia's preparations for joint EU civil missions and the alignment of Serbia's national Defence and Security strategies with the Global EU Strategy, establishing a liaison officer in the EU military staff, we call for good progress towards full alignment with EU foreign-policy positions. We underline the importance of Serbia's steady improvement in aligning with the EU's CFSP. Greater energy independence from Russia, furthermore — and not only for Serbia — will help the region as a whole to become more politically resilient. The EU has to become a stronger partner in this respect.

We have followed with appreciation the solidarity shown by Serbia during the 2015 **migration crisis**, especially as regards initiatives along the West Balkan route. Serbia's donations of **COVID-19** vaccines — to neighbouring countries, as well as to the Czech Republic, to Italy and to Lebanon — have also been welcome.

5. Recommendations and Conclusions

Trust among Western Balkan countries — among all political parties and stakeholders, internally and externally, including vis-à-vis the EU — must be reinforced. We need to address each one's difficulties and concerns. We need to rebuild trust. And we need to deliver on our enlargement promises just as our Western Balkan partners need to deliver on all necessary reforms, especially strengthening the rule of law, the fight against corruption, the independence of justice and media freedom.

Therefore, as the EPP:

- 1) We welcome the comprehensive **Economic and Investment Plan** as well as the **Green Agenda** for the Western Balkans, adopted by the Commission — focusing on green and digital transition investments, smart mobility links, sustainable energy and digital infrastructure — as one example of renewed EU commitment.
- 2) We welcome the entry into force of the new generation of the **Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance** (IPA III), offering means and support to the Western Balkans for reforms needed on their path of European integration.
- 3) We strongly believe the EU must move towards holding **regular EU-Western Balkan summits**, supporting the proposal of the last Slovenian Presidency, in order to strengthen political ownership of the enlargement process and ensure better high-level engagement and direction — goals also set out in the revised enlargement methodology.
- 4) We call for **increased EU presence** on the ground — including through visits, missions and representations — and at the same time encourage our partners to meet their counterparts and stakeholders in Brussels and throughout the European Union.
- 5) We must start EU accession negotiations with **Albania** and **North Macedonia**, based on the political decision from March 2020. This means adopting as soon as possible their respective Negotiating Frameworks while underlining that accession is a two-way process entailing both duties and responsibilities.

- 6) We call for accession negotiations with **Serbia** and **Montenegro** to accelerate: in line with own merits in meeting accession criteria, following the principles of the revised enlargement methodology — which both countries have already accepted — thus increasing the dynamism of these countries' reform agendas and strengthening their European geopolitical orientation.
- 7) We call on the EU and on Member States to support **Bosnia and Herzegovina** in addressing the 14 key priorities, including electoral and constitutional reforms, in line with EU principles and the decisions of the relevant international and constitutional courts, so that the country can move forward towards candidate status. We call on local authorities and political representatives to work closely together with the European Union, the international community and the Office of the High Representative. We condemn all divisive and secessionist rhetoric and actions; we call for an immediate end to the blockade of institutions; and we fully support BiH's independence and territorial integrity.
- 8) We call on EU Member States to grant long-overdue visa liberalisation to **Kosovo** — without further delay and as soon as possible. At the same time, we support the Dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, for the sake of the whole region.
- 9) We recognise the need for strong and appropriate engagement, perspective and signals vis-à-vis Western Balkan countries within the framework of the **Conference on the Future of Europe**, both at governmental and civil-society levels. Citizens from the Western Balkans, especially the youth, should contribute to shaping the future of the European Union.
- 10) We call for the involvement of partners along the West Balkan route, within the framework of the proposed **New Pact on Migration and Asylum**, to work together to tackle the common challenge of irregular migration also through the Joint Coordination Platform. Given the seriousness of the current situation in Afghanistan, we will work closely together to tackle developing challenges and coordinate common responses, as necessary.
- 11) We call urgently for **intensified further cooperation** with the region; this need not wait until the completion of the EU enlargement process:
 - a) We should examine the possibilities for lowering roaming costs between the EU and Western Balkan countries.
 - b) We should fully associate the Western Balkans region in Horizon Europe research and EU professional training programmes.
 - c) We should strengthen the position of all 'Western Balkan 6' within the framework of Erasmus+.
 - d) The Western Balkans, as a region, is fast-growing and has huge economic potential; it should not be defined by politics alone. We must support European SMEs' greater investment in the region, so it can become an investment hub within Europe, bringing global value-chains closer to the core of our continent (ie, nearshoring).
- 12) Stronger regional resilience is needed vis-à-vis **third actors**, whose interests and actions are often opposed to EU values and EU integration policies. The EU needs a clear positioning vis-à-vis competitors like China, Russia, Turkey and others; a more coordinated approach with the **USA** would be particularly helpful. We reiterate our expectation that Western Balkan partners

- 13) will further deepen their cooperation in the area of CFSP and make sustained and credible progress towards full alignment with EU foreign-policy positions.
- 14) With Brexit, Western Balkan countries have lost a strong advocate for the region's EU integration. And yet even post-Brexit, the European Union and **United Kingdom** must urgently refocus their efforts and work together to advance the region's Euro-Atlantic integration.
- 15) As made clear during the COVID-19 pandemic, challenges such as manipulative **disinformation** and other hybrid activities can only be fought together by building resilience and collaborating on cyber security and strategic communication. Western Balkan leaders must tackle disinformation more effectively without running the risk of jeopardising our common positive intentions and the success of our common project. Leaders must tackle disinformation and hate speech more effectively: securing a **whole-of-government**, and supporting a **whole-of-society, approach** in dealing with disinformation as a form of hybrid influence. In practice, this means:
 - a) securing **media-literacy education** in public schools and via publicly funded media;
 - b) securing **transparency of media ownership and funding** and fighting against media capture by countries such as Russia and China;
 - c) allowing media, and especially broadcasting regulators, to facilitate the opening of space for the kind of **credible professional journalism** which has proven critical in successfully countering disinformation across the world, including within the EU.

Our strongest tool is not only the enlargement instrument *per se* but its combination with a **credible and attainable EU future** for all six Western Balkan countries. As the EU, we will either export stability or import instability.

The EU cannot offer all-encompassing solutions to the challenges faced in the region. But we will only be able to move forward with further European enlargement if we treat this process as a **shared responsibility**: sticking to promises, implementing reforms and positively communicating our shared, unambiguous dedication.

We cannot compromise on values and rights: the more, the stronger and **the faster the European Union and its partners take an inclusive approach** towards the Western Balkans, **the stronger the support** of national, regional and local societies to join the Union will be.

All efforts must be made so we can proceed more swiftly — via EU membership — towards the political and territorial **reunification of Europe**.

Annex: CHRONOLOGY OF AGREEMENTS

	AGREEMENT	DATE
	1. AGREEMENT ON FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT	2 JULY 2011
1.1	Final operational conclusions	29 November 2011
1.2	Opening of new border crossing points between Kosovo and Serbia	14 September 2011
1.3	Mutual Recognition of Vehicle Insurance	10 August 2015
1.4	Removal of the barricades over the Ibar Bridge	25 August 2015
1.5	Mutual Recognition of ADR Certificates	19 April 2016
1.6	EU Implementation Plan of the Agreement on the Mitrovica Bridge	5 August 2016
1.7	Arrangements concerning the finalization of implementation of 2011 freedom of movement	14 September 2016
1.8	Establishment of a direct flight route to/from Pristina-Belgrade and vice-versa	20 January 2020
1.9	Establishment of a new railway link between Pristina and Belgrade	14 February 2020
	2. CIVIL REGISTRY BOOKS	2 JULY 2011
2.1	<i>Opening of ARC offices in northern municipalities</i>	14 September 2016
	3. CADASTRAL RECORDS	2 JULY 2011
	4. MUTUAL RECOGNITION OF PROFESSIONAL AND ACADEMIC DIPLOMAS	2 JULY 2011
4.1	Conclusions on mutual diploma recognition	19 January 2016
4.2	Operational conclusions of the Working Group on Diplomas	21 March 2016
4.3	EU Guidance on mutual Diploma recognition	4 April 2016
	5. CUSTOMS STAMP	2 SEPTEMBER 2011
5.1	Customs Revenue Collection	17 January 2013
5.2	Licensing of companies in the north	17 January 2013
5.3	Development Fund	17 January 2013
5.4	Conclusions on customs licensing of imports	16 December 2014
5.5	Certificate of Pharmaceutical Products	5 May 2015
	6. INTEGRATED BORDER MANAGEMENT, IBM	2 DECEMBER 2011
6.1	Technical protocol	24 February 2012
6.2	Final Action Plan	4 January 2013
6.3	Mutual legal assistance, MLA	9 January 2013
6.4	SEED, System for Exchange of Excise Data	24 January 2013
6.5	Phytosanitary Certificates	5 September 2013
6.6	IBM Permanent crossing points	4 September 2014
6.7	Opening of two new crossing points (Kapia, Izvor)	22 May 2015
	7. REGIONAL REPRESENTATION AND COOPERATION	24 FEBRUARY 2011
	<i>First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations</i>	27 JUNE 2013
	8. LOCAL ELECTIONS (FUNCTIONING OF FOUR MUNICIPALITIES IN THE NORTH)	19 APRIL 2013
	9. INTEGRATION OF POLICE	31 DECEMBER 2013
9.1	Law on Amnesty	17 September 2013
9.2	Kosovo Police stationed in the north	31 January 2014
	10. AGREEMENT ON THE DISSOLUTION OF "CIVIL PROTECTION"	26 MARCH 2015
10.1	Establishment of central institutions in the north	28 December 2016
	11. INTEGRATION OF JUDICIARY	9 FEBRUARY 2015
11.1	Justice Action Plan	30 November 2016
	12. <u>ASSOCIATION/COMMUNITY OF SERB MAJORITY MUNICIPALITIES IN KOSOVO</u>	25 AUGUST 2015
	13. AGREEMENT ON THE EXCHANGE OF LIASISON OFFICERS	31 MAY 2013
13.1	Administration of official visits	14 November 2014
	14. AGREEMENT ON ENERGY	8 SEPTEMBER 2013
14.1	Implementation Plan for the Energy Agreement	18 September 2014
14.2	Conclusions for the EU Facilitator on Energy	25 August 2015
	15. AGREEMENTS ON TELECOMMUNICATIONS	15 DECEMBER 2016
15.1	Telecommunications Action Plan	25 August 2015
15.2	Conclusions of the EU Facilitator on Telecommunications	13 November 2016

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**If you have any question you
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