

Thursday 4 February 2016

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## European integration process of Kosovo

**European Parliament resolution of 4 February 2016 on the 2015 Report on Kosovo (2015/2893(RSP))**

(2018/C 035/12)

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the Presidency conclusions of the Thessaloniki European Council of 19 and 20 June 2003 concerning the prospect of the Western Balkan countries joining the European Union,
- having regard to the Council decision of 22 October 2012 authorising the Commission to open negotiations on a framework agreement with Kosovo on participation in Union programmes,
- having regard to the European Council conclusions of 28 June 2013 adopting the Decision authorising the opening of negotiations on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the EU and Kosovo,
- having regard to the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalisation of Relations, signed by Prime Ministers Hashim Thaçi and Ivica Dačić on 19 April 2013, and to the Implementation Action Plan of 22 May 2013,
- having regard to Council Decision 2014/349/CFSP of 12 June 2014 amending Joint Action 2008/124/CFSP on the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, EULEX KOSOVO,
- having regard to the signing of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement between EU and Kosovo on 27 October 2015, and to its ratification by the Kosovo Assembly on 2 November 2015,
- having regard to the reports of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the ongoing activities of the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and developments relating thereto, including the latest report released on 3 November 2015,
- having regard to the extension of the mandate of the EU Special Representative in Kosovo, Samuel Žbogar, until 28 February 2017,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 10 November 2015 entitled ‘EU Enlargement Strategy’ (COM(2015)0611),
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 15 December 2015 on the enlargement and stabilisation and association processes,
- having regard to the conclusions of the General Affairs Council meetings of 7 December 2009, 14 December 2010 and 5 December 2011, which stressed and reaffirmed, respectively, that Kosovo, without prejudice to the Member States’ position on its status, should also benefit from the prospect of eventual visa liberalisation once all the conditions had been met,
- having regard to the launch of a visa dialogue in January 2012, to the visa liberalisation roadmap of June 2012, to the second Commission report of 24 July 2014 on progress by Kosovo in fulfilling the requirements of the visa liberalisation roadmap (COM(2014)0488), and to the Commission’s expert mission of July 2015,

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- having regard to UN Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) Advisory Opinion of 22 July 2010 on the accordance with international law of the unilateral declaration of independence in respect of Kosovo, and to UN General Assembly resolution 64/298 of 9 September 2010, which acknowledged the content of the ICJ opinion and welcomed the EU's readiness to facilitate dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo,
  - having regard to the joint statements of the EP-Kosovo interparliamentary meetings of 28-29 May 2008, 6-7 April 2009, 22-23 June 2010, 20 May 2011, 14-15 March 2012, 30-31 October 2013 and 29-30 April 2015,
  - having regard to the Commission's 2015 progress report on Kosovo of 10 November 2015 (SWD(2015)0215),
  - having regard to its previous resolutions,
  - having regard to the work of Ulrike Lunacek as the Foreign Affairs Committee's standing rapporteur on Kosovo,
  - having regard to Rule 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas 110 of the 193 UN member states, including 23 of the 28 EU Member States, recognise Kosovo's independence;
- B. whereas the EU-Kosovo Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) was signed on 27 October 2015 and ratified by the Kosovo Assembly on 2 November 2015; whereas the European Parliament gave its consent on 21 January 2016;
- C. whereas (potential) candidate countries are judged on their own merits, and whereas the speed and quality of the necessary reforms determines the timetable for accession;
- D. whereas the EU has repeatedly reiterated its willingness to assist in the economic and political development of Kosovo through a clear European perspective, in line with the European perspective of the region;
- E. whereas the EU has placed the rule of law at the core of its enlargement policy;
- F. whereas the EU has highlighted the need to strengthen economic governance, the rule of law and public administration capacity in all of the Western Balkan countries;
- G. whereas the EULEX mandate will expire on 14 June 2016; whereas the strategic review of the EULEX Kosovo mission is ongoing;
1. Welcomes the signing of the EU-Kosovo Stabilisation and Association Agreement on 27 October 2015, as the first contractual relationship, and the swift ratification by the Kosovo Assembly on 2 November 2015; stresses that the SAA paves the way for the integration of Kosovo into the EU, and will provide a powerful incentive for the implementation and institutionalisation of reforms and allow the establishment of cooperation with the EU in a wide variety of areas, with a view to enhancing political dialogue and closer trade integration in addition to strengthening relations with neighbouring countries and helping to ensure regional stability; calls on the Government of Kosovo to focus on implementing the comprehensive reforms necessary to meet its obligations under the SAA;
  2. Welcomes the adoption by the Commission of a package to support reforms and regional cooperation in the Western Balkans — a package which expresses the EU's commitment to supporting the political and economic reform process of the countries on their path to EU accession;
  3. Underlines that the SAA is aimed at promoting European standards in areas such as competition, procurement, intellectual property and consumer protection, and at establishing a free trade area as a tangible step towards the economic integration of Kosovo into the EU;

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4. Welcomes the progress made in 2015 in reaching agreements in the framework of the process of normalisation of relations between Kosovo and Serbia, namely on the establishment of the Association/Community of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo, on energy and on Mitrovicë/Mitrovica bridge, and including the agreements of 25 August 2015 on telecoms, of June 2015 on vehicle insurance and of February 2015 on the judiciary; supports the continued mediation efforts of the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) with a view to the normalisation of relations between Serbia and Kosovo, which has yet to be fully achieved; calls on the European External Action Service to make a thorough overall assessment of the state of implementation of all the agreements signed so far with regard to the adoption of laws on the ground, and to report regularly on this to the European Parliament and the parliaments of both Kosovo and Serbia; urges the VP/HR to identify shortfalls and to demand that the parties fulfil their commitments, and calls on Serbia and Kosovo to refrain from negative rhetoric, to move forward in good faith and in a timely manner with the full implementation of all the agreements already reached, and to continue determinedly the normalisation process; stresses that continuous and constructive dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade and the full implementation of the agreements reached are crucial for the normalisation of their relations; welcomes the resumption of talks between Serbian Prime Minister Vučić, and Kosovan Prime Minister Mustafa on 27 January 2016; notes that the topics discussed included mutual recognition of university and professional diplomas and improvement of road and rail connections; underlines that progress on the ground will be of benefit to the whole region;

5. Is concerned about the high number of missing persons from the war period and the little progress made in that connection; calls for full interstate cooperation in that area, bearing in mind that full cooperation in establishing truth about missing persons is crucial for mutual reconciliation;

6. Takes note of the Constitutional Court's decision on the implementation of the Association of Serb Municipalities; calls for the complete and committed implementation of the agreements reached; calls for respect for the rule of law, regrets that opposition forces did not take advantage of this suspension to resume parliamentary dialogue, and encourages all political forces to act constructively in the interests of their country, its democratic institutions and its citizens; considers full respect for the rules of democracy, political dialogue and unhindered parliamentary business to be essential for the implementation of all aspects of Kosovo's reform agenda; strongly condemns violent obstructions in the Assembly, calls for the prevention of further violent protests in the Assembly, and stresses that in the Assembly elected Members of Parliament should meet and discuss issues with full respect for the institution; stresses that the government should respect the parliament's resolutions and decisions and should report, as required by the legislative body, before deciding to sign agreements with other states; welcomes, in this connection, the well-prepared proposal of 20 November 2015 by two Kosovo MPs from the ruling coalition and the opposition respectively; calls on all political actors to resume political dialogue in order to break the deadlock and find a viable solution that restores the normal functioning of the Kosovo Assembly; invites all Kosovo leaders to approach this situation as being of the utmost importance and to act responsibly, bearing in mind that the Assembly is elected by the people of Kosovo, for the people of Kosovo; is strongly concerned about repeated acts of violence and calls on law enforcement authorities to carry out their duties in full compliance with legal procedures; notes with concern the events that led to the arrest of some Members of Parliament, and calls for an investigation into possible abuses of power connected with the arrests made; urges the Kosovo Assembly to clarify the rules concerning the lifting of the immunity of its members; takes note of the Ombudsperson's request to the State Prosecution in Pristina for the initiation of an investigation into the police intervention of 28 November 2015;

7. Stresses that the Assembly needs to become more efficient and to comply with its own rules of procedure under all circumstances, and that the government should respect these rules; highlights the need to strengthen the Assembly's oversight role, and calls, in particular, on the Assembly to adopt legislation as soon as possible that will give the EU Integration Committee an enhanced role in Kosovo's integration process and provide for the full involvement of the opposition in that process; encourages the Assembly to consult regularly, and involve, the Venice Commission during the consideration of legislation; underlines the urgent need to appoint competent members to regulatory and supervisory bodies in order to ensure the proper functioning of the state administration, on the basis of merit-based, transparent and non-political selection processes;

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8. Takes note that five Member States have not formally recognised Kosovo, and is of the opinion that further recognitions would help to strengthen stability in the region, to further facilitate the normalisation of relations between Serbia and Kosovo and to increase the EU's credibility in its external policy; in this regard takes positive note of the decision of the five Member States which have not recognised Kosovo to facilitate the approval of the SAA in the Council; calls on all the Member States to do their utmost to facilitate economic, people-to-people contacts and social relations between their citizens and those of Kosovo, in the spirit of the SAA and the establishment of formal contractual relations; welcomes the submission by Kosovo of the first Economic Reform Programme, which is set to be a first step in deepening its economic dialogue with the EU;

9. Is pleased to note the work undertaken by the Kosovo authorities to end the trend of irregular migration, which peaked at the beginning of 2015; stresses that short-term measures aimed at dissuading the population from leaving should be accompanied by socio-economic developments and job creation so as to encourage citizens to stay in Kosovo and build a future in their country; is convinced that visa liberalisation would also help to curb irregular immigration, as it would allow people-to-people contacts and open up possibilities for citizens to travel abroad for tourism and visit relatives and friends without having to face lengthy and expensive visa procedures, and would address their sense of isolation; reiterates the potential danger of Kosovo being the only territory to be 'locked in' and 'isolated' in the region for too long; urges, likewise, that Pristina take effective measures to combat criminal networks that traffic human beings; is of the opinion that designating Kosovo as a safe country of origin on the EU's common list of safe countries of origin could help in combating irregular migration;

10. Welcomes the progress in implementing the Visa Liberalisation Action Plan; calls on the authorities to implement swiftly and fully all the required criteria; calls on the Commission to step up its work on Kosovo's visa liberalisation process; is prepared to endorse, and calls on the Council to endorse quickly, the visa-free regime for Kosovo, as soon as the Commission has determined in a timely manner that all the technical criteria have been met; expresses the need, at the same time, to continue to seek out and prosecute human traffickers and smugglers in order to disincentivise their illegal activity; urges all the EU institutions, and particularly the Commission, to accelerate the visa liberalisation process for Kosovo, and urges the Kosovo authorities to fulfil their commitments and implement the remaining benchmarks with the aim of Kosovo entering the visa-free regime in the course of 2016, which will bring the people of Kosovo closer to the EU;

11. Supports the continuation of discussions on a framework agreement which would allow Kosovo to participate in EU programmes;

12. Welcomes the adoption of the package of human rights laws, which strengthen the institutional set-up for oversight of the protection of, and respect for, human rights; stresses the utmost importance of implementing this legislation; welcomes, particularly, the establishment and appointment of the Ombudsperson, especially with a view to establishing social trust in Kosovar society; regrets, however, that his work is hindered by the lack of adequate premises, and calls on the authorities to proceed swiftly to allocate new premises for his office, in accordance with the Paris Principles; calls on the authorities to make fully operational all existing independent institutions and regulatory bodies;

13. Notes with concern that the authorities' political will to genuinely engage with civil society is still very weak; calls on the authorities to implement in good faith the legal framework for cooperation with civil society, in particular by providing the Joint Advisory Council with all the necessary resources; invites the EU Office to encourage, and if need be facilitate, such consultation;

14. Welcomes, furthermore, the adoption in May 2015 of the Law on Protection from Discrimination, and the mandate given to the Ombudsperson to act as an equality body; remains concerned about the low level of processing and investigation of cases of hate speech, especially those targeting the LGBTI and minority communities; encourages the Advisory and Coordination Group for the Rights of the LGBTI Community to follow up actively on these cases and concerns;

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15. Welcomes also the adoption of the Law on Gender Equality, and calls on the Kosovo authorities to address gender mainstreaming as a priority and to ensure that governing bodies and authorities lead by example; is concerned about the structural challenges hampering the implementation of that law; remains concerned about the under-representation of women in decision-making positions; is concerned that no progress has been made on combating domestic and gender-based violence; urges the authorities to encourage publicly and put in place protection mechanisms and shelter measures for women who break the silence and denounce domestic violence; expresses concern about the low level of property ownership among women; calls on the authorities to actively ensure that property rights for women are secured, including through the registration of all co-owners of property by cadastral and registration officers, and through an information campaign;

16. Expresses its concern that extremely limited progress has been made in the area of freedom of expression and of the media over the past year; is concerned that journalists face violence and threats when exercising their profession, and highlights the need to strengthen the protection of journalists through a systematic response to, and public denouncement, prompt investigation and timely adjudication of cases of attacks against journalists; stresses that further progress must also be made in the area of media independence; calls on the authorities to fill the systematic gaps in legislation swiftly in order to ensure the freedom of media, in particular as regards the transparency of media ownership and the sustainability of the public broadcaster, following a thorough and comprehensive public consultation process; urges the authorities to implement effectively the legislation on libel, hate speech and defamation;

17. Recalls that Kosovo and Serbia need to find sustainable solutions for refugees, in line with the findings of the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in this connection, and with the 2014 report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons;

18. Notes that further efforts are needed to protect and guarantee in practice the rights of all ethnic minorities in Kosovo, including the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities as well as the Gorani community, through the full implementation of the relevant legislation, bearing in mind best practices from the region and from EU Member States; calls on the national and local authorities to invest greater effort into implementing the laws adopted so that they can contribute to the continued development of a multi-ethnic society, particularly as regards the education and employment of minorities, and with the aim of preventing direct and indirect discrimination; welcomes the 'Pristina Declaration' that calls upon governments, international, intergovernmental and civil society organisations to thoroughly apply principles of non-discrimination and equality when working and acting on promotion and respect of Roma rights and fighting Antigypsyism in the Western Balkans;

19. Reiterates its concern at the lack of any significant progress in fighting high-level corruption and organised crime, and in establishing a track record for prosecutions and convictions; stresses that organised crime remains an issue of major concern; notes that the Government of Kosovo needs to give a clear and explicit signal that the country is conducting a systematic fight against corruption at all levels; calls on the authorities to adopt promptly a comprehensive and strategic approach to fighting endemic corruption, which remains a significant obstacle to Kosovo's democratic, social and economic development; calls on the Kosovo Anti-Corruption Agency to launch more investigations, and on the prosecution service to follow up on cases referred by the Anti-Corruption Agency; stresses that the transparency of proceedings is an essential element in order to fight corruption and ensure that fundamental rights are protected; further underlines the role and responsibility of the political elite in fighting corruption;

20. Welcomes the increased efforts and strong commitment to fight terrorism, and encourages the implementation of the strategy for combating terrorism; urges the authorities to tackle the causes of radicalisation, in particular high youth unemployment and violent extremism; welcomes Kosovo's participation in the coalition to fight terrorism and the measures that the authorities are taking to prevent young people from being radicalised; calls on the authorities to monitor closely and prevent the mobilisation of potential Islamic foreign fighters and terrorists; welcomes the fact that Kosovo's constitution enshrines the principle that Kosovo is a secular state which is neutral in matters of religious belief;

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21. Notes that, according to Kosovo's Interior Minister, approximately 300 Kosovo nationals have joined the ranks of the jihadists in Syria and Iraq, and that many of them have already returned to Kosovo; welcomes the measures taken by the government to provide for prison sentences for nationals who have engaged in terrorist undertakings;

22. Notes that some progress has been made regarding the judiciary, with the adoption of some relevant legislation; stresses the need to proceed promptly with the concrete and effective implementation of that legislation; remains strongly concerned about the slow administration of justice, the significant backlog of cases, the judicial system's lack of resources, the low level of accountability and responsibility of judicial officials, and the possibility of political influence over judicial structures, all of which are still not adequately addressed in legislation, and emphasises the importance of having a fully functional judicial system with established rules regarding the time taken to process court cases; welcomes the steps made in integrating the judiciary in the north, with some positions having been filled by Kosovo Serb judges and prosecutors; calls on the political authorities to demonstrate clearly their full support for the independence of judges and prosecutors, who continue to be targeted in attempts to influence ongoing investigations and judicial proceedings; calls on the authorities to change the constitution to ensure that the majority of the members of the Kosovo Judicial Council are elected by their peers, in line with Venice Commission recommendations;

23. Calls on Kosovo to follow the lines of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy;

24. Takes good note of the adoption of constitutional amendments establishing Specialist Chambers and a Specialist Prosecution Office; welcomes the finalisation of the negotiations between Kosovo and the Netherlands on the host state agreement, and expects the Specialist Chambers to be fully operational as soon as possible, and the Specialist Prosecution Office to have sufficient staff to carry out its tasks; calls on the Specialist Chambers and the Specialist Prosecution Office to draw on the experience and the best practices of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), in accordance with the relevant constitutional provisions on their establishment; calls on the Kosovo authorities to cooperate fully with the new court; calls for the EU and its Member States to provide sufficient funds for the functioning of the Chambers;

25. Considers that the review of EULEX and its eventual phasing-out must go hand in hand with the strengthening and broadening of the mandate of the EUSR, so as to ensure that the EUSR has the necessary capacity for Monitoring, Mentoring and Advising activities, the enhancement of Kosovo's EU integration process, the fight against organised crime and corruption, and the prosecution of war crimes; calls, in the meantime, for increased effectiveness, as well as full transparency and responsibility, on the part of the EULEX mission during its mandate; takes note of the Council conclusions of December 2015 regarding the mandate of EULEX, and calls on Kosovo to contribute to the full and unhindered execution by EULEX of its renewed mandate; stresses that the revision of the mandate must apply the findings, and implement the recommendations, made in the report by Professor Jean-Paul Jacqué following corruption allegations within EULEX; urges EULEX to reach an agreement with UNMIK on the handover of open files to the relevant Kosovo authorities; calls on the Member States to second well-trained and -qualified experts for the necessary period of time and to ensure their reintegration into national services once their mission has been concluded;

26. Deplores the rejection of Kosovo's application for UNESCO membership, due also to active obstruction by Serbia — contradicting its commitment to developing good-neighbourly relations — but also due to a lack of unanimity among member states; welcomes the adoption of the law protecting the historical heritage of Prizren and calls for its full implementation, but points out, nonetheless, the threats posed to the city's heritage by widespread illegal building; welcomes the fact that several Serb religious and cultural heritage sites regrettably destroyed in 2004 have been renovated, such as the Orthodox cathedral, and calls for continuing renovation of Serbian religious and cultural heritage; calls, in this connection, on the interested parties, including the Kosovo authorities, the Serbian Government, the Serbian community in Kosovo and the Serbian Orthodox Church, to find a system for the promotion, protection and conservation of Kosovo's cultural and religious heritage, which should be treated as common European heritage; welcomes the fact that the Kosovo constitution enshrines Kosovo's commitment to the preservation and protection of its cultural and religious heritage, and calls for further efforts to protect the rights of all religious minorities, including Christian Kosovars; underlines the fact that

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joining international and regional organisations and mechanisms should be a priority for Kosovo; recalls, in this context, the importance of complying with the agreement reached on regional cooperation; believes that the establishment of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office of the Western Balkans (in the framework of the Berlin Process), which is being actively promoted by many, will bring positive results, in particular as regards relations between the young people of Serbia and Kosovo;

27. Supports, in the context of the Berlin Process, the creation of the Western Balkans Civil Society Forum, which provides an opportunity for civil society representatives from the region to exchange ideas, voice their concerns and formulate concrete recommendations to decision-makers, and calls for the continuation of this process at the next summit to be held in Paris in 2016, and for the organisation of preparatory workshops for civil society organisations in the region;

28. Welcomes the invitation to the Assembly of Kosovo to participate on a permanent basis, at all levels and on equal terms, in the activities and meetings of the Parliamentary Assembly of the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP-PA), as decided in May 2015, and considers it to be an important contribution to regional parliamentary dialogue; regrets that the Assembly of Kosovo has not been accepted as a full member of other regional parliamentary cooperation initiatives, such as the Western Balkans Conference of the Committees on European Integration of the States participating in the Stabilisation and Association Process (COSAP) and the Network of Parliamentary Committees for Economy, Finance and European Integration of Western Balkans (NPC); calls on all parliaments of the region to adopt a more inclusive approach vis-à-vis requests by the Assembly of Kosovo for membership of regional initiatives, thus contributing to the enhancement of regional cooperation;

29. Reiterates its call on Kosovo to complete the legislative framework for the civil service and to implement fully the strategic framework for public administration and the action plan; calls on the authorities to stop the politicisation of public administration, to promote merit-based professionalism in all public institutions, to ensure sound financial management of public institutions, and to ensure the transparency of the Assembly's oversight of budget implementation;

30. Stresses the importance of increasing project funding for Kosovo NGOs that aim to advance the principles of good governance, to increase transparency and accountability, to strengthen institutional mechanisms within the justice system, to consolidate further institutional and social democracy, and to step up efforts to protect and promote the rights of marginalised groups and ethnic minorities;

31. Reiterates its concern about the high unemployment rate, particularly among women and young people, and condemns the general discrimination against women in society and in the labour market; stresses the need to provide Kosovo's young people with prospects for the future; calls on Kosovo to focus on closing the skills gap in the labour market, to remove any administrative obstacles that could lead to discriminatory practices and to improve the overall business environment in the country, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises; calls on the Commission to provide further assistance to young entrepreneurs as part of Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) funding, with a particular focus on training courses, workshop and the exchange of know-how, including measures to facilitate links with entrepreneurs from EU Member States, while at the same time making every effort to prevent a brain drain, particularly following the entry into force of the SAA;

32. Points out that structural reforms remain essential in order to raise potential growth, to boost productivity and to improve the flexibility and competitiveness of Kosovo's economy; endorses the Commission's conclusion that Kosovo should strengthen its medium-term fiscal framework, improve the transparency of public finance, shift budget expenditure towards growth measures and channel foreign direct investment and remittances into productive sectors; calls on Kosovo to speed up the restructuring of public enterprises, to improve its bankruptcy and insolvency procedures and to reduce its reliance on customs duties by broadening its domestic tax base and modernising its revenue collection;

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33. Stresses that labour market reforms, complemented by education reforms, are crucial in view of the high unemployment and low labour participation rates; emphasises that further efforts are necessary with a view to better matching the education system with labour market needs, in particular by modifying the curriculum framework for pre-university education; stresses, furthermore, the importance of expanding the system of vocational education, which must be complemented by active labour market policies;

34. Notes that Kosovo is at an early stage of developing a functional economy; welcomes the fact that some progress has been made in the area of industry and SMEs; urges the continued reduction of burdens on SMEs, and highlights the need to implement regulatory impact assessment in respect of SMEs, in addition to support for start-ups and innovative companies that represent high added value, in order to encourage entrepreneurial activity which will have both social and economic benefits; calls on the Commission to provide further assistance to young entrepreneurs through IPA funds, including measures to facilitate links with entrepreneurs from EU Member States and the involvement of Kosovo's entrepreneurship associations in the European Confederation of Young Entrepreneurs, in particular following the entry into force of the SAA; urges Kosovo's institutions to create investment funding opportunities for social and sustainable enterprises in order to tackle the challenges of addressing social problems and securing sustainable growth;

35. Reiterates the importance of ensuring that Kosovo is assigned an international telephone code of its own as soon as possible, as this will help to give it added international visibility; calls on the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) to move forward on this agreement;

36. Highlights the importance of respecting the sensitivities of all communities when extending invitations, as was the case with General Diković, and calls on KFOR to act in collaboration with the Kosovo authorities in order to avoid gestures that would offend the memory of the victims and harm the dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade; recalls that the liaison offices in both Kosovo and Serbia must be properly informed 48 hours prior to such visits;

37. Notes the improvement of road transport and mobility infrastructure, in particular with regard to motorways, as well as the recent adoption of the 2015 IPA II package, which includes Kosovo's major railway infrastructure project; regrets, however, the high construction costs; hopes that the recent loan agreement signed between Kosovo and the European Investment Bank for the modernisation of the Kosovo part of the European Rail Route 10 network can give a boost to a comprehensive plan for improving public transport and upgrading railway infrastructure; welcomes, in this regard, the agreement between Prime Ministers Isa Mustafa and Aleksandar Vučić of 27 January 2016 to start discussions on direct air and rail connections between Kosovo and Serbia; calls on the Kosovo authorities — bearing in mind that the Commission has made the connectivity agenda one of its highest priorities and regards it as the key factor for the region's economic development — to ensure the full and swift implementation of the technical standards and soft measures in the transport field which were agreed during the 2015 Western Balkans Summit in Vienna;

38. Expresses its concern at Kosovo's current precarious energy situation, which is having a negative impact on day-to-day life; points out that the current level of electricity losses and related commercial damage are very high on account of grids wearing out, and calls for major reforms to improve energy efficiency and security of supply through investment in the rehabilitation of the existing electricity grid network, since a functional electricity grid is a prerequisite for domestic and foreign companies wishing to establish a business in Kosovo; urges the Energy Regulatory Office to be more flexible in granting licences and authorisations to new business investors in the renewables sector; takes note of the agreement reached on the construction of the New Kosovo power plant in conjunction with US company Contour Global, which will have a generating capacity of 500 MW, and calls for a transparent process accompanied by a social and environmental impact assessment of the project, in full compliance with EU standards;

39. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the European External Action Service and the Government and National Assembly of Kosovo.

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