**Follow up to the European Parliament non-legislative resolution
on the 2019-2020 Commission Reports on Kosovo**

1. **Rapporteur:** Viola VON CRAMON-TAUBADEL (Greens/EFA / DE)
2. **Reference numbers:** 2019/2172 (INI) / A9-0031/2021 / P9\_TA-PROV(2021)0113
3. **Date of adoption of the resolution:** 25 March 2021
4. **Competent Parliamentary Committee:** Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET)
5. **Brief analysis/ assessment of the resolution and requests made in it:**

Overall, the resolution is supportive of Kosovo and the EU's efforts to advance Kosovo on its

European path. It welcomes the peaceful and orderly conduct of the early legislative elections held on 6 October 2019 and 14 February 2021, but expresses concerns over the lack of competition, freedom of choice and expression in the Kosovo Serb community, as well as problems related to the out-of-Kosovo votes.

At the same time, the Parliament points out the context of political instability and, in this regard, calls on all political forces in Kosovo to reform the political system to improve legal certainty and the process for the formation of new governments.

The resolution’s key messages on Kosovo’s EU-related reforms are broadly in line with the Commission’s 2019-2020 reports on Kosovo.

The Parliament considers it vital to grant visa liberalisation to Kosovo without undue delay, assessing that Kosovo continues to fulfil all the benchmarks of the visa liberalisation roadmap, as consistently confirmed by the Commission since July 2018. It calls on the Council to urgently proceed with the adoption of a visa-free regime for Kosovo.

The resolution expresses regrets for the opening of the Embassy of Kosovo to Israel in Jerusalem, which goes against the position of the European Union on this matter.

The resolution welcomes some of the recent progress made in adapting the legal framework on the rule of law, including the Law on the disciplinary liability of judges and prosecutors and the Law on mediation, as well as the roll-out of an electronic case management system and central criminal record registry. It, however, regrets the weak level of implementation.

The resolution reiterates its full support for the work of the Kosovo Specialist Chambers and the Specialist Prosecutor’s Office and stresses the importance of these institutions being able to continue their work independently, without any outside interference.

The resolution welcomes the adoption of the 2020 IPA (Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance) Annual Action Programme for Kosovo of a total value of EUR 90 million and insists that IPA funds are used inter alia to promote the green agenda by reinforcing environmental protection, contributing to mitigation, increasing resilience to climate change, and accelerating the shift towards a low-carbon economy.

The resolution supports the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue and calls on Kosovo to improve internal coordination on this issue.

1. **Response to the requests and overview of the action taken, or intended to be taken, by the Commission:**

**On promoting regional cooperation, greater coordination and exchange of information between the security services of Kosovo and the EU and its Member States in countering potential terrorist activities (paragraph 26)**, the Commission agrees on the importance of cooperation with Kosovo on countering terrorism and noted that progress was made in this area, in line with the objectives set out in the EU-Kosovo implementing arrangement for the Joint Action Plan on counter-terrorism for the Western Balkans, especially with regard to the rehabilitation and reintegration of foreign terrorist fighters and their families. The Kosovo authoritiesshould improve their capacity to address terrorist content online, including by efforts to refer terrorist content to internet companies, and enhancing efforts to empower civil society to develop effective alternative narratives online. The Kosovo authorities need to be more effective in their efforts to fight money laundering and the relevant law should be brought in line with the EU *acquis* and international standards.

**On addressing disinformation (paragraph 47)**, the Commission services and the European External Action Service (EEAS) will continue to coordinate and strategically address issues related to disinformation and hybrid threats, including by supporting initiatives to enhance media literacy in the country. In its 2020 Report, the Commission encouraged the national authorities to increase efforts to fight disinformation and build up the resilience of media outlets. The Commission will continue to monitor the developments in these areas, including in its annual reports.

**On further support to small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) (paragraph 76)**, the Commission has been providing substantial IPA funds for supporting SMEs in Kosovo. EUR 10 million have been blended with funds of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) to create an overall package of EUR 30.5 million for enterprises in Kosovo. The Commission has also committed EUR 3 million to support SME development in Kosovo with a specific focus on improving the business environment and entrepreneurship capacities through the enhancement of start-ups and innovation. Moreover, as part of its support to Kosovo to recover from the economic and social impact of the COVID-19 crisis, the Commission has committed substantial financial support to SMEs to ensure their survival in the short-term and recovery in the medium-term, including, among others, EUR 5.2 million for “EU4 small business recovery following the COVID-19 crisis”.

**On developing a regional strategy to address persistent youth unemployment (paragraph 78)**, the Commission recalls that tackling youth unemployment is one of the key priorities of the EU in Kosovo. Youth unemployment and brain drain is an issue across the Western Balkans region, however, the Commission considers that regional ownership is important for the creation of any regional initiative or strategy. The Commission can support the region in addressing the issue, as it already does through several cooperation paths, e.g. Alliance for Apprenticeships, or European Training Foundation.

**On supporting Kosovo and the other Western Balkan states in their efforts to curb the pandemic (paragraph 86)**, the Commission continues its support to the Western Balkans during the pandemic. A EUR 3.3 billion emergency support package was approved in spring 2020 and the EUR 9 billion Economic and Investment plan for the longer-term economic recovery of the Western Balkans in October 2020. The Commission is focusing on providing vaccines to the region as soon as possible. The COVAX mechanism, to which the EU has contributed over EUR 3 billion delivered the first doses to the Western Balkans. In addition, the Commission is working with EU Member States and vaccine manufacturers to operationalise the resale of vaccine doses to the Western Balkans under the Advance Purchase Agreements for which the EU has made available grants totalling EUR 70 million to the Western Balkans. A first success was the conclusion of agreements announced on 20 April 2021 for the delivery of 651 000 doses of BioNTech/Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines to all the Western Balkans. These are funded by the grants and will be shared with the facilitation of Austria. The first delivery to all the partners in the region arrived in early May, with regular deliveries to continue until August.

**On focusing IPA III funds on the ongoing democratic transition of Kosovo in addition to infrastructure projects (paragraph 101)**, the Commission notes that IPA III presents a solid policy-driven approach, putting the fundamental requirements for membership – in particular the rule of law, respect for fundamental rights and public administration reform – at the core of the assistance. IPA III will also support the long-term economic recovery and integration, by mobilising up to EUR 9 billion of funding, in areas such as sustainable transport, energy, environment, digital and human capital. The Economic and Investment Plan is an integral part of the support to the Western Balkans on the path to the EU.