



TEXTS ADOPTED

P10_TA(2025)0130

2023 and 2024 reports on Montenegro

European Parliament resolution of 18 June 2025 on the 2023 and 2024 Commission reports on Montenegro (2025/2020(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Montenegro, of the other part¹, which entered into force on 1 May 2010,
- having regard to Montenegro's application for membership of the European Union of 15 December 2008,
- having regard to the Commission opinion of 9 November 2010 on Montenegro's application for membership of the European Union (COM(2010)0670), the European Council's decision of 16-17 December 2010 to grant Montenegro candidate status and the European Council's decision of 29 June 2012 to open EU accession negotiations with Montenegro,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/1529 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 September 2021 establishing the Instrument for Pre-Accession assistance (IPA III)²,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2024/1449 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on establishing the Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans³,
- having regard to the Presidency conclusions of the Thessaloniki European Council meeting of 19-20 June 2003,

¹ OJ L 108, 29.4.2010, p. 3, ELI:
http://data.europa.eu/eli/agree_internation/2010/224/oj.

² OJ L 330, 20.9.2021, p. 1, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/1529/oj>.

³ OJ L, 2024/1449, 24.5.2024, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1449/oj>.

- having regard to the Sofia Declaration of the EU-Western Balkans summit of 17 May 2018 and the Sofia Priority Agenda annexed thereto,
- having regard to the declarations of the EU-Western Balkans summits of 13 December 2023 in Brussels, and of 18 December 2024 in Brussels,
- having regard to the Berlin Process launched on 28 August 2014,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 6 October 2020 entitled 'An Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans' (COM(2020)0641),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 8 November 2023 entitled '2023 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy' (COM(2023)0690), accompanied by the Commission staff working document entitled 'Montenegro 2023 Report' (SWD(2023)0694),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 8 November 2023 entitled 'New growth plan for the Western Balkans' (COM(2023)0691),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 20 March 2024 on pre-enlargement reforms and policy reviews (COM(2024)0146),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 24 July 2024 entitled '2024 Rule of Law Report' (COM(2024)0800), accompanied by the Commission staff working document entitled '2024 Rule of Law Report - The rule of law situation in the European Union: Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in Montenegro' (SWD(2024)0829),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 30 October 2024 entitled '2024 Communication on EU enlargement policy' (COM(2024)0690), accompanied by the Commission staff working document entitled 'Montenegro 2024 Report' (SWD(2024)0694),
- having regard to the Commission's overview and country assessments of 31 May 2023 and of 13 June 2024 of the economic reform programme of Montenegro, and to the joint conclusions of the Economic and Financial Dialogue between the EU and the Western Balkans and Türkiye adopted by the Council on 16 May 2023 and to the joint conclusions of the Economic and Financial Dialogue between the EU and the Western Balkans Partners, Türkiye, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine adopted by the Council on 14 May 2024,
- having regard to the EU-Montenegro Intergovernmental Accession Conferences of 22 June 2021, 13 December 2021, 29 January 2024,

26 June 2024 and 16 December 2024,

- having regard to the 11th EU-Montenegro Stabilisation and Association Council on 14 July 2022,
 - having regard to the declaration and recommendations adopted at the 22nd meeting of the EU-Montenegro Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee, held on 31 October and 1 November 2024,
 - having regard to Montenegro's accession to NATO on 5 June 2017,
 - having regard to Special Report 01/2022 of the European Court of Auditors of 10 January 2022 entitled 'EU support for the rule of law in the Western Balkans: despite efforts, fundamental problems persist',
 - having regard to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the Istanbul Convention), ratified by Montenegro in 2013, and to the recommendations of the Commission on gender equality and combating gender-based violence,
 - having regard to the World Press Freedom Index report published annually by Reporters Without Borders,
 - having regard to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) data on the Ukraine Refugee Situation as of April 2025,
 - having regard to its recommendation of 23 November 2022 to the Council, the Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy concerning the new EU strategy for enlargement¹,
 - having regard to its previous resolutions on Montenegro,
 - having regard to its resolution of 29 February 2024 on deepening EU integration in view of future enlargement²,
 - having regard to Rule 55 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (A10-0093/2025),
- A. whereas enlargement is a key EU foreign policy tool and a strategic geopolitical investment in peace, stability, security and prosperity;

¹ OJ C 167, 11.5.2023, p. 105.

² OJ C, C/2024/6746, 26.11.2024, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/6746/oj>.

- B. whereas the new enlargement momentum, sparked by the changing geopolitical reality and the EU membership applications by several Eastern Partnership countries, has prompted the EU to accelerate its efforts towards delivering on its long-overdue commitments to the Western Balkans; whereas the future of the Western Balkan countries lies within the EU;
- C. whereas each country is judged on its own merits in fulfilling the Copenhagen criteria, including full respect for democracy, the rule of law, good governance, fundamental EU values and alignment with EU foreign and security policy; whereas the implementation of necessary reforms in the area of 'fundamentals' determines the timetable and progress in the accession process;
- D. whereas Montenegro has gone furthest in the accession process, with all 33 chapters of the EU *acquis* open and six provisionally closed, and has significant public support therefor;
- E. whereas the EU is Montenegro's largest trading partner, investor and provider of financial assistance;
- F. whereas Montenegro is exposed to malign foreign influence, disinformation campaigns and other forms of influence, including election meddling, hybrid warfare strategies and unfavourable investments from non-EU actors, particularly Russia and China, which are trying to influence Montenegro's political, economic and strategic trajectory and threaten democratic processes and media integrity, jeopardising the country's prospects for EU accession;
- G. whereas on 8 June 2024, an 'All-Serb Assembly' took place in Belgrade with the participation of high-ranking parliamentarians under the slogan 'One people, one Assembly';

Commitment to EU accession

1. Recognises Montenegro's firm commitment to EU accession and reaffirms its full support for the country's future EU membership; welcomes Montenegro's leading regional position in the EU accession process as well as the overwhelming support of Montenegro's citizens and the majority of political actors for joining the EU in 2028;
2. Welcomes Montenegro's positive progress in enacting EU-related reforms and measures, underpinned by an ambitious timeline and calls for collective efforts of political actors, civil society and citizens; commends Montenegro for meeting the interim benchmarks for Chapters 23 and 24, which continue to determine the overall pace of negotiations, and for receiving a positive Interim Benchmark Assessment Report; welcomes the closure of three more negotiating chapters, bringing the total to six;

3. Encourages all political actors to stay focused on EU integration and the required reforms; stresses the need for political stability, commitment and constructive engagement in consensus building across party lines in order to move swiftly and more effectively towards closing additional chapters in 2025, so as to achieve the country's ambitious timeline; stresses that the reforms adopted must be implemented effectively and consistently to ensure genuine progress and full alignment with EU legislation; calls for a strengthening of the functioning of, and coordination between, state institutions in order to achieve political stability and advance the country's substantial progress in implementing key EU-related reforms, in particular electoral and judicial reforms and the fight against organised crime and corruption;
4. Underlines that the credibility of the EU, including its enlargement policy as a whole, would be affected if tangible progress achieved by certain Western Balkan countries does not translate into clear advancements on the EU accession path;
5. Welcomes Montenegro's sustained full alignment with the EU's common foreign and security policy (CFSP), including EU restrictive measures, inter alia, those related to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and those targeted against cyberattacks, as well as its support for the international rules-based order at UN level; encourages Montenegro to strengthen the enforcement of restrictive measures and avoid their circumvention and to seize the assets of those sanctioned; calls on all government representatives to respect and promote CFSP alignment and EU values and refrain from any activities that may threaten Montenegro's strategic path towards EU membership and its sovereignty; is highly concerned, in this context, by public high officials' statements in support of the President of the Republika Srpska entity, Milorad Dodik, who is undermining the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina; regrets the participation of high-ranking parliamentarians from Montenegro in the 'All-Serbian Assembly' in Belgrade as well as their support for the declaration adopted on that occasion undermining the sovereignty of Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo;
6. Underlines the strategic importance of Montenegro's NATO membership and welcomes its active involvement in EU common security and defence policy missions and operations, such as EU Naval Force Operation Atalanta, and in NATO and other international and multilateral missions; welcomes the decision of Montenegro's Council for Defence and Security to approve the participation of its armed forces in the EU Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine and NATO's Security Assistance and Training for Ukraine and calls on the Montenegrin Parliament to adopt these decisions, thereby reinforcing the country's commitment to collective security;

7. Commends Montenegro for its humanitarian and material support to Ukraine and for extending the temporary protection mechanism that grants persons fleeing Ukraine the right to stay in Montenegro for one year; recalls that Montenegro is among the Western Balkan countries hosting the largest number of Ukrainian refugees, with over 18 800 refugees from Ukraine registered in Montenegro as of 31 January 2025, according to UNHCR statistics;
8. Remains seriously concerned by malign foreign interference, destabilisation efforts, cyberattacks, hybrid threats and disinformation campaigns, including attempts to influence political processes and public opinion, by third-country actors, which discredit the EU and undermine Montenegro's progress on its accession path; urges Montenegro to adopt countermeasures in stronger cooperation with the EU and NATO and through increased regional cooperation among the Western Balkan countries; notes that religious institutions can be used as a tool for external influence and condemns any undue interference by the Serbian Orthodox Church in this regard; reiterates the importance of building resilience capacity against foreign information manipulation and interference, including through greater oversight of the media landscape, public awareness campaigns and media literacy programmes; recommends that Montenegro establish a dedicated hybrid threat task force;
9. Urges the Commission, the European External Action Service (EEAS), the Delegation of the EU to Montenegro and the Montenegrin authorities to boost strategic communication to Montenegrin citizens on the benefits of the enlargement process and EU membership, as well as on the concrete accession criteria that Montenegro still needs to fulfil to align with EU requirements; urges them, furthermore, to improve the EU's visibility in the country, including as regards EU-funded projects; calls for StratCom monitoring to be expanded in order to concentrate on cross-border disinformation threats in the Western Balkan countries and their neighbours; calls on the Commission to further support the efforts of the EEAS and the Western Balkans Task Force so as to expand outreach activities by increasing visibility in local media, fact-checking reports and partnering with civil society organisations to counter false narratives more effectively;
10. Welcomes the Montenegrin Parliament's renewed engagement in the Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee;

Democracy and the rule of law

11. Recognises the Montenegrin Parliament's key role in the accession process, notably as regards passing accession-related legislation, and underlines the importance of parliamentary cooperation in this regard; reiterates the European Parliament's readiness to use its

political and technical resources to advance the EU-related reform agenda, including through democracy support activities; notes, with concern, the re-emerging tensions and ethnic polarisation, which are slowing the reform process; calls for constructive dialogue and consensus building across the political spectrum, prioritising legislative quality, and strongly urges that solutions be found through parliamentary dialogue; calls for preventing identity politics from diverting attention from the EU agenda or straining relations with its neighbours, ensuring that Montenegro remains firmly on the EU path; welcomes the agreement between the Montenegrin Prime Minister and opposition leaders to request an opinion from the Venice Commission regarding the termination of the mandate of Constitutional Court judge Dragana Đuranović and for the opposition to return to the parliament;

12. Expresses its concern about attempts to amend the law on Montenegrin citizenship in the Montenegrin Parliament, which could have serious and long-term implications for the country's decision-making processes and identity, while emphasising that any discussions on identity politics must be handled with the utmost sensitivity to avoid further polarisation and should aim for broad societal consensus; encourages the Montenegrin authorities to consult and coordinate with the EU on any possible changes to the law on citizenship and stresses the importance of achieving consensus on any matters relating to this subject of crucial importance for the identity and independence of Montenegro;
13. Strongly encourages the Montenegrin Parliament to hold inclusive and transparent public consultations and regular and meaningful engagement with civil society in decision-making from an early stage in the legislative process, notably for key legislation in the EU reform process; encourages a more active role for the Montenegrin Parliamentary Women's Club;
14. Calls on Montenegro to fully align its electoral legal framework with EU standards, notably as regards harmonising electoral legislation, voting and candidacy rights restrictions, transparency, dispute resolution mechanisms, campaign and media oversight, and political party and election campaign financing, and to implement the recommendations of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights¹; urges Montenegro to increase transparency and control of political party spending and prevent the abuse of state resources by bringing the relevant legislation into line with EU standards, as well as enhancing the enforcement of third-party financing rules and strengthening sanctions for violations; highlights the role of the Agency for Prevention of Corruption (APC) in this regard, and calls for increased cooperation between the APC and financial intelligence

¹ <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/montenegro>.

authorities to detect and prevent foreign influence in political campaigns; calls, furthermore, on Montenegro to implement the recommendations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) on gender parity on electoral lists;

15. Reiterates its call on the Montenegrin authorities to establish a single nationwide municipal election day, as provided for in the Law on Local Self-Government, in order to enhance governance efficiency, reduce political tensions and strengthen the stability and effectiveness of municipal and state institutions; recalls that future disbursement of funds under the Reform and Growth Facility is contingent on the fulfilment of this reform, in line with Montenegro's commitments in its reform agenda, and should be pursued as a matter of priority; welcomes the fact that, in 2022, elections in 14 municipalities were held on the same day; calls for a robust legislative framework in this regard; is concerned by the misconduct of the electoral process in the municipality of Šavnik;
16. Calls on the Montenegrin authorities to adopt the Law on Government that should enable an improved governance framework and the optimisation of public administration;
17. Underlines the importance of a professional, merit-based, transparent and depoliticised civil service; calls on Montenegro to amend and implement the relevant legislation to provide a framework for the professionalisation, optimisation and rationalisation of state administration, including procedural safeguards against politically motivated decisions on appointments and dismissals, as well as high standards for managerial positions; regrets the lack of significant progress in adopting and effectively implementing such legislation and highlights that this allows for public service recruitment to remain subject to political influence;
18. Welcomes Montenegro's inclusion in the Commission's 2024 Rule of Law Report; notes, with concern, the identified deficiencies, including judicial appointments and the independence of the prosecutor's office;
19. Welcomes the progress made in implementing key judicial reforms, adopting a new strategic framework and completing long-outstanding judicial appointments; calls on Montenegro to fill the remaining high-level judicial positions;
20. Urges Montenegro to further align its legal framework, including the constitution, in particular on the composition and decision-making process of the Judicial Council, with EU laws and standards on the independence, accountability, impartiality, integrity and professionalism of the judiciary, and to further depoliticise appointments to bolster independence, implement outstanding

international recommendations, and determine criteria for the retirement of judges and prosecutors in line with European standards and in full compliance with the Constitution; regrets the pending case backlog and calls on Montenegro to take measures to reduce the duration of legal proceedings, particularly for serious and organised crime cases, notably on money laundering; recommends that Montenegro adopt the amendments to the Constitution in the final stage of the country's EU accession negotiations;

21. Notes the steps taken in the fight against corruption, including new laws and provisions on the protection of whistleblowers, the creation of a new National Council for the fight against corruption and a new anti-corruption strategy for 2024-2028; encourages Montenegro to further align with the EU *acquis* and EU standards and address recommendations by the Commission, the Venice Commission and the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO); encourages the Montenegrin authorities to continue addressing existing deficiencies in the handling of organised crime cases and the seizure and confiscation of criminal assets;
22. Urges Montenegro to step up its criminal justice response to high-level corruption, including by strengthening the effective enforcement of existing criminal legislation and imposing effective and deterrent penalties, and to create conditions for judicial institutions and independent bodies dealing with corruption to function effectively, free from political influence;
23. Notes the work of the Agency for Prevention of Corruption and calls for it to be provided with sufficient funding and for it to be depoliticised; expects the Agency to deliver tangible results and act non-selectively to strengthen its integrity and enhance its authority in carrying out its competences effectively; calls for a stronger corruption prevention framework;
24. Urges Montenegro to align its weapons legislation with EU law and international standards, particularly as regards technical standards for firearm markings, deactivation procedures and regulations for alarm and signal weapons, as well as to establish a standardised and effective data collection and reporting system for firearms; is appalled by the tragic mass shooting in Cetinje and expresses its condolences to the victims' families; expresses its concern over the exploitation of this tragedy for disinformation and ethnic polarisation; urges Montenegro to strengthen its crisis communication to counter disinformation and ensure responsible media reporting in the aftermath of violent incidents; calls for systematic actions in the areas of security, mental well-being and institutional transparency, as well as in civic education and public awareness, outreach and educational initiatives, on the dangers and risks of firearms, in line with citizens' expectations and societal needs;

25. Calls on Montenegro to urgently fully align its visa policy with that of the EU, especially as regards countries posing irregular migration or security risks to the EU; expresses its concern that, contrary to expectations, two additional countries have been added to the visa-free regime and that Russian and Belarusian passport holders continue to benefit from a visa-free regime; notes that the harmonisation of the visa policy is also provided for in Montenegro's reform agenda under the Reform and Growth Facility;
26. Welcomes the ongoing cooperation between Montenegro and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), Europol, Eurojust and the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL), and notes the importance of this cooperation in tackling cross-border crime, including the trafficking of weapons, drugs and human beings, and in combating terrorism and extremism; welcomes the entry into force of the upgraded agreement on operational cooperation in border management with Frontex on 1 July 2023 and encourages further cooperation between Montenegro and Frontex to strengthen border management, support asylum procedures, fight smuggling and enhance readmission;

Fundamental freedoms and human rights

27. Regrets that the most vulnerable groups in society still face discrimination; calls on Montenegro to adopt a new anti-discrimination law and relevant strategies, through an inclusive, transparent and meaningful process that actively involves those most affected, to improve vulnerable groups' access to rights; underlines that respect for the rights of all national minorities is an integral part of the EU *acquis*; calls for stronger implementation to ensure equal treatment of all ethnic, religious, national and social groups so that they are guaranteed equal rights and opportunities and can fully participate in social, political and economic life;
28. Welcomes Montenegro's multi-ethnic identity and calls for the further promotion of and respect for the languages, cultural heritage and traditions of local communities and national minorities, as this is closely intertwined with Montenegro's European perspective;
29. Underlines the multi-ethnic identity of the Bay of Kotor; stresses that Montenegro's European perspective is closely intertwined with the protection of minorities and their cultural heritage; calls on the Montenegrin authorities to nurture the multi-ethnic nature of the state, including the traditions and cultural heritage of the Croatian community in the Bay of Kotor;
30. Expresses its grave concern over the endangered heritage sites in Montenegro such as the Bay of Kotor and Sveti Stefan; stresses that Sveti Stefan, along with Miločer Park, was listed among the '7 Most Endangered heritage sites in Europe' for 2023;

31. Calls on the Montenegrin authorities to address the difficult living conditions of Roma people in Montenegro and the discrimination they face, and calls for more measures to promote intercultural understanding in schools; calls on the Montenegrin authorities to also take measures to improve the climate of societal inclusion for LGBTI persons;
32. Welcomes that Montenegro has aligned its legislative and institutional framework with the EU *acquis* and international human rights standards regarding compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols; urges the authorities to address shortcomings in implementation, namely related to accountability and monitoring;
33. Calls for the effective implementation of strategies to uphold the rights of persons with disabilities across all sectors and policies;
34. Condemns all hate speech, including online and gender-based hate speech, and hate crimes; welcomes the criminalisation of racism and hate speech;
35. Emphasises the need to strengthen institutional mechanisms for gender quality and calls on the Montenegrin authorities to address the gender pay gap, to improve women's participation in decision-making – in both the public domain, particularly public administration, and judicial and security sectors, and in business – to ensure the increased political participation of women, to introduce gender responsive budgeting, and to combat gender stereotypes and strengthen efforts to combat discrimination against women, particularly in rural areas; welcomes recent efforts aimed at boosting women's representation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and encourages further efforts in technology sectors;
36. Is deeply concerned by the high rates of gender-based violence, including domestic violence and femicide; calls on Montenegro to fully align its definitions of gender-based violence and domestic violence with the Istanbul Convention, and with recommendations of international bodies, and to set up effective protection and prevention mechanisms and support centres, and ensure effective judicial follow-up for victims of domestic and sexual violence as well as a more robust penal policy towards perpetrators; calls for the collection of disaggregated data on gender-based violence and gender disparities to improve policy responses;
37. Regrets that the draft law on legal gender recognition was not adopted in 2024, despite it being a measure under Montenegro's EU accession programme; urges Montenegro to adopt the law without delay;
38. Welcomes Montenegro's new media laws and its strategy for media

policy aimed at strengthening the legal framework to effectively protect journalists and other media workers; insists on a zero-tolerance policy with regard to pressure on, harassment of, or violence against journalists, particularly by public figures; underlines the need for effective investigations, the prosecution of all instances of hate speech, smear campaigns and strategic lawsuits against journalists, and follow-up of past cases; stresses the need to ensure journalists' rights to access information and maintain a critical stance; notes a significant improvement in Montenegro's press freedom, demonstrated by its progress on the World Press Freedom Index;

39. Expresses its concern over cases where journalists, academics and civil society organisations have faced pressure for exercising free speech, including instances where the police have initiated misdemeanour proceedings against them; is concerned by the use of strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) to target journalists;
40. Regrets the prevailing high level of polarisation in the media and its vulnerability to political interests and foreign influence as well as foreign and domestic disinformation campaigns that spread narratives that negatively impact democratic processes in the country and endanger Montenegro's European perspective; calls on Montenegro to further develop improved media literacy programmes and include them as a core subject in education; calls on the Montenegrin authorities to ensure the editorial, institutional and financial independence of the public service broadcaster RTCG, as well as the legality of the appointment of its management and full respect for court rulings concerning RTCG; recalls that it needs to comply with the law and the highest standards of accountability and integrity; regrets that the independence of public media is being weakened and undermined; calls on all media entities to comply with legal requirements on public funding transparency;
41. Welcomes the publication of the 2023 population census results; calls on the authorities to avoid any politicisation of the process; encourages stakeholders to use these results in a non-discriminatory manner;
42. Welcomes Montenegro's vibrant and constructive civil society and underlines its importance in fostering democracy and pluralism and in promoting good governance and social progress; expresses its concern over the shrinking space for civil society organisations with a critical stance, and condemns all smear campaigns, intimidation and attacks against civil society organisations, notably by political figures in the context of proposals for a 'foreign agent law'; notes that such laws have the potential to undermine fundamental freedoms and the functioning of civil society and are inconsistent with EU values and standards; calls for a supportive legal framework

and clear and fair selection criteria in relation to public funding; calls for the Council for Cooperation between the Government and non-governmental organisations to resume work; underlines the importance of building collaborative relationships and genuinely consulting civil society on draft legislation from an early stage onwards;

Reconciliation, good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation

43. Recalls that good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation are essential elements of the enlargement process; commends Montenegro's active involvement in regional cooperation initiatives; recalls that good neighbourly relations are key for advancing in the accession process;
44. Regrets that Chapter 31 could not be closed in December 2024; calls on all engaged parties to find solutions to outstanding bilateral issues in a constructive and neighbourly manner and prioritise the future interests of citizens in the Western Balkans; recalls that using unresolved bilateral and regional disputes to block candidate countries' accession processes should be avoided; welcomes bilateral consultations between the Republic of Croatia and Montenegro on the status of unresolved bilateral issues; encourages the authorities to continue pursuing confidence-building measures;
45. Notes Montenegro's amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code to address legal and practical obstacles to the effective investigation, prosecution, trial and punishment of war crimes in line with relevant recommendations; calls on Montenegro to apply a proactive approach to handling war crimes cases, in line with international law and standards, to identify, prosecute and punish the perpetrators and the glorification of war crimes and ensure access to, and delivery of justice, redress and reparations for victims, and clarify the fate of missing persons; calls on Montenegro to allocate sufficient resources to specialised prosecutors and courts and proactively investigate all war crime allegations and raise issues of command responsibility, as well as to review past cases that were not prosecuted in line with international or domestic law; calls for regional cooperation in the investigation and prosecution of individuals indicted for war crimes; recognises that addressing these issues and safeguarding court-based facts are an important foundation for trust, democratic values, reconciliation and strengthening bilateral relations with neighbouring countries, and encourages Montenegro to step up these efforts;
46. Warns against the dangers of political revisionism, which distorts historical facts for political purposes, undermines accountability and deepens societal divisions; strongly condemns the glorification of war criminals and widespread public denial of international verdicts

for war crimes, including by the Montenegrin authorities; considers that President Jakov Milatović's statement expressing regret over the participation of Montenegrin forces in the bombardment of the city of Dubrovnik was a valuable contribution to regional peace and reconciliation;

47. Reiterates its support for the initiative to establish the Regional Commission for the establishment of facts about war crimes and other gross human rights violations on the territory of the former Yugoslavia (RECOM);
48. Reiterates its call for the archives that concern the former republics of Yugoslavia to be opened and for access to be granted to the files of the former Yugoslav Secret Service and the Yugoslav People's Army Secret Service in order to thoroughly research and address communist-era crimes;

Socio-economic reforms

49. Welcomes Montenegro's inclusion in SEPA payment schemes, lowering costs for citizens and businesses; underlines that this opens up opportunities for business expansion, increased competitiveness, innovation and improved access to foreign direct investments;
50. Welcomes the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, which aims to integrate the region into the EU's single market, promote regional economic cooperation and deepen EU-related reforms, and which includes the EUR 6 billion Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans; welcomes Montenegro's adoption of a reform agenda and encourages its full implementation; notes that the implementation of the defined reform measures under Montenegro's reform agenda for the Growth Plan would provide access to over EUR 380 million in grants and favourable loans, subject to successful implementation; stresses the importance of inclusive stakeholder consultations, including local and regional authorities, social partners and civil society, in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases;
51. Encourages Montenegro to make best use of all EU funding available under the Pre-accession Assistance Instrument (IPA III), the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans, the IPARD programme and the Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans, to accelerate socio-economic convergence with the EU and further align its legislation with the EU on fraud prevention; recalls the conditionality of EU funding, which may be modulated or suspended in the event of significant regression or persistent lack of progress on fundamentals;
52. Calls for the EU and the Western Balkan countries to establish a framework for effective cooperation between the European Public

Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) and the accession countries in order to facilitate close cooperation and the prosecution of the misuse of EU funds, including through the secondment of national liaison officers to the EPPO; encourages Montenegro to fully implement working arrangements with the EPPO; calls for the EU to make the necessary legal and political arrangements to extend the jurisdiction of the EPPO to EU funds devoted to Montenegro as a candidate country;

53. Positively notes Montenegro's economic growth; calls for more steps to reduce the budget deficit and public debt, and to further remove indirect tax exemptions that do not align with the EU *acquis*; welcomes the efforts to reduce these fiscal vulnerabilities; reiterates the need for increased public investment in the education system for sustainable social and economic development;
54. Notes Montenegro's public debt to foreign financial institutions and companies that can be used as a tool to influence its policy decisions, in particular those related to China and Russia; welcomes the efforts to reduce these vulnerabilities and calls on the authorities to further reduce economic dependence on China and to continue making use of the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans, the EU Global Gateway initiative and the Reform and Growth Facility, with a view to finding greener and more transparent alternatives for financing infrastructure projects; calls on Montenegro to increase transparency in future infrastructure projects, ensure competitive bidding and avoid excessive debt dependence on foreign creditors;
55. Calls on the Montenegrin authorities to take measures to counter depopulation and emigration, in particular through investments in education and healthcare, especially in the north of the country, as well as through decentralisation by investing in medium-sized cities;
56. Encourages the Montenegrin authorities to boost the digital transformation and pursue evidence-based labour market policies to address the persistently high unemployment rate, in particular among women and young people, while bolstering institutional capacity and enhancing the underlying digital policy framework, and to effectively implement the Youth Guarantee and the new Youth Strategy; urges the authorities to address brain drain as a matter of urgency; encourages the development of targeted preventive measures and incentives to legalise informal businesses and employees, as a large informal sector continues to hinder economic and social development in Montenegro;
57. Welcomes the calls for the prompt integration of all Western Balkan countries into the EU's digital single market before actual EU membership, which would crucially enable the creation of a digitally safe environment;
58. Calls for more transparency in public procurement, notably for

procedures via intergovernmental agreements, and for full compliance with EU rules and principles; calls on Montenegro to reduce the number of public procurement procedures without notices; expresses its concern over the financial burden and lack of transparency surrounding the construction of the Bar-Boljare motorway financed by a Chinese loan; stresses that the secrecy surrounding loan agreements and construction contracts raises accountability concerns;

59. Expresses its concern over any agreements or projects that circumvent public procurement rules, transparency obligations and public consultation requirements, as set out in national legislation and EU standards; calls on the Government of Montenegro to ensure full respect for the principles of transparency, accountability, inclusive decision-making and the rule of law in all public infrastructure and development initiatives;

Energy, the environment, biodiversity and connectivity

60. Urges Montenegro to advance the green transition, with the support of EU funding, improve its institutional and regulatory framework and enhance energy resilience by finally adopting and implementing the long-overdue National Energy and Climate Plan, adopting energy efficiency laws and integrating further with EU energy markets; calls for all new green transition projects to be implemented in line with EU standards on the environment, State aid and concessions;
61. Regrets the lack of progress on key sector reforms in the area of transport policy; calls on the Montenegrin authorities to align the country's transport development with the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy for the Western Balkans, focusing on railways, multimodality and reducing CO₂ emissions and other environmental impacts, and to further implement its Transport Development Strategy and strengthen administrative capacities for the implementation of trans-European transport networks;
62. Welcomes the reduction of data roaming charges between the EU and the Western Balkan countries and calls on the authorities, private actors and all stakeholders to take all necessary steps towards the goal of bringing data roaming prices close to domestic prices by 2028; welcomes the entry into force of the first phase of the implementation of the roadmap for roaming between the Western Balkans and the EU;
63. Encourages the adoption of sectoral strategies for waste management, air and water quality, nature protection and climate change, ensuring strategic planning for investments; notes the lack of progress and associated rising costs in building essential waste water treatment plants to prevent sewage pollution in rivers and the sea in seven municipalities;

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64. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Commissioner for Enlargement, the Commissioner for the Mediterranean, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, and to the President, Government and Parliament of Montenegro, and to have it translated and published in Montenegrin.