



RESOLUTION

Supporting the common future of the Western Balkan and the European Union

Adopted at the YEPP Council Meeting in Vienna, 13.04.2019

Recognising that:

- Western Balkan is surrounded by EU Member States. The region is with a population of almost 18 million people, more than 18% of which are young people and is our closest partner, geographically, historically and economically.
- The European Union and the Western Balkan share a vision of a common future¹, and that the accession process needs to remain the key perspective for all Western Balkan;
- It is part of European Union's values to keep the peace and stability in the region. Peace, stability and prosperity in the Western Balkans will have a long-term positive effect on security and stability throughout the whole European continent²;
- For all of the Western Balkan, the EU is the leading trade partner accounting for over 73% of the region's total trade; while the region's share of overall EU trade is only 1.3%. Trade with the region has more than doubled since 2006 with the total trade between the EU and the Western Balkans exceeding EUR 49.5 billion in 2017. This trade expansion has overall been to the benefit of the Western Balkan: in 10 years, the region increased its exports to the EU by 142% against a more modest increase of EU exports to the region of 84%.³
- The threat of radicalisation must be tackled by regional leaders with the help of the EU⁴;
- EU should prevent foreign actors, in particular the Russian Federation, from destabilizing the region⁵ by using the escalating tensions, which is nourished by economic policy, propaganda and disinformation tools while using pro-Russian milieus to perform subversive activities.

Acknowledging that:

- Supporting the countries of the Western Balkans and working together with them towards a common European future is first of all an objective and a responsibility of the EU, but nonetheless we count as well on NATO, another reliable international and

¹ <https://news.gallup.com/poll/213899/western-balkans-benefit-joining.aspx>

² https://ec.europa.eu/commission/news/strategy-western-balkans-2018-feb-06_en

³ https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/isdb_results/factsheets/region/details_western-balkans-6_en.pdf

⁴ <http://journals.sfu.ca/jd/index.php/jd/article/view/102/85>

⁵ <https://www.epp.eu/papers/russian-disinformation-undermining-western-democracy/>

multilateral partner, in supporting, by means of a balanced approach, peace, stability and prosperity in the region;

- Western Balkan share a common goal in joining the European Union and that they equally seek to establish democratically functioning institutions for the benefit of their citizens; and that in this respect, the implementation of rule of law and independent judicial systems and the fight against corruption are key;
- Foreign powers, Russian Federation in particular, are carrying out hybrid warfare against some of the pro-Western authorities⁶ in the Western Balkans as well as supporting separatists which poses a threat to the state structures there.
- The fact that the majority of Balkan Muslims reject radical and conservative religious ideas, as well as violence against civilians, was confirmed by a 2013 poll conducted by the Pew Research Center, but still The Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) estimates that over 900 people from the Western Balkan travelled to warzones in Iraq and Syria.⁷

YEPP calls on:

- The European Commission assistance and cooperation regarding the region's path to the EU to remain one of the key priorities in the next mandate;
- The European Commission to support and improve the visibility of EU-sponsored projects and to extend other initiatives by EU Member States in the neighborhood of the Western Balkans.
- The EU's agency for law enforcement cooperation Europol to support the Western Balkans in preventing and combating all forms of radicalization, extremism, cyberterrorism and terrorism;

⁶https://issuu.com/warsawinstitute/docs/russia_s_hybrid_warfare_in_the_west/14?fbclid=IwAR0TksAVwnt3PX1qb4HbOgSHpS3KmFchmMmf6LaagBEoiudRYM8CCDc5hHE

⁷ https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Alert_24_Balkan_radicalism.pdf