EUCRTA:
European Centre for Research, Transparency and Accountability

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTIONS ON WESTERN BALKAN COUNTRIES:

Growing concern over Serbia's destabilising influence in the region

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The European Parliament's recent resolutions on the European Commission's 2023 and 2024 reports on Western Balkan countries reflect unusually strong language and the increasing concerns about Serbia's active role in regional instability.

- For the first time in such strong words, the European Parliament directly criticises Serbia for acting as a destabilising force in the Western Balkans. It accuses Belgrade of spreading disinformation and anti-EU rhetoric, interfering in the internal affairs of neighbouring countries, and fostering nationalist sentiments, and promoting the ideology of the "Serbian World".

- Serbia is increasingly viewed as a central actor / regional hub for Russian-aligned hybrid threats. The EP highlights its state-sponsored disinformation campaigns, support for separatist movements and actors, manipulation of political processes and the aggressive promotion of a Serbian nationalist agenda in Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and North Macedonia.

- The European Parliament urges the European Commission to adopt a tougher stance toward Serbia. It calls for more decisive action to counter democratic backsliding and recommends considering targeted sanctions against Serbian and Republika Srpska officials who pose a threat to regional stability.

The brief analysis below demonstrates that this year's EP resolutions mark a significant escalation in the EU's rhetoric regarding Serbia's role in the Western Balkans. Moving past cautious diplomacy, the EP explicitly identifies Serbia as a destabilising force, highlighting both its involvement in hybrid threats and its nationalist agenda. The call for a firmer EU response - including tougher language, stricter conditionality, and the possibility of sanctions - reflects growing concern over Serbia's increasing divergence from EU integration and its negative effects on the region's democratic and security landscape.

Introduction

The European Parliament (EP) has recently adopted all six resolutions based on the European Commission's 2023 and 2024 country reports for the Western Balkans. These resolutions outline the EP's positions on key issues affecting the region's path toward EU membership, including adherence to democratic principles, the rule of law, fundamental freedoms, and human rights, reconciliation efforts, regional cooperation, and progress on socio-economic and sectoral reforms in areas such as the energy, environment, and connectivity.

Sharper tone on Serbia's regional influence

The resolutions adopted in 2025 mark a significant shift in rhetoric compared to previous years, with notably harsher and more direct criticism of Serbia's actions in the Western Balkans. The EP condemns Serbia's destabilising influence, describing it as a hub for disinformation and interference in neighbouring countries' domestic affairs. The heightened criticism extends beyond Serbia's individual report, with references to its malign activities now appearing in the assessments of other Western Balkan countries, including, for the first time, North Macedonia.

The current resolutions explicitly hold Serbian authorities responsible for actions including election interference, support for terrorist actors in Kosovo, and the legitimisation of Bosnian Serb secessionist leader Milorad Dodik in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). In parallel, the EP urges EU institutions to strengthen accountability measures, calling on the European Commission to take a more resolute stance and to push for targeted sanctions against destabilising figures, notably Milorad Dodik and his political supporters in Serbia.

A content analysis - three key dimensions of Serbia's destabilising role:

1 | Serbia as a regional hub of disinformation and foreign influence

The EP reports repeatedly identify Serbia as a central platform for enabling foreign malign influence operations in the Western Balkans, particularly through the dissemination of disinformation and pro-Russian, anti-EU narratives. Serbia is specifically criticised for permitting the unrestricted operation of Russian state-controlled media outlets such as *RT Balkan* and *Sputnik Srbija*. These outlets, along with Serbian-language media "which function as regional amplifiers of Kremlin narratives", are seen as driving disinformation efforts aimed at weakening democratic institutions and societal cohesion across the region.

Furthermore, the EP also highlights the active involvement of Serbian government officials and state-owned media in spreading false or misleading information through government-controlled media campaigns. Unlike previous reports, which focused on Serbia's lack of effective strategic communication on EU matters, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, the latest resolutions take a more assertive tone, explicitly accusing Serbia of orchestrating "state-sponsored disinformation campaigns" and deliberately fostering and promoting anti-EU sentiment.

> *"Calls on Serbia to fight disinformation, including manipulative anti-EU narratives and, in particular, to end its own state-sponsored disinformation campaigns; condemns the opening of an RT office in Belgrade, the launch of RT's online news service in Serbian and the continued operation of the Russian online news service Sputnik Srbija, which is used to propagate pro-Russian narratives and misinformation across the Western Balkans region."* (Serbia report)

2 | Promotion of a nationalist agenda and the "Serbian World" concept

The EP resolutions also highlight the growing promotion of the Serbian nationalist agenda centered around the ideology of the *"Serbian World"* (*Srpski svet*), which draws from the Greater Serbia ideology. The EP expresses strong alarm over efforts to foster ethnic unification of Serbs across national borders, viewing this as a direct challenge to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of neighbouring states.

A key example cited is the *All-Serb Assembly* in Belgrade in June 2025, a Russia-backed event conducted under the slogan "One people, one assembly." The EP sees this gathering as emblematic of a broader regional strategy that threatens peace and stability.

The resolution on BiH specifically criticises Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić for his active interference in BiH's internal affairs. It cites his support for Milorad Dodik, endorsement of unconstitutional celebrations such as Republika Srpska Day, and orchestration of nationalist gatherings and events that fuel separatist narratives. Similar warnings appear in the reports on Montenegro and North Macedonia, where the EP condemns the participation of political figures in the Assembly and cautions against alignment with irredentist agendas that undermine regional cooperation and EU integration goals.

> *"Deplores the participation of RS entity authorities in the 'All-Serb Assembly' held on 8 June 2024 in Belgrade under the slogan 'One people, one assembly' and rejects its declaration which undermines the sovereignty of BiH and other Western Balkan countries and fails to promote good neighbourly relations; condemns Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic's interference in the affairs of BiH, including by expressing support for the illegitimate actions of Milorad Dodik and*

organising the Russia-backed 'All-Serb Assembly' which undermines the sovereignty and territorial integrity of BiH." (BiH report)
"The EP notes that the ideas of Srpski Svet are incompatible with aspirations to join the EU; calls on Serbia to be constructively committed to the stability and territorial integrity of BiH and actively support BiH's accession path." (BiH report)

"Republika Srpska entity and its head Milorad Dodik possess a threat by maintaining close ties with Russia and playing the "Great Serbia card" along with Serbian president Aleksandar Vučić and therefore make Bosnia and Herzegovina a battleground for hybrid operations, foreign interference and disinformation campaigns." (BiH report)

"Expresses concern about the so-called 'Serbian world' project and that some representatives of the Government of North Macedonia have been advocating and promoting this concept; condemns the participation in meetings that attempt to establish a sphere of influence undermining the sovereignty of other countries and the stability of the region" (North Macedonia report)

3 | Political and Electoral Interference in Neighbouring Countries

A recurring theme in the EP resolutions is Serbia's political and electoral interference in the domestic affairs of neighbouring Western Balkans states, an issue flagged in all reports except for Albania.The EP explicitly calls on Serbia to cease meddling in the internal politics of the region, warning that such actions undermine democratic processes and regional stability.

- In the case of Kosovo, the EP denounces Serbia's interference in Kosovo's parliamentary elections, particularly through its control over Srpska Lista and the exertion of pressure on ethnic Serb voters. The resolution also criticises Serbia's continued failure to prosecute those responsible for the 2023 Banjska terrorist attack, portraying this inaction as part of a broader pattern of destabilising behaviour and impunity.

- In the case of BiH, the EP condemns the ongoing support by Serbian officials for Dodik's secessionist activities and calls for targeted EU sanctions against both Republika Srpska and Serbian officials involved in destabilising actions.

- In Montenegro, concerns remain over the political influence wielded by the Serbian Orthodox Church and its backing for narratives that challenge Montenegro's sovereignty.

- Notably, for the first time, Serbia features prominently in the report on North Macedonia. The EP highlights Serbia's role in promoting disinformation and exploiting anti-EU sentiments. According to the resolution, Serbian-language media are spreading pro-Russian disinformation, contributing directly to hybrid threats and "advancing the geopolitical interests of Russia and China."

> *"Condemns all actions that endanger stability and jeopardise the reconciliation process, including the tensions in the north of Kosovo and provocations by Serbian state-sponsored groups and illegal armed formations, and urges the European Union to take a stronger stance against external interference in Kosovo's internal affairs."* (Kosovo report)
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> *"Whereas North Macedonia remains a target of foreign malign influence operations, including efforts to fracture the country's social fabric and weaponise anti-EU sentiment, notably via Serbian-language tabloids and media outlets, which function as regional amplifiers of Kremlin narratives and enjoy considerable influence."* (North Macedonia report)
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> *"Urges all the Member States – and calls for their unity – as well as the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Commission, to act more decisively to respond to these direct threats to European security and reiterates its call for targeted sanctions against all destabilising actors, notably Milorad Dodik, as well as other high-ranking RS entity and Serbian officials providing political and material support for secessionist policies."* (BiH report)

About EUCRTA

The European Center for Research, Transparency, and Accountability (EUCRTA) is an independent, non-partisan civil society organization based in Brussels, founded by the leaders of CRTA, a prominent democracy watchdog from Belgrade, Serbia. As EUCRTA, we focus on bridging the gap between European institutions and the Western Balkans to strengthen democracy, accountability and civic engagement across the region. Building on CRTA's two decades of experience in fostering transparency and citizen participation in Serbia, we promote inclusive dialogue, evidence-based research and strategic partnerships that shape EU-level discussions. Through strategic support, knowledge-sharing, and capacity-building programs, EUCRTA connects local activists and organizations with European institutions, ensuring their voices shape policy debates at the highest level. At the same time, we provide EU decision-makers with critical insights and regional expertise, helping them better understand the realities on the ground and craft more effective policies. By serving as a bridge between grassroots defenders and EU institutions, we contribute to a stronger, more transparent, and accountable Europe—where every vote counts and every voice is heard.

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