

**STABILISATION AND ASSOCIATION
BETWEEN
THE EUROPEAN UNION
AND KOSOVO***

The Stabilisation and Association Council

**Brussels, 7 December 2021
(OR. en)**

UE-KS 2004/21

LIMITE

COVER NOTE

Subject: Fourth meeting of the EU- Kosovo* Stabilisation and Association
Council (Brussels, 7 December 2021)

Delegations will find attached the position of the European Union tabled on the occasion of the
above-mentioned Stabilisation and Association Council.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

FOURTH MEETING OF THE EU-KOSOVO*
STABILISATION AND ASSOCIATION COUNCIL

Brussels, 7 December 2021

Position of the European Union

1. Opening

The European Union welcomes the holding of the fourth meeting of the EU-Kosovo Stabilisation and Association (SA) Council. This meeting provides for a review of Kosovo's progress on its European path following the publication of the European Commission's 2021 Report on Kosovo.

The EU recalls that the 2016 Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) is the core of the relationship between the EU and Kosovo. This EU-only agreement, which is without prejudice to Member States' positions on status, provides the contractual framework within which the EU and Kosovo will intensify their co-operation and take stock of developments in their relationship. It offers Kosovo an opportunity for sustainable progress and rapprochement with the Union, in line with the European perspective of the region, and creates trade and investment opportunities.

2. Adoption of the agenda

3. Adoption of the minutes of the third meeting of the Stabilisation and Association Council held on 17 December 2018

4. Adoption of the minutes of the informal meeting of the members of the Stabilisation and Association Council held on 30 November 2020 (via videoconference)

5. Relations under the Stabilisation and Association Process

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Political criteria

The EU welcomes that the new government, elected by the Assembly in March 2021, has confirmed Kosovo's strategic commitment to its European path.

While limited progress was made in the year since the last meeting, the EU welcomes the government's initial steps to reinvigorate the reform processes, including in the fight against corruption and organised crime, as well as regarding the COVID-19 pandemic recovery. The EU reiterates the importance of continued implementation of the SAA between the EU and Kosovo, and acknowledges the renewed commitment to prioritise related reforms, notably through the launch of a second phase of the European Reform Agenda (ERA 2) and the adoption of its Action Plan, endorsed by the Assembly in October 2021 as well as relevant funding. The EU recalls that the full and effective implementation of the action plan over the coming period will be essential. The EU stands ready to support the process and offer its advice to avoid any incompatibilities with EU standards and the EU *acquis*.

The EU welcomes that the legislative elections of February 2021 and the mayoral and municipal elections of October-November 2021 were well-administered, transparent and competitive (except in Kosovo Serb areas), despite several shortcomings. The EU calls on Kosovo to urgently intensify efforts to comprehensively strengthen Kosovo's electoral process and address long-standing weaknesses throughout the electoral cycle, as identified by successive EU election observation missions since 2014.

The EU regrets the persistent high political polarisation affecting the Assembly and causing delays in its work, including in addressing the legislative backlog. The EU welcomes that the Assembly continued its work during the pandemic, while maintaining health protection measures, and reiterates the need for the Assembly to improve its regulatory framework, including its rules of procedure.

The EU calls on Kosovo to further intensify its efforts to improve the rule of law, and to step up the fight against corruption and organised crime, and public administration reform, building on Kosovo's achievements to date.

The EU welcomes the signature of the additional implementing agreements between the Kosovo Police and Europol, in follow-up to the Working Arrangement adopted in 2020, which should result in enhanced cooperation and exchange of information in countering terrorism, extremism and organised crime. The EU encourages the Kosovo National Drug Observatory (NDO) to fill the vacancy at its head since January 2019 to ensure smoother cooperation between the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction and the NDO.

The EU underlines the need for continued commitment by Kosovo to the Specialist Chambers, as an important demonstration of its commitment to the rule of law and ending impunity. The existing legal framework enables the proper investigation and prosecution of all alleged war crimes. In this respect, the EU appreciates the work of the Specialist Chambers that has led to the first trials taking place this year in The Hague.

The EU welcomes the extension of the EULEX mandate, mutually agreed in June 2021, and invites Kosovo to continue to cooperate closely and effectively with this Mission, including in its role as a security responder.

The EU encourages Kosovo to continue efforts to implement the existing legal framework on fundamental rights, which broadly provides guarantees for the protection of rights in line with European standards. Gender equality, the full enjoyment of all human rights by all women and girls and their empowerment, as well as the protection of persons with disabilities and LGBTI persons, among others, needs to be ensured. More needs to be done to promote the full protection of cultural and religious heritage, as well as the protection of the rights of persons belonging to non-majority communities, including Roma and Ashkali. The existing human rights mechanisms need to be further strengthened. The EU welcomes the creation of the position of Deputy Prime Minister for Minority Issues and Human Rights, which could represent an important step towards better inter-institutional cooperation in this area.

The EU fully supports facilitation efforts by the High Representative and the EU Special Representative (EUSR) for the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue and other Western Balkan regional issues. The EU reiterates its strong expectation that all past Dialogue agreements are respected and fully implemented and that actions that undermine stability should be avoided. The EU urges Kosovo to remain continuously engaged in the EU-facilitated Dialogue, and to do so in good faith and in the spirit of compromise that is needed to achieve a comprehensive, legally binding agreement in accordance with international law and EU *acquis*. This agreement should address all outstanding issues and contribute to regional stability. This is crucial so that Kosovo and Serbia can advance on their respective European paths. The EU recalls that progress in the normalisation of relations with Serbia is an essential principle of the SAA and underpins the development of relations and cooperation between the EU and Kosovo.

The EU recalls the importance of regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations and encourages Kosovo to continue to participate actively in regional cooperation activities and to play a constructive role therein. The EU encourages Kosovo's active and constructive involvement in implementing the Action Plan to develop a Common Regional Market, endorsed at the Sofia summit in November 2020, which will help to foster commercial and economic opportunities for a faster recovery in Kosovo and in the region.

The EU recognises the importance of visa liberalisation for Kosovo citizens. The Commission made a formal proposal in May 2016 to transfer Kosovo to the Schengen visa-free list and presented a report in July 2018 on the fulfilment of the remaining benchmarks. The Commission's proposal, supported by the European Parliament in its first reading, remains under consideration in the Council.

The EU calls on Kosovo to step up efforts on the implementation of the Public Administration Reform, including by ensuring reform continuity and enhanced coordination between the political and the technical levels. The EU welcomes the government's initiative to draft a new Strategy for Public Administration Reform 2021-2026 and publish the government annual report on public finance management. The EU underlines the importance of consolidating ongoing reform efforts, strengthening institutional capacity and improving central and inter-ministerial coordination. With regard to the civil service, while welcoming recent progress in this regard, the EU stresses the need to effectively implement merit-based recruitment procedures in order to respect the principles of merit, transparency and accountability, as enshrined in legislation. This would improve the administration's capacity to recruit the best-ranked candidate, without political influence on recruitment procedures of senior managers. In particular, the EU calls on Kosovo to effectively implement the Law on Public Officials by addressing the delayed recruitment and promotion of civil servants, and finalising all necessary legislative amendments to bring this law in line with the Constitutional Court ruling and the Law on Salaries. The EU stresses the need to advance the implementation of the Law on Organisation and Functioning of State Administration and Independent Agencies by developing a methodological guidance for the process of rationalisation of agencies, advancing the implementation of the related action plan and clarifying the governance structures that will steer, oversee and monitor this process. This will contribute to enhancing accountability, eliminating overlapping competences and ensuring a more streamlined public administration. The EU reiterates the importance of implementing managerial accountability and improving delegation of responsibilities. It equally calls on Kosovo to reduce the administrative burden for citizens and businesses, and accelerate the alignment of contradictory special laws with the Law on General Administrative Procedures, necessary to increase investment and improve the efficiency of the public service.

Regarding the judiciary, the EU stresses the need to ensure the independence, accountability, professionalism and efficiency of the Kosovo judiciary, and repeats its uncompromising position that all reforms must be in line with European and international standards. It is therefore of utmost importance that the current draft reform proposals, in particular in the important areas of vetting and the reform of the legislative framework governing the prosecution system, be sent as soon as possible to the Venice Commission and that their recommendations be fully implemented. The EU notes some positive developments over the past six months, with the milestone adoption of the Rule of Law Strategy and Action Plan, following the finalisation of the functional review of the Rule of Law sector. This is a positive step forward and testimony to Kosovo's willingness to fulfil the recommendations of the 2020 Annual Report. Still, the EU stresses the need for a swift implementation of the actions of the Action Plan, without delay. This is crucial to streamline reform objectives and strengthen rule of law. The EU welcomes also the continued increase in the use of e-justice tools for monitoring and operationalising cases. The EU calls for the appointment of the remaining members of the Kosovo Judicial Council and the Kosovo Prosecutorial Council to happen without delay and in a transparent and merit-based manner. It also urges the full implementation of provisions on the composition of panels for cases coming from Kosovo Serb-majority municipalities, especially in the Special Department of the Court of Appeals. The EU recalls that any reform of the legal framework governing these Councils must be in line with EU standards. It also recalls that the authorities should take the necessary measures to prevent a negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the conduct of criminal trials.

As regards the fight against corruption and organised crime, the EU welcomes the new government's initial steps and calls on the authorities to effectively implement all recently adopted rule of law-related legislation and to deliver on outstanding legislation, especially the new Law on Asset Declaration. Asset confiscation is key in criminal proceedings. In this context, the EU urges Kosovo to fully implement the Law on Extended powers of confiscation, which is a powerful legal tool. The EU notes the creation of a civil confiscation system, which should then be independently and objectively applied, in line with European standards. In this regard, the EU calls for the adoption of the revised Criminal Procedure Code, which is long overdue, and calls for the adoption of the anti-corruption legal package which is needed to provide the legal basis for reforming the competences of the Anti-Corruption Agency. The adoption of the package would strengthen the capacity of the Agency and ensure the proper implementation of the existing asset declaration system. The EU stresses the importance of continued progress on the track record on the fight against high-level corruption and organised crime. The EU recalls that it is essential to maintain an effective investigative capacity on anti-corruption within the Kosovo Police in the event of any future structural or organisational changes. Furthermore, the EU stresses the importance of adequate staffing and administrative capacity of the Special Prosecutor Office (SPRK) and the Special Department of the Basic Court and the Court of Appeals in Pristina in order to improve the effectiveness of the fight against corruption and organized crime.

The EU welcomes Kosovo's efforts to fight terrorism and counter violent extremism, including the phenomenon of foreign fighters and radicalisation, and welcomes the good cooperation on the EU-Kosovo implementing arrangement for the Joint Action Plan on counterterrorism for the Western Balkans. The EU stresses that reintegration of foreign fighters remains complex and requires sufficient financial and human resources on the central and local level, and encourages Kosovo to continue its implementation of comprehensive programmes on rehabilitation and reintegration. The Office of Kosovo's Coordinator for the Prevention of Violent Extremism and the Fight against Terrorism should still be developed, as well as a Joint Threat Assessment Centre, which would facilitate a greater understanding among all agencies of the current operational climate, and improve responses, including regarding the protection of critical infrastructure. Regarding anti-money laundering and countering of terrorism financing, the EU encourages Kosovo to further align its legislation with the relevant EU *acquis* and to implement the recommendations from the relevant evaluation based on MONEYVAL and FATF principles.

On migration and asylum, the EU welcomes the continued good cooperation with EU Member States on return, readmission and reintegration. Kosovo has demonstrated solidarity by hosting Afghan evacuees; it is important to handle the related procedures with care and continue to exchange information. The EU welcomes also the recent but long-awaited adoption of the Migration Strategy and Action Plan for 2021-2025 and stresses the need to continue measures preventing irregular migration and unfounded asylum applications from Kosovo citizens. The EU welcomes the continued progress in managing regular and irregular migration by further increasing accommodation capacities and stepping up preparedness in case of increased influx of migrants. However, the National Centre for Border Management should be fully operationalised. Migration governance should be further improved through the enhancement of government capacities for data collection and analysis, as well as the capacity to respond to the increased migration inflow (biometric registration, reception, identification of vulnerable migrants, improved communication).

As regards human rights and the protection of persons belonging to all communities in Kosovo, the EU recalls the importance to fully implement relevant legislation and strategies at local and central level and the need to better coordinate the existing human rights mechanisms within the Prime Minister's Office. Efforts are needed to ensure a secure environment for non-majority communities that ensures access to property, personal documentation, language rights, and adequate provisions for education, employment and social welfare.

Regarding the protection and promotion of cultural heritage, the EU notes that the protection of cultural heritage remains a challenge. The EU calls on Kosovo to ensure the proper functioning of the Implementation and Monitoring Council (IMC) and to maintain the frequency of its meetings. It further urges the authorities to adopt and implement relevant legislative changes and urgently enforce the relevant Constitutional Court judgement, especially the decision of the Kosovo Constitutional Court in May 2016 in relation to the registration of the Decani Monastery land, and to implement the agreement reached by the IMC in November 2020 about the roads in the area of the Decani Monastery.

Kosovo showed determination in pursuing gender equality, following up on the adoption of Programme for Gender Equality 2020-2024 with the drafting of the relevant Action Plan, and the inscription of the Istanbul Convention into the Constitution of Kosovo. The EU encourages the authorities to translate these commitments into clear and tangible outcomes to ensure the full enjoyment of all human rights by all women and girls and their empowerment as well as to step up efforts in the fight against domestic violence. Concerning the rights of persons with disabilities, authorities should provide for the effective implementation of the legislative frameworks, further financial support to scale up community-based social and health services and increase efforts to effectively integrate people with disabilities into the educational system.

Regarding data protection, the EU welcomes the appointment of the commissioner to lead the new Information and Privacy Agency, but urges the Agency to swiftly become operational and effective.

Concerning freedom of expression, the EU notes that while Kosovo benefits from a pluralistic and lively media environment, the financial self-sustainability of media remains a challenge. The authorities need to ensure sustainable funding of the public broadcaster and a transparent selection of the board members in a manner which preserves its independence. The EU is concerned with the basis on which the RTK board was dismissed by the Assembly last July. The investigative and prosecutorial response to attacks and threats against journalists also needs to be improved.

The EU notes with appreciation that the environment in which civil society operates in Kosovo has improved. The EU encourages further efforts to provide opportunities for civil society to contribute to policy development as well as to enhance transparency of public funding for civil society organisation.

The EU welcomes Kosovo's participation in the following Union programmes: Fiscalis; Customs; SMP programme; Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV); Creative Europe; and Erasmus+.

Economic criteria

The EU notes several years of robust economic growth before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, during which Kosovo out-performed regional peers in some economic growth indicators. In 2020, however, real GDP contracted by 5.3%.

Although provisional figures signal an accelerated recovery throughout 2021, the COVID-19 crisis has had an impact on Kosovo's efforts to catch up with neighbours, and to offer employment possibilities for a greater part of the population, notably the youth, women and vulnerable groups. The EU takes note of the credible fiscal and financial measures of the 2020 emergency packages and the Economic Revival Programme as part of the revised 2021 budget.

The EU notes that mid-term fiscal risks have significantly increased over the past year as a result of the economic and health crisis, including a temporary widening financing gap. The EU notes that current indicators point towards an improving economic situation and considers that the temporary suspension of the fiscal rule, and the proposed plans to increase the ceiling for the public debt ratio, were exceptional emergency measures that should be removed once the COVID-19 crisis recedes and GDP growth figures and other macroeconomic indicators turn positive again. In addition, the EU stresses the need to ensure fiscal sustainability and improve the quality of public finance, including a better targeting of social spending, notably by containing the wage bill and respecting the cap on spending on war veterans.

The EU welcomes the increasing trade volume with the EU and the positive trend in the trade in services, but expresses its concern at a persistently high negative trade balance.

The EU notes that the COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated some underlying structural weaknesses present in Kosovo's economy, especially those previously identified in employment, social protection, the public health sector, the business environment and the overall competitiveness of the private sector.

The EU calls on Kosovo to implement the Joint Ministerial Conclusions adopted on 12 July 2021 with regard to the Economic Reform Programme. As regards COVID-19 response measures, the EU urges the Kosovo authorities to ensure well-targeted, well-funded, transparent and effective policy measures, aiming at a long-term economic recovery building on the Green and Digital transition.

The EU further considers that Kosovo's competitiveness and sustainable economic growth, and the success of COVID-19 related relief measures, will depend on strong political support and timely implementation of urgent and much-needed structural reforms to improve the rule of law and the investment climate for domestic and foreign investment. The current preparation and effective implementation of major policy plans and strategies - such as the 2030 National Development Plan, the National Strategy on Informal Economy, and the National Energy and Climate Plan - will be crucial in delivering results and in reducing the effects of structural challenges on Kosovo's economy.

In addition, the EU stresses the need to continue addressing pressing challenges, such as low labour market performance, widespread informality, weaknesses in the rule of law and unreliable energy supply. The EU further underlines that fostering private sector development, addressing the skills mismatch, increasing the scope of active labour market measures in particular for women, improving the education system, strengthening productivity and creating jobs should guide Kosovo's reform agenda.

Financial Cooperation

The EU welcomes Kosovo's recent ratification of the 2020 IPA Financing Agreements (EUR 90.2 million).

The EU recalls the new features of the IPA 3 Regulation, which will be broken down by thematic envelopes and governed by a strengthened performance principle. The EU recalls that future IPA assistance should continue supporting the main political priorities, such as implementation of the SAA, the European Reform Agenda, the Economic Reform Programme, and the Economic and Investment Plan (EIP). The EU also recalls that actions under IPA 3 are expected to contribute 18% of the overall financial envelope of IPA 3 to climate objectives, with the objective of increasing this percentage to 20% by 2027.

The EU recalls that the EIP for the Western Balkans will support the region's long-term economic recovery, backed by a green and digital transition, including decarbonisation. It equally recalls the benefits Kosovo can draw from the Green Agenda and the Common Regional Market. To this end, government support for already agreed major projects is necessary.

The EU further reiterates that maintaining macro-economic stability will be key to fully benefit from the budget support operations on Public Administration and Public Finance Management.

The EU repeats that effective donor coordination and sufficient administrative capacity are key for successful implementation of IPA assistance.

The EU recalls that, in addition to IPA support, the EU provided macro-financial assistance (MFA) of EUR 100 million in the form of loans, to help limit the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic. The first tranche of EUR 50 million was disbursed in October 2020, while the second tranche, also worth EUR 50 million, was released in June 2021, following a positive assessment of Kosovo's fulfilment of the relevant structural reform, financial stability, policy and fiscal conditions agreed in the signed Memorandum of Understanding.

Implementation of the SAA – state of play

The EU takes note of the progressive approximation of Kosovo's legislation to European internal market standards. Substantial efforts need to be invested in harmonised approximation with the EU *acquis*, strengthening of the administrative capacities as well as better coordination between the relevant institutions, to take better advantage of the opportunities offered by the SAA.

As regards the free movement of goods and the protection of consumers, the EU encourages Kosovo to strengthen the capacities of its institutions, further align with the EU *acquis* the legislation improving quality infrastructure in the areas of standardisation, accreditation, conformity assessment, metrology, and market surveillance and ensure that its legislation is enforced. The awareness of consumers' rights and traders' obligations needs to rise.

The EU invites Kosovo to lift remaining obstacles to create a single domestic market and ensuring the free movement of persons, the right of establishment and the freedom to provide services, while also approximating legislation with the EU *acquis* in these areas, including on regulated professions and on postal and cross border parcel delivery services.

Regarding financial services, the EU calls on Kosovo to continue aligning with the Basel framework, enforce Solvency I measures and prepare a roadmap to align with Solvency II measures.

Concerning the free movement of capital, the EU stresses the need to further align with the Directive on payment services and welcomes Kosovo's first step to grant national treatment to EU nationals on property rights for foreign citizens. The EU calls on the authorities to align further with the *acquis* on prevention of money laundering and terrorism financing.

As regards customs and taxation, the EU emphasises the need for better coordination between Kosovo Customs, law enforcement agencies and other relevant institutions on fighting informal economy and customs fraud. The EU calls on Kosovo to continue alignment with EU legislation and practices, including as regards customs and excise.

On competition, the EU welcomes efforts made and encourages Kosovo to continue aligning with the *acquis* on competition and state aid. The EU calls on Kosovo to strengthen Kosovo Competition Authority and the State Aid Commission in their enforcement capacity to investigate and control state aid, and to complete the nomination of their members. The EU calls on Kosovo to increase coordination between ministries, state regulators and the judiciary in this area, and ensure continuous training of staff, judges and granting authorities.

On public procurement, the EU invites Kosovo to adopt and implement the Law on public procurement to increase enforcement and transparency in the procurement process. Inter-institutional capacity cooperation and increased capacity for its implementation and remedy is needed, in particular by now filling vacant positions at the Procurement Review Body rather than restarting a selection process for its members.

On intellectual property rights, the EU stresses the need to continue alignment, address capacity constraints and raise awareness in order to ensure effective implementation and enforcement.

On employment and social policies, the EU calls on Kosovo to continue implementing the sectorial Strategy for Employment and Social Welfare and action plan on youth unemployment. It encourages Kosovo to amend the Labour Law, in line with the relevant EU *acquis*. The EU also calls on the authorities to step up efforts to implement legislation on health and safety at work, and to further enhance the capacity of the Labour Inspectorate. It encourages Kosovo to amend and adopt the Law on the Economic Social Council and to take measures to further reduce workplace accidents. The EU calls on Kosovo to ensure better targeting and delivery of social services in municipalities and of social assistance schemes.

On public health policy, the EU emphasises the need for Kosovo to provide a sustainable financing of primary health care and mandatory health insurance scheme, bringing it closer to internationally recognized quality and safety standards. The importance of these reforms has been further illustrated during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the EU encourages continued alignment with the EU *acquis* and underlines that citizens' health must be protected from environmental degradation and pollution. It calls on Kosovo to implement the Law on tobacco control, in line with Kosovo's commitment towards transposition and implementation of the EU *acquis* in this field.

On research and innovation, the EU encourages Kosovo to strengthen its administrative capacity on research and innovation. It also calls Kosovo to actively continue the development of the Smart Specialisation Strategy and to advance on the development and implementation of research and innovation-related laws.

On education, the EU stresses the need for Kosovo to improve the quality of its education system. The EU stresses the importance of improving access to quality education at pre-school level and for disadvantaged groups, and of increasing the availability and improving the quality of vocational education and training by better linking the programmes to the demands of the labour market. It urges Kosovo to take measures to address the risk of corruption and political influence in the education sector and increase transparency in the operation of higher education institution. It calls on Kosovo to adopt the draft Law on Pre-School Education and the draft Law on Textbooks and to advance preparations of the revised Law on Higher Education. The EU further urges Kosovo to take steps to ensure the transparency of the Kosovo Accreditation Agency by meeting the European Quality Assurance Register's recommendations.

Regarding industry and SMEs, the EU welcomes some recent improvements in the business environment and encourages Kosovo to address other areas where obstacles remain. These include difficult access to finance, weak legal enforcement of contracts and business regulations, difficulties in resolving insolvencies and obtaining construction permits, unfair competition from the informal sector, inefficient judiciary and corruption. The EU calls on authorities to continue and reinforce support for SME development, in the ongoing context of the COVID-19 crisis. The EU also recalls the need to move forward in the structural reorganisation of the Kosovo Investment and Enterprise Agency (KIESA), whose role is to help businesses and investors.

The EU encourages all stakeholders to find an acceptable and mutually agreeable long-term solution for the future of the Trepça/Trepča mining complex.

On agriculture and fisheries, the EU reiterates the need for Kosovo to make progress on combating illegal conversion of agricultural land use and continue with the implementation of the Land Consolidation Strategy. The EU encourages Kosovo to step up efforts to align legislation with the EU *acquis* and to deploy agriculture information systems, particularly the farm accountancy data network (FADN) and the farm register. With regard to the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, the EU encourages Kosovo to strengthen the administrative capacity and to align its legislation with the *acquis*, particularly in the areas of control, market policy and data collection.

As regards food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary standards, the EU welcomes that the long-standing issue of the transfer of inspection responsibilities and staff, from the municipalities to the Kosovo Food and Veterinary Agency, has been resolved and that the budget allocation was ensured, as part of Kosovo efforts to establish an integrated food control system.

On energy, the EU stresses the need for Kosovo to review its Energy Strategy and Action Plan and ensure its coherence with the Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan defining the 2030 renewable energy and energy efficiency targets. Competitive bidding for support for renewables should be introduced to improve transparency. The Energy Efficiency Fund should be further operationalised, while energy efficiency incentives should also be introduced in residential and private sectors. The EU expects Kosovo to honour its commitments to decommission the non-functional assets of Kosovo A and to complete the necessary preparatory works for the EU-funded environmental measures at the Kosovo B thermal power plant.

Regarding transport, the EU encourages Kosovo to develop a national road safety strategy in compliance with the Transport Community Road Safety Action Plan. The EU calls on Kosovo to pursue reforms in the railway sector, including by strengthening the capacity and independence of the railway regulator. It urges Kosovo to adopt legislation on Intelligent Transport Systems. Kosovo should remain actively engaged with the Permanent Secretariat of the Transport Community.

With respect to climate change and environment, the EU calls on Kosovo to be fully engaged on the recently endorsed Action Plan on the implementation of the Sofia Declaration on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, including by increasing its commitment to decarbonisation. The EU emphasises the need for climate change actions to be mainstreamed into other sectors, particularly energy and transport, and to improve inter-institutional cooperation. The EU stresses the need to strengthen efforts to fight air pollution, including by developing and adopting an action plan on air quality. The EU urges Kosovo to adopt a strategy and Action Plan for Integrated Waste Management, and to develop a Law on Waste. It should also prepare a Law on Kosovo Waters, implement legislation on wastewater discharge and prepare an Action Plan to combat illegal logging.

As regards information society and media, the EU commends Kosovo for advancing with the implementation of the 2013-2020 Digital Agenda and the Regional Roaming Agreement. The EU calls on Kosovo to align with relevant EU legislation. The EU further calls for the implementation of number portability to ensure effective use of numbering resources and foster competition and for the liberation of frequencies. It urges Kosovo to find a solution, as a matter of priority, for the funding of the Public Service Broadcaster and to ensure the financial and operational independence of the Regulatory Authority of Electronic and Postal Communication.

In the area of financial control, the EU calls for ensuring comprehensive Public Internal Financial Control and Public Finance Management and Public Administration Reforms and reiterates the need to include a specific component on Public Internal Financial Control, with a particular focus on the application of the principle of managerial accountability, in the Public Finance Management strategy which is currently being drafted. The oversight and monitoring function of the Assembly and Government should be strengthened to ensure implementation of the external audit recommendations.

Concerning statistics, the EU welcomes the recent adoption of the amended law on statistics, and calls for its implementation. Kosovo should further improve statistical governance and coordination between the main statistical institutions, as well as intensify preparations for the next population census scheduled for 2022 by ensuring adequate resources and full coverage of the territory.

6. Exchange of views on developments in the Western Balkans

The EU and Kosovo will proceed to an exchange of views regarding developments in the Western Balkans.

7. Any other business

8. Closing remarks