

Relations between the EU and Russia

2008/2104(INI) - 02/04/2009 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 416 votes to 80, with 147 abstentions, a resolution comprising a series of recommendations to the Council on the new EU-Russia agreement.

Recalling that EU relations with Russia are of crucial importance for the purposes of pragmatic cooperation and that Russia is the third largest trading partner of the EU and the fourth largest trading partner of the Eurozone and an essential energy supplier to the EU, the Parliament addresses the following recommendations to the Council in the context of the current negotiations on a new cooperation agreement.

Human Rights: Parliament calls for the following:

- that the EU continues to insist on a broad, wide-ranging and legally binding agreement based on a shared commitment to human rights;
- that Russia respects international law and all binding agreements and treaties to which it adheres, including the UN Charter, the European Convention on Human Rights and the Energy Charter Treaty;
- that the EU insists on the fact that a close partnership, enhanced cooperation and good neighbourly relations between it and Russia, as well as the new policy of the US administration towards Russia, can create a stable foundation and a precondition for stability, security and prosperity in Europe and worldwide (the plenary welcomes the declarations of the US administration concerning the great potential for cooperation with Russia);
- the putting in place a consultation mechanism, under the responsibility of the High Representative, which would enable Member States to consult each other sufficiently in advance on every bilateral issue – whether an agreement or a dispute – with Russia which could have repercussions on other Member States and the EU as a whole;
- that the EU insists on raising with the Russian Government concerns about the human rights situation and the shrinking space for Russia's civil society and to take prompt and effective steps to foster a favourable working climate for NGOs;
- that the Russian Government fully respect media freedom and guarantee the enjoyment by independent media of political and economic conditions;
- that the EU recalls President Medvedev's public commitment to strengthening the rule of law in Russia and raises its concerns over the independence of Russia's judiciary and legal system;
- the revision of the six-monthly EU-Russia human rights consultation to make it more efficient and to also include minority rights;
- that the Russian Federation guarantee the existence and sustainable development of the traditional lifestyle, culture and language of indigenous people living within its borders.

External policy: the Parliament points out:

- that the negotiations on a new agreement aimed at enhancing cooperation between the EU and the Russian Federation should in no way legitimise the current status quo in Georgia, and that the obligation for Russia to implement fully the agreements signed on 12 August and 8 September 2008 with regard to the conflict in South Ossetia and Abkhazia remains valid, since its compliance with those agreements should be a sine qua non for the successful completion of the talks, which should include a renunciation by all parties of the use of force against neighbouring countries;
- its strong concern at the situation in Chechnya, where Kadirov's regime has failed to bring peace and reconciliation and, on the contrary, has imposed fear and oppression that eroded civil society and suppressed any open and democratic voice, and call for a real political settlement.

Membership of the WTO: Parliament wants:

- the EU to continue to maintain support for Russia's accession to the WTO and support the further opening-up of the Russian economy and to create a free-trade zone between the EU and Russia, which continues to be a long-term objective;
- further improvements to be made in legislation and law enforcement as regards the protection of intellectual, industrial and commercial property rights in order to increase competitiveness and make the investment climate attractive;
- new measures to combat effectively counterfeiting and piracy.

Energy and environment: the Parliament asks:

- that the Energy Charter (signed but not ratified by Moscow) and its protocol on transit (not signed by Russia) serve as a basis for relations on the energy field with the Union and for their integration in the new agreement (this protocol would prohibit any interruption or reduction in energy flow in the event of dispute regarding transit means);
- Russia to establish a **legal framework governing the transit of energy supplies** to the Union, based on the framework already in place in the Energy Charter;
- environmental impact assessments to be carried out on all energy infrastructure projects;
- Russia to demonstrate greater transparency and reciprocity in the energy crisis which faces the Union and for it to enhance significantly the security of energy supply (in particular, MEPs call for the establishment of a transparent rules-based system and dispute-settlement mechanism).

Political dialogue: The Parliament calls for:

- a clear code of conduct governing relations between the EU, Russia and the countries of the shared neighbourhood, including provisions relating to respect for the sovereign independence of all European states, a commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes and a determination to resolve frozen conflicts;
- improvements on the existing political dialogue so as to encourage discussion of "hard security issues", which are often at the core of the disagreements between the EU and Russia but which indubitably affect European and global security;
- a positive contribution to finding a sustainable political solution for the future of Kosovo and the stability of the Western Balkans;
- a **real commitment** from the Russian authorities to resolve in a constructive and peaceful manner, together with **Georgia and the EU**, the "modalities of security and stability in Abkhazia and South Ossetia" (MEPs urge the Russian Government to ensure that EU monitors are granted full access to all areas affected by the conflict, in compliance with the mandate of the EU Monitoring Mission).

Visa policy: the Parliament:

- insists that the goal of visa-free travel vis-à-vis Russia be pursued in the light of Council Regulation (EC) No 539/2001 as well as that of visa facilitation to encourage interpersonal contacts, but taking into account reciprocal measures on the part of the Russian authorities;
- insists on a clear commitment from the Russian authorities to reduce bureaucratic obstacles applied in a non-reciprocal manner with respect to all travellers, such as the need to have an invitation and to register upon arrival;
- calls for the Kaliningrad transit and visa problem to be urgently addressed.

Market liberalisation: Parliament calls for:

- the liberalisation of markets and the reciprocity of investment rights between the partners, as well as the guarantee the property rights of foreign investors;
- the compatibility of Russian legislation with Russia's current and future obligations under the WTO;
- the phasing out of Siberian overflight payments requested by Russia and the signature of the agreement reached on this issue at the summit in Samara;
- free passage through the Pilawa strait to allow access for EU shipping to the passage to Asia along the Northern Russian territory.

Lastly, Parliament calls on the Council and the Commission to keep Parliament regularly and fully informed of the progress of the negotiations.