Resolution on Iceland's application for membership of the European Union

2010/2746(RSP) - 07/07/2010 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution tabled by the Committee on Foreign Affairs on Iceland’s application for membership of the EU.

Political criteria: Members welcome the decision of the European Council to open accession negotiations with Iceland, as well as the prospect of having as a new EU Member State a country with a strong democratic culture. Commending Iceland on its human rights record, Parliament emphasises that Iceland's accession will further enhance the Union's role as a worldwide promoter and defender of human rights and fundamental freedoms. It highlights the excellent cooperation between the Members of the European Parliament and the members of the Althingi in the framework of the EEA Joint Parliamentary Committee and expects an equally fruitful collaboration in the new EP-Iceland Joint Parliamentary Committee.

Members add that the Government of Iceland should adopt the measures necessary to ensure the independence of the judiciary, in line with Venice Commission recommendations, adequately addressing the issue of the predominant role given to the Minister of Justice and Human Rights in the appointment of judges, prosecutors and supreme judicial authorities.

Economic criteria: Parliament notes that the EFTA Surveillance Authority (ESA) has stated, in its letter of formal notice of 26 May 2010 - the first step in an infringement procedure against it for failure to comply with its obligations under the EEA agreement to implement the EU Deposit Guarantee Directive (94/19/EC)-that Iceland is obliged to ensure payment of the minimum compensation to Icesave depositors in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. It welcomes the Icelandic Government's reaction of readiness to conclude the Icesave negotiations as soon as possible.

Furthermore, Members call for a bilateral agreement to be concluded on arrangements for the repayment of loans totalling EUR 3.9 billion to the Governments of the UK and the Netherlands. They stress that reaching an agreement acceptable to all parties will restore confidence in Iceland's ability to honour its commitments, including compliance with all obligations under the EEA agreement, and will strengthen the public support, both in Iceland and in the EU, for the Icelandic accession process.

Capacity to assume the obligations of membership: the resolution notes that, as an EEA member, Iceland is at an advanced stage of compliance with the requirements of 10 of the negotiating chapters and partly fulfils the requirements of 11 chapters, leaving only 12 chapters not covered by the EEA that need to be negotiated in full. It makes the following points:

- Iceland is encouraged to adopt **fisheries-policy measures** that will allow it to make the transition towards introduction of the CFP. Parliament recognises the responsible and sustainable manner in which Iceland has managed its marine resources and expects both the EU and the Icelandic authorities to adopt a **constructive attitude in negotiations** on the requirement for Iceland to adopt the European Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), so that the outcome may be a mutually satisfactory solution based on best practices and protecting the interest of both fishermen and consumers in the EU, as well as in Iceland;
- the Icelandic authorities should address the key institutional weaknesses of the country's economy, notably the organisation and functioning of the financial supervisory system and the deposit guarantee system;

- they must adopt an agricultural and rural development policy in line with EU policies, and put in place the administrative structures needed to implement these policies.

Lastly, Parliament insists that Iceland cease all whaling and drop all the reservations it has lodged with the International Whaling Commission.

Regional cooperation: Iceland's accession to the EU – inasmuch as it will further anchor the European presence in the Arctic Council – is a strategic opportunity for the EU to play a more active and constructive role, and also to contribute to multilateral governance, in the Arctic Region. Members point out that this will help in tackling environmental issues of common concern and could heighten EU interest in the Arctic and its protection at regional and international level.

Public opinion and support for enlargement: Member States and the Commission are asked to give EU citizens clear and comprehensive information on the implications of Iceland's accession, and to address citizens" concerns and questions.

Parliament encourages the Icelandic authorities to initiate a broad public debate about EU accession, involving civil society in the process from the outset, addressing Icelandic citizens" concerns about EU membership and taking into account the need for a firm commitment in order to have successful negotiations. It calls on the Commission to provide material and technical support, if requested to do so by the Icelandic authorities, in order to help them improve transparency and accountability in relation to the accession process and to organise a thorough and extensive country-wide campaign of information on the implications of EU membership, so that Icelandic citizens can make an informed choice in the future referendum on accession.