Resolution on the 2010 progress report on the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

2010/2998(RSP) - 07/04/2011 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 506 votes to 44 with 44 abstentions a resolution tabled by the Committee on Foreign Affairs on the 2010 Progress Report on former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (COM(2010)0660).

Political developments: Parliament shares the assessment by the Commission's 2010 progress report on the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and regrets that the Council has not taken a decision on the opening of accession negotiations, as recommended by the Commission for a second year in a row and in line with previous Parliament resolutions.

Members note the recent political developments leading to the early elections and calls on all political parties to play a constructive role in the process of preparing the elections. Members appeal to all the key players to step up their efforts and demonstrate responsibility for solving all outstanding issues which are not only hindering the accession process of the candidate country, and the EU's own policy in the region, but could also have repercussions on inter-ethnic relations, regional stability and economic development.

Parliament congratulates the country on the 10th anniversary of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, which remains the cornerstone of inter-ethnic relations in the country. It is, however, concerned by growing inter-ethnic tensions over the construction on the site of the Kale fortress in Skopje, and calls on the government to foster a comprehensive dialogue between the ethnic communities, to take due account of the sensitivities of all the communities in its decisions, such as the urban plan for ‘Skopje 2014’.

Members regret that the UN mediation efforts to solve the name dispute have not yielded concrete results.

Democracy, the rule of law and human rights: Parliament calls on the opposition parties to end the **boycott of the national parliamen**t and resume the political dialogue within institutions, pointing out that political instability could affect the European integration process, which should be a common shared priority for all the components of society. Members express concern at the **politicisation of the media** and are worried about the economic dependence and the concentration of political power of the media, which often result in a lack of editorial independence and in poor standards of journalism. They also call for further intensive efforts in the reform of the judiciary, and recall that corruption remains prevalent and call for further intensive efforts to eradicate it. The Commission is asked to prepare, with its next Progress Report, an assessment of the impact and results achieved from the allocation of EU funds to **reform of the judiciary and the fight against corruption**, and to provide the Council and Parliament with a more detailed assessment of the efficiency of anti-corruption measures taken by the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in the case of public procurement and fraud.

Parliament goes on to point to efforts made in several fields including public administration, the reform of the prison system, and the strategy of integrated education but calls for further efforts in these fields. It is seriously concerned at the situation of the Roma community. It regrets that sexual orientation has been omitted from anti-discrimination law as a ground for discrimination, contrary to European legislation. Members call for more efforts in the field of gender equality and women's rights, and they condemn recent cases of intimidation and direct attacks on civil society organisations and personal defamation of their leading activists.

The resolution welcomes the country’s progress towards a functioning market economy and a broad consensus on fundamental aspects of the country's economic policy, commending the government for maintaining macroeconomic stability, despite the negative impact of the global financial crisis.

Socio-economic developments: Parliament is concerned at the **persistent and very high unemployment** , in particular among young people, which is common to many of the countries in the region, and it calls on the government to implement more efficient measures for improving public investment, focused on employment policies and employment of the labour force in high-quality, stable and decent jobs. The Commission is asked to assist the authorities with increased assistance from the IPA.

Members congratulate the government on the effective implementation of the **Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU,** welcoming the recent government decision to abolish the customs tariffs on over a hundred different products as a step towards full trade liberalisation with the EU. They consider this development to be an important milestone demonstrating the country's efforts to withstand the increased competition that it will face once it becomes EU member.

Parliament stresses the need for a transparent budgetary system, the importance of developing an efficient public transport system both inside the country and at regional level, and more effort to implement legislation in the field of the environment and to provide adequate funds to this end, with particular stress on the areas of water quality, waste management and nature protection. It expresses deep concern over the soil pollution in the town of Veles, which the World Health Organisation has declared a dangerous place to live.

Regional issues: Parliament strongly regrets the fact that the name dispute with Greece continues to block the country's road to EU accession, and recalls its recommendation to the Council to start the accession negotiations immediately. Members call on the governments concerned to avoid gestures, controversial actions and statements which could have negative effects and could strain good neighbourly relations. They note with concern the use of **historical arguments in the current debate, including the phenomenon of so-called ‘antiquisation’**, which threatens to increase tensions with neighbour countries and create new internal divisions. Members invite the HR and the Commissioner for Enlargement and ENP to facilitate an agreement on the name issue and offer political guidance. Parliament considers that finding a mutually acceptable solution as quickly as possible is a **test case for the post-Lisbon common foreign policy,** and for the Union's ability to solve long-standing international controversies on its borders.

It also calls on the Council and the Commission:

to honour their commitments towards third countries and reward the progress and reform efforts of the countries that meet the requirements of the Union;

to start developing a generally applicable arbitration mechanism aimed at solving bilateral issues between enlargement countries, between Member States and enlargement countries and between Member States;

Lastly, Parliament takes the view that a further prolongation of the status quo regarding the name issue and other open questions with the neighbouring countries could undermine not only the stability of the country and region but also the credibility of the enlargement policy. It therefore calls upon all the parties concerned to show goodwill, solidarity and responsibility in resolving the outstanding issues. In this regard calls on the authorities in the country to advance the initiative of establishing joint expert committees on history and education with Bulgaria and Greece.