Resolution on the review of the European neighbourhood policy - southern dimension

2011/2642(RSP) - 07/04/2011 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution tabled on behalf of the Committee on Foreign Affairs on the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy - Southern Dimension.

ENP Review – general: Parliament considers that since its launch in 2004 the ENP has brought tangible benefits both for ENP partners and the EU. However, in the light of current events in the southern Mediterranean, particularly in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Algeria, Morocco, Jordan, and other countries calling for democratic reforms, Parliament recalls the **ENP's failure to promote and safeguard human rights in third countries.** Members urge the EU to draw lessons from those events and to revise its democracy and human rights support policy so as to **create an implementation mechanism for the human rights clause** included in all agreements with third countries. The review of the ENP must prioritise criteria relating to the independence of the judiciary, respect for fundamental freedoms, pluralism and freedom of the press and the fight against corruption. By using all existing instruments in the framework of the ENP and, wherever necessary, by adopting new ones, the EU should lend strong support to the process of political and economic reform in the region.

Parliament emphasises the **need to increase the funds allocated to the ENP in the post-2013 multiannual financial framework** (MFF), giving priority, in the light of recent events, to the southern dimension of the ENP. A concrete offer of a closer political partnership and economic integration must be made to the EU's neighbouring countries, based on the principles of openness, joint ownership and conditionality. That offer should be tailored to the differing needs of specific countries and regions, so as to **give the most advanced partners a faster path** towards compliance with EU standards and values. There must be an increased focus on **cooperation with civil society organisations**, as these have been the main driving forces behind the popular uprisings throughout the region. Parliament takes the view that it is therefore a matter of the utmost importance and urgency to rethink and overhaul the EU strategy towards the Mediterranean and that this new strategy should enhance political dialogue and support for all democratic and social forces, including civil society actors. It calls on the Council, in that connection, to **define a set of political criteria** that ENP countries must fulfil in order to be granted advanced status.

Southern Dimension: Parliament strongly supports, in the light of recent developments in the region, the legitimate democratic aspirations expressed by people in several countries in the EU's Southern Neighbourhood. It highlights the importance of **setting up a task force, involving Parliament**, in response to the calls for monitoring of the democratic transition processes made by actors for democratic change, in particular as regards free and democratic elections and institution-building, including an independent judiciary. It calls on the Council and the Commission to make **short-term transitional financial support mechanisms**, including loans, available to those countries expressing a need for them as a result of swift democratic changes and an extraordinary fall in liquidity. In addition, the Commission should **review as quickly as possible Tunisia and Egypt's National Indicative Programmes** for the period 2011-2013 in order to take into account the new, urgent needs of those partners in terms of democracy-building.

Noting that **advanced status** has already been granted to or is currently being negotiated with some partner countries, Members stress the importance of taking a more transparent and coherent approach towards this differentiation, in order to create a substantive process that delivers, and of **clear benchmarks** being established in order to avoid the application of double standards regarding the criteria which must be fulfilled in order for advanced status to be granted. They insist on being consulted at all stages of the

process of granting advanced status to partner countries and of the drafting of the ENP Action Plans, in keeping with its new role under the Lisbon Treaty. The Council and the EEAS are asked to **involve Parliament in the advanced-status decision-making** process by developing a clear consultation mechanism to be used at all stages of the negotiations, including as regards the criteria to be fulfilled and the setting of the priorities and guidelines included in the Action Plans.

Parliament reiterates the value of the ENPI as the financing instrument for the ENP but emphasises the need to provide more flexibility and to ensure that assistance is targeted more effectively, particularly at civil society and local communities, in keeping with the bottom-up approach. It regards the transparency of funding and the inclusion of anti-corruption mechanisms in the financing instruments as vital. It emphasises the need to increase the funds allocated to the southern dimension of the ENP in the EU's forthcoming MFF for the period from 2014 to 2020 in order to ensure that funding matches political ambitions and to implement the provisions on advanced status without affecting the other priorities of the ENP.

Turning to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which Parliament states is at the root of political tensions in the Middle East and in the Mediterranean region as a whole, Members calls on the VP/HR to engage actively in **conflict resolution and confidence-building** in the region, ensuring that the EU has an active role as a player and not only a payer. They believe that conflict resolution holds the key to political, economic and social developments in the region and to the progress of the ENP regional dimension and its multilateral forms of cooperation, such as the **Union for the Mediterranean** (UfM). Parliament is deeply concerned at the continued postponement sine die of the second Summit of Heads and State and Government of the UfM and of UfM ministerial meetings. It also deplores the inadequate funding allocated to the UfM and the very low degree of commitment shown by Member States on both shores of the Mediterranean. The UfM should be relaunched to take account of the new developments in the region.

On immigration, Parliament believes that in the context of policy on the Southern Neighbourhood the **problem of irregular immigration** has to be addressed. It calls for regular monitoring of the implementation of the agreements with all the southern neighbouring countries and of existing bilateral agreements between the EU Member States and all the regional actors as regard the issues of immigration and, particularly, readmission. Members deplore the asymmetrical approach adopted by the EU towards its eastern and southern neighbours in the area of mobility and visa policy, advocating the facilitation of visa procedures for ENP southern countries – especially for students, researchers and businessmen. They insist that readmission agreements with partners countries should be envisaged only for irregular immigrants, thus excluding those who declare themselves asylum seekers, refugees or persons in need of protection

Parliament calls on the VP/HR, the EEAS and the Commission to strengthen the role of civil society organisations, in particular **human rights organisations and women's organisations**. Relations between third countries and EU must not be strengthened if the countries concerned do not involve civil society organisations sufficiently in their policies, and Members note that civil society organisations are the EU's most faithful and powerful allies in promoting democratic values, good governance and human rights in partner countries. They call for the strengthening and more effective use of the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights in this regard.

Role of the European Parliament: Parliament reiterates its commitment to continue exercising the right of parliamentary scrutiny over the implementation of the ENP, also by holding regular debates with the Commission on the application of the ENPI. It calls for Parliament to be granted access to the negotiating mandates for all international agreements in the process of being concluded with the ENP partner countries, in accordance with Article 218(10) TFEU, which states that Parliament must be immediately and fully informed at all stages of the procedure. Lastly, Members call on the Commission and the EEAS to consult Parliament and civil society stakeholders at an early stage in the forthcoming preparation of the successor instrument.