Resolution on the 2011 progress report on Iceland

2011/2884(RSP) - 14/03/2012 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 596 votes 52 to 35 a resolution tabled by the Committee on Foreign Affairs on the 2011 progress report on Iceland. It notes that Iceland fulfils the Copenhagen criteria and accession negotiations with Iceland were opened on 27 July 2010 after approval by the Council. Members support Iceland's progress in the accession process, welcoming the prospect of having as a new EU Member State a country with a historically long and strong democratic tradition and civic culture. They also welcome the opening of eleven negotiation chapters and the provisional closure of eight of these chapters in the accession negotiations.

Political criteria: Parliament notes the close historic ties of Iceland with Northern Europe it takes note of the political division inside the government as well as within the Althingi and all of Iceland's main political forces regarding EU membership. It encourages the adoption of comprehensive strategies for accession to the EU in certain areas, and particularly in those that are not covered by the EEA.

Members are pleased to note that a significant proportion of Icelanders are in favour of the continuation of the accession negotiations. They welcome the government's support for a well-informed and balanced debate about the accession process and consider that the opening of the EU Information Centre in Iceland is an opportunity for the EU to provide the citizens of Iceland with all possible information regarding all consequences of EU membership for the country and the EU itself. It is essential to give EU citizens clear and comprehensive fact-based information on the implications of Iceland's accession, and Members call on the Commission and the Member States to make efforts to that end.

Economic criteria: Parliament invites the Icelandic authorities to tackle the still significant state intervention in the banking sector, and to gradually reform and open industries like energy, air, transport and fishing, which continue to be protected from foreign competition. It supports efforts to shed further light on the causes of the collapse of Iceland's economic and financial system, commending Iceland for successfully completing the Economic Recovery Programme with the IMF.

Parliament recalls that the **Icesave dispute remains unresolved** at this stage, and stresses that the Icesave issue must be resolved outside the accession negotiations and must not be an obstacle in the way of Iceland's accession process. It takes note of EFTA's Surveillance Authority decision to refer the ‘Icesave’ case to the EEA Court and of the ruling of the Icelandic Supreme Court upholding the Emergency Act of 6 October 2008. Members welcome the first partial payments to priority creditors in the **winding-up of Landsbanki Íslands hf,** estimated to be close to one-third of the recognised priority claims.

Capacity to adopt the obligations of membership: Parliament welcomes Iceland's stated ambition to **open all negotiation chapters during the Danish Presidency**. Taking account of the fact that both the Common Fisheries Policy and the **Icelandic fisheries policy** are currently being revised, it calls on Iceland and the EU to approach this chapter of the negotiations in a constructive way with a view to reaching a mutually satisfactory solution for the sustainable management and exploitation of fisheries resources within the then applicable acquis.

Members regret that the recent meeting of the four coastal states, Iceland, the EU, Norway and the Faroe Islands, on the **management of mackerel fisheries** in the North-East Atlantic in 2012, ended without reaching an agreement, and they encourage all coastal states to make a renewed effort to continue the negotiations aimed at reaching a resolution of the mackerel dispute, based on realistic proposals consistent

with historical rights and the advice of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea, which safeguard the future of the stock, protect and maintain jobs in the pelagic fishery and ensure a long-term, sustainable fishery.

Parliament notes, however, that divergences remain between the EU and Iceland on issues related to the management of marine life, notably on whale hunting. It points out that the ban on whaling is part of the EU acquis and calls for broader discussions on the matter of the abolition of whale hunting and of trade in whale products.

Regional cooperation: the resolution highlights the need for a more effective and coordinated Arctic policy of the European Union and expresses the view that **Iceland's accession to the EU would strengthen the EU's voice in the Arctic and the North Atlantic dimension** of the Union's external policies, contributing to multilateral governance and sustainable policy solutions in the region, as challenges to the Arctic environment are of mutual concern. Members feel that Iceland could become a strategic bridgehead in the region and its accession to the EU would further anchor the European presence in the Arctic Council.

Lastly, they regard positively **Iceland's participation** in the Nordic Council, in the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) as well as in the Northern Dimension Policy, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, the Arctic Council and the Nordic-Baltic co-operation (NB8). Parliament considers that the adoption of a Resolution on an Icelandic ‘High North Policy’, adopted by the Althingi in March 2011, reinforced Iceland's commitment to play an active part in the Arctic region in general.