Resolution on the pressure exerted by Russia on Eastern Partnership countries (in the context of the upcoming Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius)

2013/2826(RSP) - 12/09/2013 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the pressure exerted by Russia on Eastern Partnership countries (in the context of the upcoming Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius in November 2013). The resolution was tabled by the EPP, ALDE, ECR, S&D, and Greens/EFA groups.

Recalling that Ukraine, Armenia, Georgia and Moldova have the prospect of signing or initialling, as the case may be, Association Agreements with the EU, **Parliament deplores the fact that different types of pressure are mounting on Eastern Partnership countries** reaching the final phase of negotiating their Association Agreements. Such pressure includes targeted sanctions against Ukraine's exports, an export ban on the Moldovan wine industry, additional obstacles impeding progress towards resolution of the Transnistrian conflict, and security-related threats with respect to Armenia, which are aimed at forcing the Eastern Partnership countries **not to sign or initial the Association Agreements or DCFTAs but instead to join the Russian-led Customs Union**. Parliament regards this pressure as unacceptable and it **calls on Russia to refrain from exerting more pressure** on the Eastern partners and to respect fully their sovereign right to pursue their own political choices. Parliament considers that this type of pressure signals Russia's intention to continue to consider the Eastern Partnership region as its **sphere of exclusive influence** and oppose the prospect of these countries' closer integration with the EU, an approach which goes against the principles of national sovereignty, mutual trust and good neighbourly relations. Parliament firmly rejects the zero-sum game as a paradigm for EU and Russian relations with the Eastern Partnership countries.

Noting, furthermore, that **an Association Agreement with the EU entails political and legal reforms** conducive to strengthening the rule of law, reducing corruption and securing greater respect for human rights, Members are convinced that further political and economic reform in these countries, based on EU standards, is **ultimately in Russia's own interest**, as it would expand the zone of stability, prosperity and cooperation along its borders. Joining the Customs Union, however, does not involve any values-based benchmarks, and therefore cannot be considered as an incentive to domestic reform.

Parliament strongly underlines the fact that the free choices of the Eastern Partnership countries, **which do not have any negative impact whatsoever on trade with Russia**, should not make them bear consequences such as trade measures, visa restrictions, worker mobility restrictions and interference in frozen conflicts.

Members call on the Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) to **consider those developments beyond a purely trade dimension, which is merely a cover for blatant political pressure,** and to send a strong message of support for all Eastern Partnership countries in their European aspirations and choices. They ask the Commission and the Council to come forward with **concrete, effective measures to support the partner countries.**

Parliament notes that European integration commands popular support in the countries concerned and it urges the Commission and the EEAS, nonetheless, to step up efforts to promote the visibility of the Eastern Partnership and its benefits, asking that in the short term a **broad information and public**

awareness campaign be launched concerning the nature, benefits and requirements of the Association Agreements.