Resolution on the European neighbourhood policy: towards a strengthening of the partnership - position of the European Parliament on the 2012 reports

2013/2621(RSP) - 23/10/2013 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution tabled by the Committee on Foreign Affairs on the European Neighbourhood Policy: towards a strengthening of the partnership. Position of the European Parliament on the 2012 reports.

Whilst welcoming the publication of the 2012 progress reports for the ENP South and Eastern countries, Parliament regretted that, in most cases, the **reports presented a mixed picture of progress, stagnation and regression.** They described the national situation **without evaluating the programmes carried out by the Union or making concrete recommendations regarding the allocation of funds** under the EU external instruments or development cooperation assistance and its influence on policy-making in the partner countries. The reports should also assess trends by containing data for previous years.

Involvement of Parliament: Members strongly believed that Parliament should be fully involved in implementing the new ENP and in adjusting EU financial support, notably through delegated acts, and should be kept regularly informed about progress in the implementation of reforms in the partner countries and resulting adjustments. They deplored the fact that Parliament was not always consulted when action plans are drawn up or informed about the tenor of discussions, and they called for the status of observer to be accorded to MEPs to take part in meetings of policy and human rights subcommittees.

‘More for more’ principle: Parliament called for the consistent implementation of the incentive-based and differentiated approaches and of the principle of ‘more for more’ as the cornerstone of the revised ENP. It also called for **’less for less’ if necessary** for those ENP countries making insufficient efforts to build a deep and sustainable democracy and to undertake the agreed reforms.

Democratic transition: Members stressed the need to support the democratic transition processes and that freedom of expression, pluralism and media independence are cornerstones of democracy. They called on the Commission and the EEAS to continue and, wherever possible, to reinforce their support for the democratic conduct of upcoming elections in the partner countries, including the strengthening of media freedom and pluralism.

Eastern Partnership: Parliament made a series of recommendations, stating that the EU should, inter alia:

- strengthen the **application of the more-for-more principle** and stimulate it by positive competition and cooperation among partner countries, expressing necessary support to EaP states facing pressure from third countries when implementing the acquis communautaire ;

- apply a two-track approach, by making demands of EaP governments whilst being open, generous and engaging towards the citizens of partner countries;

- design a long-march strategy to promote European values encompassing internal change and the aspirations of these societies for freedom and prosperity;

- decentralise the EaP by engaging with, and offering its ownership to, public actors on both sides through horizontal partnerships and twinning, accompanied by increased mobility, people-to-people contacts, visa facilitation and the prospect of a visa-free system,

- initial or sign the Association Agreements and aim for their prompt entry into force, initially on a provisional basis and then in full, before the end of the current term of the European Parliament and the European Commission, provided that the necessary conditions and requirements have been met.

Parliament started its concern about **Russian actions designed to deter partner countries** from political and economic association with the EU.

It went on to make a series of specific remarks about partner countries, these being: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. Regarding the latter, Members recommended that the Council sign the Association Agreement between the EU and Ukraine if the conditions are met.

The Southern Neighbourhood: Parliament was concerned at the difficulties being encountered by the southern Mediterranean countries in overcoming the challenges of their **democratic transitions**, taking the view that a successful transition to sustainable democracy must be the Union's priority regarding its Southern Neighbourhood, and calling for the EU institutions and the Member States to increase their support to that effect.

Members pointed out that **social justice and improving the quality of life** are key elements of the transitions currently taking place in the Southern Neighbourhood countries, expressing deep concern at the employment situation, in particular among young people, and they urged the Commission to support **effective employment policies**. They believed that there was an urgent need to promote projects for sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development and integration in the Maghreb in order to facilitate the circulation of goods, services, capital and persons. Furthermore, Parliament wanted the EU and its Member States to implement a concrete and effective **mobility policy with the countries of the Southern Neighbourhood**, in particular by simultaneously signing visa liberalisation agreements and readmission agreements similar to those signed with most countries of the Eastern Partnership, underlining the importance of increasing mobility and cooperation in the field of academic education and vocational training.

Parliament went on to make a series of specific observations regarding Southern Neighbourhood partner countries, these being: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia.