Resolution on the 2014 progress report on the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

2014/2948(RSP) - 11/03/2015 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the 2014 Progress Report on the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), prepared by its Committee on Foreign Affairs.

Parliament recalled that FYROM has been an EU candidate for nine years and is the most advanced country in terms of alignment with the acquis.

Accession negotiations: Parliament reiterated, for the ninth consecutive time, its call on the Council to **set a date for the start of accession negotiations** without further delay, in order to boost acquis-related reforms and strengthen the democratisation process. It stressed that further prolonging the status quo undermines the credibility and effectiveness of the EU's enlargement policy and its position in the region.

Bilateral issues: Parliament reiterated its position that bilateral issues should not be resorted to in order to hinder the accession process but that they **should be addressed as early as possible in the accession process**. It is mindful of the lack of compliance by one of the parties with the ruling of the International Court of Justice of 5 December 2011 on the application of the Interim Accord of September 1995. **It invited Greece to create a positive environment for settling bilateral differences** in the spirit of European values and principles. It reiterated its **concern over the use of historical arguments** in the current debate with neighbouring countries. According to the Parliament, this could contribute to a better understanding of history and good neighbourly relations.

Name of the country: Parliament called for more active EU engagement on the name issue, and supports a proactive approach on the part of EU political leaders. It invited the new Vice-President/High Representative (VP/HR) to develop new initiatives to overcome the current stalemate and to work, in cooperation with the UN Special Representative, towards a mutually acceptable solution. It called on the Council to conduct a thorough discussion on the **Macedonian EU accession perspective in the first half of 2015**.

Political stability: Parliament is concerned at the polarised domestic climate in the country. It urged the government and on all political parties to work towards improving relations in order to maintain political stability and to accelerate the European agenda. It is also concerned at the worsening of relations between the government and the opposition and condemns all illegal surveillance.

Community tensions: Parliament is concerned that interethnic coexistence remains fragile and poses a challenge for the country. It called on all political parties and civil society organisations to actively promote an inclusive and tolerant multiethnic and multireligious society. Whilst welcoming the improvements in the election process, Parliament shared concerns, however, over the blurred line between state and party activities.

Reforms: Parliament welcomed the high level of alignment with the legislative acquis. However, it is concerned about the political influence over certain court proceedings, and emphasises that the judiciary should remain independent of all external pressures of the parliamentary and executive branches. Provisions are called for as regards the **fight against corruption** and organised crime.

Political/religious extremism: Parliament condemned all forms of political and/or religious extremism and sees a need for cross-border cooperation with other Western Balkan countries and EU Member States.

It recalled that public policy should combat all forms of extremism, and that stigmatisation of any one religious group in this context should be carefully avoided.

Fight against discrimination: Parliament called for the anti-discrimination law to be aligned with the acquis. It condemned all violence against the LGBTI community. It reiterated its concern at the continued existence of gender stereotypes in society and at domestic violence.

Fight against poverty and unemployment: Parliament urged the government to step up its efforts to implement the revised national strategy on poverty and social exclusion. It called for greater attention be paid to ensuring fair and effective access to justice for all children, including children with disabilities and those from the Roma community. Other measures are called for in the field of employment.

Regional cooperation: lastly, welcoming the fact that the country has remained active and constructive in regional cooperation, Parliament invited the government to improve the overall level of alignment with CFSP declarations and decisions.