Review of the European neighbourhood policy

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The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted the own-initiative report by Eduard KUKAN (EPP, SK) on the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP).

The report stressed that the ENP is an essential part of the EU´s foreign policy and must remain a single policy. An effective ENP is vital to enhance the EU's foreign policy credibility and global positioning.

The Neighbourhood is currently in a **state of flux** due to the increasing number of long-standing and newly emerging security challenges, and is less stable, considerably less secure and facing a more profound economic crisis than when the ENP was launched.

Revised policy: the revised policy should be based on mutual accountability and shared commitment to EU values and principles. Despite the complexities and challenges in practice, the EU must remain steadfastly in support of transition processes in all and any countries and democratisation, respect for human rights and the rule of law.

Developments in the region since 2004, but in particular in the last few years, have shown the ENP to be unable to respond adequately and promptly to rapidly changing and challenging circumstances.

This report stressed the importance, **necessity and timeliness of the review of the ENP** and emphasised that the revised ENP should be able to provide a quick, flexible and adequate response to the situation on the ground. According to Members, the ENP should become a stronger, more political and more effective policy.

The report stated that the renewed policy must be more strategic, focused, flexible and coherent, and politically driven. The EU is called upon to formulate a clear and ambitious political vision on the ENP, and to pay special attention to its own political priorities in the Eastern and Southern neighbourhoods, taking into account the different challenges facing countries in each region.

Resources: Members regret the **limited resources allocated to the EU's cooperation with its partners within its neighbourhood**, notably in comparison with the significantly higher levels of resources invested in ENP countries by stakeholders from third countries. They noted that this undermines the EU's ability to promote and implement policies that are in line with its strategic interests in its neighbourhood. They stressed the need to streamline support and increase funds in this area as well as the need to strengthen accountability and transparency mechanisms in the partner countries in order to ensure that they have the capacity to absorb and spend the funds in an efficient and meaningful way.

Moreover, Members called for **more coherence and consistency** between the various **EU external financing instruments** and called on the Commission to allocate more resources to the **European Endowment for Democracy** (EED) which complements EU instruments with a new approach that is more flexible and responsive, gap-filling and financially efficient.

Members also considered that the EU's financial and technical assistance should be conditional on successful achievement of tangible benchmarks in the reform process, on the basis of which further support will be allocated.

Reshaping the European Neighbourhood Policy: Members stressed the need to reshape the ENP and for the technical aspects of the policy to be underpinned by a clear political vision. They stressed that

enlargement policy and neighbourhood policy are separate policies with different objectives. However, they reiterated that European countries within the ENP, like any European country, can apply for EU membership if they satisfy the criteria and conditions of eligibility and admission under Article 49 TEU. The report underlined the continuous need to focus on strengthening and consolidating democracy, the rule of law, good governance, the independence of the judicial system, the fight

against corruption, respect for women, the rights of LGBTI persons, the rights of persons with disabilities, and the rights of persons belonging to ethnic minorities.

Members called for the ENP to be developed into a more **tailor-made and flexible policy framework** that is able to adapt to the diversity that exists among partner countries, and for a consistent implementation of the 'differentiated approach'.

The need for a **strong security component** in the ENP has been stressed as well as for a closer coordination between the ENP and wider Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) activities.

Parliamentary dimension: the parliamentary dimension of the policy needs to be reinforced by enhancing the effectiveness of the interparliamentary meetings and the joint parliamentary bodies established under agreements with the EU, and of the parliamentary assemblies. Members welcomed, in this context, the new approach that Parliament has adopted to parliamentary democracy support. They called for the Parliament to be involved in the implementation of the new ENP and to be kept regularly informed and consulted on its progress in the partner countries.

Assessment and visibility: the EU is called upon to:

- design a **special mechanism for providing EU humanitarian assistance** to the neighbourhood countries that would differ from the model used for third countries worldwide and would ensure high visibility for the EU and its political agenda, among other goals;
- strengthen its capacity to **counter misinformation and propaganda campaigns** against itself and its Member States which are aimed at diminishing their unity and solidarity;
- **strengthen its visibility** in order to show clearly its support for and engagement with and in the partner countries;
- prepare a clear communication strategy for societies in the ENP countries, in order to explain to them the benefits of the Association Agreements, including Deep and Comprehensive Trade Areas (DCFTA's), as a tool for modernising their political systems and economies.