Resolution on the 2015 report on the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

2015/2895(RSP) - 10/03/2016 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 404 votes to 76, with 29 abstentions, a resolution drafted by its Committee on Foreign Affairs on the 2015 Report on the 2015 Report on the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM).

Members recall that the prospect of EU membership is a major incentive for further reforms. They also recall that opinion polls show considerable public support for EU membership in FYROM.

Political dialogue: Members call for the strengthening of political dialogue and the restoring of public trust in institutions. They insist that all the political parties make efforts to create the conditions for credible early elections and underlined the paramount importance of these elections being free, fair, and in full compliance with international standards.

Parliament considers it of strategic importance to ensure continuity of support to FYROM's progress towards EU membership and that the recommendation to open accession negotiations should be conditional upon the full implementation of the June/July 2015 political agreement. It considers it essential for the democratic process that the systemic reforms on the rule of law and fundamental rights be implemented without delay. It invites the Commission to report back to Parliament and the Council on the implementation of the political agreement and the Urgent Reform Priorities after the early parliamentary elections.

Administrative capacity: Parliament is concerned that FYROM's public administration remains subject to political influence. It supports the government's plans to increase accessibility to public services by prioritising the development of e-services. It calls once again for political will to depoliticise the appointment and promotion of judges and prosecutors and to ensure the professionalism and independence of the Judicial Council. Concerned about the difficult climate surrounding civil society organisations (CSOs), Parliament urges the government acknowledge their added value.

Corruption: Parliament remains concerned about widespread corruption, particularly in state and local administration, public procurement and political party financing. It urges the government to fight corruption in a non-selective manner and to ensure that all law enforcement and supervisory bodies have sufficient autonomy to act independently.

Combating terrorism: Parliament notes the important contribution to regional efforts to fight Islamic radicalism. It encourages the development of a comprehensive strategy and action plan to prevent and counter radicalisation, in close cooperation with religious leaders and communities. It reiterates the need for the government to define a common proactive strategy of foreign, security and defence policy, bearing in mind the current international terrorist threat.

Minorities: Parliament condemns the use of any kind of violence against the LGBTI community and reiterates its request that those responsible for such acts of violence be brought to justice. It underlines the need to combat prejudices and discrimination on any grounds against the Roma, and to facilitate their integration and their access to the educational system and the labour market. It reaffirms that the Anti-Discrimination Law should be amended to bring it into line with the EU's *acquis*.

Parliament calls on all political parties and CSOs to actively promote an inclusive and tolerant multi-ethnic and multi-religious society. It calls for measures to promote integration in the education of all interested parties.

Freedom of expression: Parliament deplores the further deterioration of freedom of expression and media freedom, political pressure, hate speech, the continued polarisation, lack of independence and pluralism in the media, the widespread illegal wiretapping of journalists, the cases of violence and threats against journalists. It urges that steps be taken to enhance media freedom.

Market economy: Parliament stresses the need to further strengthen legal certainty for foreign investors as well as domestic companies and to strengthen administrative capacities and regulatory and supervisory agencies. It is concerned about the high level of public debt; calls for improved fiscal discipline and encourages the principle of balanced budget and calls for budgetary implementation and transparency to be improved. Although Parliament welcomes the GDP increase of 3.9 % in real terms in the first quarter of 2015, it is concerned that unemployment remains high at 27.4 % and that labour market participation is very low, especially among young people and women.

Migrants: Parliament notes that the country has been facing an **unprecedented migratory flow, with over 500 000 persons** transiting through FYROM in 2015. It is aware of the increasingly tense situation at the border with Greece, and calls on the authorities to continue cooperation and coordination with the EU on migration issues. It encourages the **stepping-up of measures related to border management** to combat illegal migration and human trafficking. It calls on the Commission to enhance support for border management capacity and allow access to the relevant EU instruments and programmes.

Parliament calls upon the competent authorities to avoid and refrain from any kind of actions, including violence and the use of force, which might discriminate against, and put at risk the lives of, refugees and migrants. It encourages the competent authorities to enhance, with the EU's help, reception and accommodation facilities, regional coordination and information exchange and effective border management.

Parliament urges the country to do everything possible to ensure facilities for refugees and migrants, uphold humane conditions, refrain from violent pushbacks and ensure strict respect for the country's own law and for international law on refugees and asylum.

Relations with Greece: Parliament commends the agreement with Greece on 11 confidence-building measures and welcomes the high-level consultations of the two Foreign Ministers in their respective capitals. It invites both sides to build upon the outcome of these meetings and engage in further constructive discussion at a high political level. In particular, encourages both governments to take concrete steps towards further enhancing mutual trust, including with regard to **the name issue**.

Regional cooperation: Parliament underlines the importance of regional cooperation and believes that it is **an essential element in the EU accession process.** In this regard, it reiterates its concern over the use of historical arguments in the current debate with neighbours, and welcomes any efforts towards joint celebrations of common historical events with neighbouring EU Member States.

Lastly, Parliament is of the opinion that FYROM's membership of NATO could contribute to achieving greater security and political stability in South-East Europe. It recalls, however, that the EU and NATO accession processes are independent of each other.