EU/Australia Framework Agreement

2017/2227(INI) - 18/04/2018 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 489 votes to 59, with 33 abstentions, a non-legislative resolution on the draft Council decision on the conclusion on behalf of the Union of the Framework Agreement between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and Australia, of the other part.

A legislative resolution on the proposal for a draft Council decision on the conclusion on behalf of the Union of this Framework Agreement was adopted in parallel.

In 2016, the EU was **Australia's second largest trading partner** – its second source of imports (19.3 %) and third destination for exports (10.3 %). The EU and Australia celebrated **55 years of cooperation** and diplomatic relations in 2017 and on 7 August 2017, they concluded a Framework Agreement.

Parliament stressed that the EU, as a global actor, should **further strengthen its presence in the large and dynamic Asia-Pacific area**, where Australia is a natural partner of the EU as well as an important actor itself.

Members noted that the Agreement will provide a **legally binding instrument** to upgrade and strengthen EU-Australia bilateral relations and to increase cooperation in areas.

Trade: Parliament supported the upcoming launch of negotiations for an **EU-Australia free trade agreement**, which must be conducted in a spirit of reciprocity, transparency, accountability and mutual benefit while taking into account the sensitivity of certain products, such as agricultural ones, due to the fact that Australia is a major agricultural exporter.

Both partners to have a **high degree of ambition** in the area of services.

In the negotiations, the EU should take into account of SME needs without reducing environmental, social and labour standards.

Education: Australia also has an active role in the EU's higher education cooperation programmes through the EU-Australia Bilateral Education programme. Since 2015, Australian universities have been able to enter into Erasmus+ mobility agreements. This cooperation should be further strengthened.

External relations: Parliament commended Australia for its support and for aligning its sanctions regime with the EU following **Russia's** illegal annexation of Crimea and military interventions in eastern Ukraine. It also commended Australia´s operational agreement with Europol and highlights the potential for further expansion of intelligence sharing and operational cooperation with the Australian Government. Its key contribution in the Security Council to seeking to improve the humanitarian situation in **Syria** has been recognised.

Members underlined the importance of ever-closer bilateral cooperation on exchanging information on **foreign fighters** and their return. In this regard, they called for steps to enhance counter-terrorism cooperation through joint-training exercises between Member State emergency response teams and EU agencies such as Europol and its European Counter-Terrorism Centre (ECTC) on the one hand and key elements of the Australian national security architecture on the other.

While welcoming the engagement by the EU and Australia envisaged in the FA on intensifying their dialogue and cooperation on migration and asylum, Members urged Australia to continue to contribute to

finding a positive solution to the situation of asylum-seekers and migrants retained in **Papua New Guinea and Nauru**.

Climate change: Members welcomed Australia's ratification of the Paris Agreement and the commitment laid down in the FA to enhance cooperation and foreign policy endeavours in order to fight climate change and took note of Australia's target of reducing emissions by 26 to 28 % below 2005 levels by 2030.

Human rights: Parliament welcomed the commitment of both partners to advancing the protection and promotion of human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law, including in multilateral fora and with third partners. It highlighted Australia's launch in 2008 of the **Closing the Gap** strategy on addressing indigenous disadvantages, such as the gap in life expectancy and other inequalities.

Lastly, Members recalled their concern about tensions in the **South China Sea** and encouraged both partners to continue to promote stability and freedom of navigation in this crucial international waterway.