

EU/Euratom/Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement

2017/2269(INI) - 04/07/2018 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 598 votes to 52 with 27 abstentions, a non-legislative resolution on the draft Council decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the Union, of the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Armenia, of the other part.

The current framework for relations between Armenia and the European Union is the 1996 Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, which entered into force in 1999 and is to be replaced by the proposed Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement.

The new agreement sets a new legal basis to reinvigorate the political dialogue and broaden the scope of economic cooperation, as well as cooperation in sectors such as energy, transport, infrastructure and the environment.

Core values and conflict resolution: Members warmly welcomed the signature of the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement, which constitutes a significant step forward in EU-Armenian relations and embodies a commitment to a further deepening of political and economic relations. However, there remained concerns about **Armenia's full respect for some of the EU's core values**, notably as regards democracy and the rule of law, which are being undermined by corruption, vote-buying, organised crime and abusive oligarchic control. Significant progress in these areas is key to unlocking further prospects for cooperation.

Parliament encouraged Armenia to swiftly implement mutually agreed reforms, in particular concerning the stability of the electoral system, the independence of the judiciary, and transparency in the governance of state institutions, whilst emphasising the utmost importance of involving relevant civil society organisations during this implementation phase.

Financial support: the Commission is called on to follow through on the conditionality of the EU's financial assistance by systematically linking EU support – including through the European Neighbourhood Instrument, macrofinancial assistance and other instruments – to the **effective implementation of reforms**, progress in which should be the subject of thorough monitoring.

Nagorno-Karabakh conflict: Armenia and Azerbaijan were urged to increase, in good faith, the pace and output of their negotiations following the 2018 elections in both countries, in order to make history by **ending a conflict which cannot be solved militarily** yet has claimed too many lives, especially of civilians, and which has not only prevented the establishment of peace and stability, but also hampered socio-economic development in the region for almost three decades.

Members supported all initiatives conducive to peace and to developing good neighbourly relations, including high-level talks and a ceasefire monitoring mechanism. They called on the EEAS and the Commission to **increase EU support for programmes** to enable increased contacts between Armenian and Azerbaijani NGOs and youth organisations, while ensuring that EU Member States avoid indirect exports of dual-use goods and technology to parties to the conflict.

Political reform: Parliament called on both Armenia and the EU to attach a high priority to **domestic reforms**, so as to ensure in particular a smooth transition from a presidential to a parliamentary system

and the non-politicisation of state institutions. It emphasised the need to ensure a level playing field for the opposition and an environment in which **civil society** may operate free from fear of reprisals.

Armenia was called upon to:

- implement **all the recommendations of the international observation missions** led by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR), in particular in relation to allegations of vote-buying, voter intimidation, pressuring of civil servants and private-sector employees, and undue interference in the voting process by party representatives or law enforcement officers;
- make significant progress in areas such as regards media freedom, the independence of the judiciary and the fight against corruption, organised crime, money laundering, tax evasion, and nepotism;
- address the issues of **gender equality** and put a high priority on ending gender based sex-selection;
- increase cooperation on preventing and **combating criminal activities** such as terrorism, organised crime, cybercrime and cross-border crime, and to align itself more closely with the EU's foreign and security policy.

Trade and economic cooperation: Parliament welcomed the deepening of trade and economic relations between the EU and Armenia and the fact that the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement in some instances goes **beyond WTO commitments** in terms of transparency and market access for EU products and operators, in areas such as trade in services, intellectual property rights and public procurement. It encouraged Armenia to engage in a trustful trade relationship with the EU, in line with its commitments taken on with WTO accession.

Members regretted that the Agreement cannot include the removal of tariff barriers because of Armenia's membership of the Eurasian Economic Union. However, they stressed that it does not prevent the EU to be the main Armenia's trading partner and first donor, thus demonstrating that the EU does not hold as a prerequisite for partner to choose deeper relations with the EU at the expense of their relations with third parties.

Energy: Parliament welcomed the emphasis placed on nuclear safety but regretted the decision of the Armenian authorities to extend the life of the Medzamor nuclear plant, and reiterated its grave concern over the persisting discrepancy between the safety standards of this nuclear plant and the major risks arising from its location in a seismic area. It also stressed the urgent need for progress in the field of cooperation on environmental issues in Armenia.