Implementation of the EU association agreement with Georgia

2017/2282(INI) - 14/11/2018 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 528 votes to 97, with 34 abstentions, a resolution on the implementation of the EU Association Agreement with Georgia.

Parliament welcomed the sustained reform track and progress made in implementing the AA and the DCFTA, which has positioned Georgia as a key partner of the EU in the region. It called the Georgian authorities to continue ensuring stability, further democratic reforms and economic and social improvements for Georgians, who are affected by poverty, unemployment and a high level of economic emigration.

It also noted with satisfaction that Georgia's European agenda continues to garner cross-party consensus and the support of a majority of Georgian citizens.

The Georgian authorities have been invited to address some remaining concerns:

Institutional framework in place to implement the Association Agreement: Members noted that EU support to Georgia will reach between EUR 371 and 453 million for 2017-2020, with additional funds available under the 'more for more principle' in line with the EU-Georgia Association Agenda. The Commission is encouraged to **provide such assistance proportionally to Georgia's absorption capacity and reform efforts**.

Members stressed the need for Georgia to have highly qualified local officials to implement the association programme. They invited the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the European Commission to **strengthen internal capacity** to intensify the monitoring of the implementation of the Association Agreement, notably through an increase in dedicated human resources with in-depth expertise in the Georgian administrative and legal system.

Political dialogue: Members regretted the postponement of the implementation of a fully proportional electoral system until 2024. They reiterated their readiness to observe future elections in Georgia and to assist the Georgian authorities in following up on and implementing the recommendations that will be presented.

While supporting the democratic strengthening of Georgia's political institutions, the resolution underlined the importance of pursuing an ambitious reform agenda aimed at the political neutrality of state institutions and their staff. It also stressed the urgent need to put in place more rigorous mechanisms for scrutinising the executive.

Members welcomed the effective implementation of the visa free regime for Georgian citizens since 27 March 2017. However, they encouraged regular monitoring thereof in order to ensure continued compliance.

As regards the **illegal occupation of Georgian territories by Russia**, the report stressed that the international community must take a consistent, coordinated, united and firm stance against Russia's occupation and annexation policy.

It also stressed the need to further develop high level dialogue on security issues between the EU and Georgia, particularly on countering radicalisation, violent extremism, propaganda and hybrid threats.

Rule of law, good governance and freedom of the press: while congratulating Georgia on its implementation of the **anti-corruption strategy** and action plan, Parliament stressed that the fight against corruption must go hand in hand with the independence of the judiciary, and that there was still a need to build a solid experience in investigating high-level corruption cases. It also called for all necessary measures to be taken to strengthen the judicial system in order to guarantee the full independence of the judiciary and the Prosecutor's Office.

Emphasising the **politicisation of media content**, Members recalled the importance of a pluralist and transparent media environment.

Respect for human rights: Members called on the Georgian authorities to take further steps to uphold fundamental freedoms and human rights, notably for vulnerable groups, by fighting hate speech and discrimination, including on the labour market through an amended Labour Code, against LGBTQI people, Roma people, people living with HIV/AIDS, persons with disabilities and other minorities.

The humanitarian situation in and isolation of the breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia continue to represent one of the key challenges for Georgia.

Members also called for:

- the broadening of the scope of the law to avoid exemptions; reminds the Georgian authorities of the obligation to respect international labour rights standards;
- increased implementation efforts in the fields of transport and the environment: Members urged the Georgian government to adopt a strategy to combat air pollution;
- further steps to protect women against all forms of violence, sexual abuse and harassment at work and in public places, and to increase the number of women on the labour market and in politics where they remain underrepresented;
- a strengthening of the protection of children's rights, including the prevention of violence against children, access to education for all children, including those with disabilities.