

Implementation of the EU association agreement with Ukraine

2017/2283(INI) - 12/12/2018 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 433 votes to 105 with 30 abstentions a resolution on the implementation of the European Union's Association Agreement with Ukraine.

Parliament noted that the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA), which is part of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement (AA), and has been officially operational since 1 January 2016, provides a solid basis for Ukraine's economic development and modernization.

General environment of reform

Members considered that while Ukraine has been making progress on the path towards European integration, more difficult tasks still need to be addressed, and public support for modernisation and reform is suffering on account of people's disappointment at deteriorating social conditions.

The consent of the Ukrainian people for closer relations with the EU remains strong, but a large part of the population are nonetheless dissatisfied with the country's overall development.

Parliament welcomed Ukraine's reforms in the fields of energy, health, pensions, education, administration, decentralisation, public procurement, defence and security, banking and macroeconomic stabilisation. However, these reforms were accompanied by drastic price increases and a deterioration in access to social protection systems.

Significant challenges remain, particularly in areas such as **fighting corruption, privatisation and judicial reform**. According to Members, Ukraine's reform programme should focus on three main priorities: (i) establishing an effective legal framework to fight corruption, including institutions, financial transparency and audits; (ii) reform for decentralisation; (iii) measures to end oligarchy and privatisation measures.

Institutional framework in place to implement reforms

Parliament stressed its conviction that meaningful progress with the implementation of the Association Agreement and the reforms will only be possible if the **deoligarchisation process** is pursued. It criticised the entrenched system in which economic, political and media power is concentrated in the hands of a few individuals feeding off one another, a problem which **increasingly hampering** the progress of reforms. Members were concerned about persistent **conflicts of interest** on the part of regulatory and supervisory authorities, and also critical of the fact that deoligarchisation has so far been used mainly as a tool for restoring the balance between the different groups of oligarchs, which was fundamentally disturbed in 2014.

Parliament went on to called for, inter alia:

- further progress in deepening a culture of **parliamentary dialogue**, a crucial step in making the Verkhovna Rada a more effective, transparent and efficient legislator;
- the establishment of a transparent and highly reliable selection process which will enhance the **integrity and professionalism of judges and prosecutors**, as well as increase the confidence of citizens in the

judicial system. Members called for the swift and transparent establishment of the independent **High Anti-Corruption Court** and for the independence of the **National Anti-Corruption Bureau (NABU)** to be safeguarded;

- the speedy adoption of the **new electoral code**, which should guarantee equal opportunities for representation and eligibility of candidates of all nationalities living in Ukraine;
- the abolition of **electronic reporting obligations for non-governmental organisation (NGO) activists** and transparent monitoring of declarations by politicians and officials;
- more attention be paid to areas related to the space devoted to **civil society** in the drafting and implementation of legislation;
- the continuation of the reform in favour of **decentralisation** and the acceleration of the merger of local and regional authorities;
- strengthening the legal basis so that **workers** can effectively compel their employers by judicial means to respect their right to wages for work done;
- more concerted efforts to implement the Ukrainian **human rights strategy**, including policies to improve the situation of the Roma minority and other minority groups;
- the ratification of the **Istanbul Convention on Violence against Women**, as well as the ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court;
- reforms to guarantee **media independence and pluralism** to guarantee the safety of media professionals and journalists;
- the establishment of State programmes to prevent **hate crimes** as part of the implementation of the national human rights strategy;
- the implementation of necessary reforms to attract **new investment**, in particular foreign direct investment;
- the further **reform of the gas and electricity markets** so as to fully integrate them into the EU energy market, and to end existing monopolies;
- the strengthening of Ukraine-EU cooperation **fighting against Russian propaganda**, including the country's expected interference in the elections in Ukraine.

Parliament called for better monitoring of the implementation of reforms, on both the Ukrainian and EU sides, on the basis of measurable indicators. It invited the Commission and the EEAS to submit more frequent and detailed written reports on the implementation of the agreements.

Relations with Russia

Parliament condemned both the **illegal annexation by Russia** of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, and the deliberate act of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine on 25 November 2018 in the **Kerch Strait**, when three Ukrainian Navy vessels conducting a routine transfer from Odessa to Mariupol were blocked, shot at and seized in international waters by the Russian Coast Guard. Members called on the EU and its Member States to **introduce targeted sanctions** if the Ukrainian servicemen are not released and if there is any further military escalation. They demanded that Russia guarantee freedom of navigation through the Kerch Strait and in the Sea of Azov, urging the OSCE and its Members to

extend the mandate of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to the Sea of Azov. Parliament called on the EU and its Member States to **close access to EU ports for Russian ships coming from the Sea of Azov** should Russia not re-establish freedom of navigation through the Kerch Strait and in the Sea of Azov.