Recommendation to the Council, the Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy concerning the new EU strategy for enlargement

2022/2064(INI) - 23/11/2022 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 502 votes to 75, with 61 abstentions, a recommendation to the Council, the Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy concerning the new EU strategy for enlargement.

In the light of the growing Russian threat to European peace and stability, an enhanced enlargement policy remains the strongest geopolitical tool at the EU's disposal. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has prompted three countries with EU Association Agreements – Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova – to submit membership applications, expressing their peoples' wish to live in free and democratic countries. On 23 June 2022, the European Council granted candidate status to Ukraine and Moldova, while recognising the European perspective of Georgia.

Enlargement policy must be updated to become more flexible, dynamic and rewarding, by taking into consideration both the political realities and the new geopolitical context created by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, while maintaining the merit-based accession process.

Recommendations

Parliament recommends that the Council, the Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy:

Geopolitical context

- advance the EU's enlargement policy as the single most effective EU instrument for securing peace, prosperity and fundamental values on the European continent;

- enhance the EU's capacity to act by **reforming decision-making**, including through the introduction of **qualified majority voting** in areas relevant to the accession process;

- **abolish the requirement for unanimity** when deciding on the start of the negotiation process as well as the opening and closing of individual negotiating clusters and chapters;

- avoid using unresolved bilateral and regional disputes to block candidate countries' accession processes and adopt an official mechanism for the resolution and arbitration of these disputes to support their resolution separately from the accession to the EU;

- work strategically and proactively to counter hybrid threats and to prevent third-party **interference** in the political, electoral and other democratic processes of the accession countries, in particular malicious acts aimed at manipulating public opinion and undermining European integration.

Accession process

- overcome the enlargement gridlock by revamping the accession process to clearly define political and socio-economic aims, making full use of the new enlargement methodology to increase its credibility, predictability and dynamism;

- consider appointing **EU chief negotiators** to carry out negotiations under a broad negotiating mandate, who would also be accountable to the European Parliament;

- accelerate the integration of countries that demonstrate strategic orientation and unwavering commitment to EU-related reforms, democratic consolidation, fundamental values and foreign policy alignment, including sanctions;

- establish enhanced structured political dialogue with associated, candidate and potential candidate countries, including leaders' meetings on the margins of the European Council;

- establish clear **deadlines** for concluding negotiations with the accession countries by the end of the current decade at the latest;

- assist Ukraine and Moldova to help them meet the conditions set by the Commission for further steps towards EU membership, and assist Georgia to help it complete the necessary steps to obtain candidate status;

- sufficiently **increase the overall budget of IPA III** in order to retain funding for current IPA III beneficiaries;

- keep the process of accession negotiations with Türkiye frozen until the country genuinely engages with the EU and demonstrates clear and significant progress in the field of fundamental freedoms, civil and human rights and the rule of law.

Conditionality

- confirm that the democratic transformation and the rule of law have a central role in the EU accession process, in line with the new methodology;

- strengthen the involvement of civil society, non-governmental organisations and experts in monitoring the accession process;

- implement the EU human rights sanctions regime (the European Magnitsky Act), and extend it to include sanctions for corruption crimes, covering accession countries;

- provide the European Parliament with a full and in-depth evaluation of the use of all pre-accession funds;

- set up a **dedicated rule of law task force**, to be entrusted with developing more substantial and effective support to candidate and potential candidate countries.

Democratic and socio-economic transformation in candidate countries

- actively engage in fostering a culture of **political pluralism and inclusion**, as well a constructive political dialogue and parliamentary functions with regard to legislation, scrutiny and oversight;

- foster electoral reforms with the aim of ensuring undisputed free, fair and democratic election processes in all candidate and aspiring countries;

- uphold democratic accountability, increase transparency and inclusiveness and enhance the parliamentary dimension, especially parliamentary oversight, of the accession process;

- insist on the need to build an **inclusive society** free from discrimination, racism, violent nationalism and extremism;

- increase support for economic development, the market economy, transport connectivity, competitiveness and green transition;

- include the candidate countries in the EU's energy policy strategies, with a special focus on those which are heavily dependent on Russian gas and are severely impacted due to their European choice;

- implement a roadmap for phasing out **roaming fees** between the EU and accession countries.