Resolution on 30 years of Copenhagen criteria - giving further impetus to EU enlargement policy

2023/2987(RSP) - 13/12/2023 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 468 votes to 99, with 58 abstentions, a resolution on 30 years of Copenhagen criteria - giving further impetus to EU enlargement policy.

The text adopted in plenary was tabled by the EPP, S&D, Renew, Greens/EFA and ECR groups.

The resolution noted that the effectiveness of enlargement has considerably decreased over the last years owing to a failure on the EU's part, notably from the Council, to live up to its promises. Unfair delays and vetoes in the Council have considerably damaged the EU's credibility and capacity to encourage political transformation in the enlargement countries. Moreover, in the light of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and the growing Russian threat to European peace and stability, an **enhanced enlargement policy** remains a very **strong political tool** at the EU's disposal to protect and promote peace, security, stability, cooperation and democratic values on the European continent.

Opening accession negotiations

While commemorating the 30th anniversary of the Copenhagen criteria and appreciating their historic significance in providing a clear and effective framework for EU enlargement, Parliament stressed that there is a need to establish a **clear EU enlargement timetable** for EU candidate countries for them to conclude the EU accession negotiations by the end of the current decade. The resolution stressed that there should be **no fast track** for membership and underscored that there can be **no shortcuts** on fundamental values.

In the light of the above, Parliament urged the European Council to endorse the Commission's recommendations presented in its 2023 Enlargement Package from 8 November 2023, and to decide on opening accession negotiations with Ukraine, Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and granting candidate status to Georgia on the understanding that certain steps are taken.

Parliament also highlighted the **geopolitical significance** of including the Western Balkan countries, Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia in the EU, emphasising their many ongoing efforts and the importance of their integration for regional stability and security, and encouraging continued dialogue and cooperation to resolve current conflicts and differences.

Members strongly deplored the statements by the Prime Minister of Hungary concerning the opening of accession negotiations with Ukraine and the country's change policy towards Kosovo and noted that Mr Orban's statements obstruct the EU enlargement process.

The resolution reminded the Council of the potential negative consequences of Hungary taking over the EU's Presidency in July 2024.

Türkiye

Parliament concluded that the Turkish Government has no interest in closing the persistent and growing gap between Türkiye and the EU on values and standards. Moreover, it has not shown any interest in respecting and upholding the Copenhagen criteria and in aligning itself with EU policies and objectives.

Ukraine

Parliament welcomed the Commission's proposal for a regulation on establishing the Ukraine Facility. However, it is concerned about the **lack of progress** in the legislative procedure and urged the Council to swiftly adopt a general approach on the regulation, and the overall revision of the multiannual financial framework, in order for interinstitutional negotiations to commence without further delay.

State of play

The Commission is called on to apply strict conditionality and formally assess accession countries under the EU's rule-of-law mechanism with the aim of providing an objective and clear picture of the state of play in order to prevent a persistent lack of progress, serious deficiencies and regression. The resolution noted the **limited efforts** made by some enlargement countries to meet the requirements for membership in line with the Copenhagen criteria. Members regretted the serious and worrying lack of progress – and even backsliding – by some enlargement countries in their path towards EU accession. The Commission should disburse funds only to those countries that deliver tangible results and implement reforms in the area of the 'fundamentals'.

Parliamentary oversight

The resolution called for consideration to be given to appointing an **EU chief negotiator**, who would be accountable to the European Parliament, to carry out negotiations under a broad mandate for each country. There is also a need for stronger parliamentary oversight of the EU's enlargement policy. Parliament insisted on strengthening the role of Parliament throughout the entire accession process, including allowing it to fully scrutinise the progress made by many candidate countries and potential candidate countries across policy fields.

Monitoring

A robust monitoring mechanism should be established to track the reforms and progress made by the candidate countries in respecting all political criteria. Parliament called for a specific and effective monitoring mechanism to be set up for protecting fundamental values and the financial interests of the Union, in the context of accession procedures.

Lastly, the next College of Commissioners is called on to nominate a **Commissioner for Enlargement**, as well as to restore the Directorate-General for Enlargement.