Resolution on the democratic backsliding and threats to political pluralism in Georgia

2024/2822(RSP) - 09/10/2024 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 495 votes to 73, with 86 abstentions, a resolution on the democratic backsliding and threats to political pluralism in Georgia.

The text adopted in plenary was tabled as a joint resolution by the EPP, S&D, ECR, Renew, Greens/EFA and Members.

The past months have seen significant attacks on democracy in Georgia, which have been characterised by the hasty adoption of anti-democratic legislation, concurrent with attacks on civil society and independent media, prolonged mass protests and the subsequent violent suppression of those peaceful protests, and deep political and societal tensions and polarisation.

Concerned about the democratic backsliding in Georgia, which has occurred exponentially throughout this year, Parliament strongly condemns the adoption of the law on **transparency of foreign influence** and the law on **family values and protection of minors**, as well as the changes to the Electoral Code. These laws violate freedom of expression and impose restrictions on critical voices in civil society. They are incompatible with EU values and democratic principles and run against Georgia's ambitions for EU membership.

The resolution called on the Commission and the Member States to **investigate the consequences of the democratic backsliding** that these laws represent for their donor role in Georgia and asked for all EU funding provided to the Georgian Government to be frozen until the above-mentioned undemocratic laws are repealed and for strict conditions to be placed on the disbursement of any future funding to the Georgian Government. Moreover, a thorough investigation of police brutality against peaceful protestors during the spring protests against the law on 'transparency of foreign influence' in Georgia should be carried out.

Members condemned comments by oligarch Bidzina Ivanishvili and leading figures of the government threatening to ban opposition parties and referring to the opposition as a 'criminal political force'. The resolution called on the EU and its Member States to **hold to account and impose personal sanctions** on all those responsible for undermining democracy in Georgia, including Bidzina Ivanishvili.

Parliament reiterated its **unwavering support for the Georgian people's legitimate European aspirations** and their wish to live in a prosperous country, free from corruption, that fully respects fundamental freedoms, protects human rights and guarantees an open society and independent media. It underlined that the decision to grant Georgia EU candidate country status was motivated by the wish to acknowledge the achievements and democratic efforts of Georgia's civil society, as well as the overwhelming support for EU accession among its citizens, with over 80 % of the Georgian people consistently in favour.

Members expressed concern about the fact that many recent legislative proposals adopted by the Georgian Dream majority in the Georgian Parliament betray the aspirations of the large majority of the Georgian people to live in a democratic society, continue democratic and rule of law reforms, pursue close cooperation with Euro-Atlantic partners and commit to a path towards EU membership.

Parliament recalled that the European Council of 14 and 15 December 2023 granted Georgia **candidate country status** on the understanding that the relevant steps set out in the Commission recommendation of 8 November 2023 would be taken. It stressed that recently adopted legislation clearly goes against this ambition and has effectively put on hold Georgia's integration into the EU.

Parliament strongly believes that the upcoming elections will be decisive in determining Georgia's future democratic development and geopolitical choice, as well its ability to make progress with its EU member state candidacy. It urged the Georgian authorities to ensure that the upcoming parliamentary elections in October 2024 **adhere to the highest international standards**, guaranteeing a transparent, free and fair process that reflects the democratic will of the people. It expects the Georgian Dream party to respect the will and free choice of the Georgian people in the upcoming parliamentary elections and ensure a peaceful transfer of power.