EU-Albania agreement: stabilisation and association agreement. Report on the work of the High Level Steering Group

2001/2277(COS) - 16/04/2002

The committee unanimously adopted the report by Doris PACK (EPP-ED, D) on preparations for negotiating the agreement with Albania (for which Parliament's assent would be required). The committee was convinced of the benefits of the negotiations for strengthening democracy in Albania and, while noting the efforts made by the authorities of the country, called on the Albanians and their political parties to keep up a sustained dialogue in order to restore mutual confidence between political groupings and strengthen the credibility of the country's institutions. However, the report also argued that negotiations should not be opened until a number of conditions were fulfilled: the bipartisan committee set up to look into the irregularities identified in the 2001 general elections should start work, the electoral law should be redrafted and the new version thereof implemented, and preparations for the presidential elections should go ahead, with the country's political groupings agreeing to put forward candidates who could ensure political stability. On this point, MEPs believed that a high-profile non-party consensus candidate would be best for the country. The committee stressed the numerous remaining obstacles, such as problems with the judicial system, widespread corruption, the lack of any effective opposition to organised crime, the weakness of the economy and the very low level of administrative capacity. It therefore wanted the Commission's negotiating directives to include ensuring that Albania would be able to implement any undertakings resulting from an agreement when the time came.