South-Eastern Europe: stability pact, stabilisation and association agreements

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The European Parliament adopted its resolution on the Commission's communication on the stabilisation and association process for countries of South-Eastern Europe. Parliament's rapporteur was Mr. Jan Joost LAGENDIJK (Greens/EFA, NL). The EP considers the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe as the central challenge for the EU at present, and considers that it will be decisive for the future of peace and stability in South-Eastern Europe, as well as for the Union's political credibility. It therefore calls on the EU to take over the central leading role in the Stability Pact using all the instruments, programmes and funding potential at its disposal. It calls for dovetailing with the Special Coordinator responsible for the implementation of the Pact and for the strengthening of the European pillar within the structure of the Pact to be used to reduce the number of actors on the Balkan stage and to ensure greater transparency in the use of existing structures. The Parliament stresses the need to isolate extreme nationalist groups which resist all efforts to bring about a return to democratic dialogue and the economic development wanted by moderate groups in the region. The results of the financing conference for the Stability Pact of 29/30 March 2000 and considers its implementation as a decisive test of the Pact's ability to transform political concepts into practice. The EP calls on the Commission to cofinance practical projects from all three subject areas in the context of the new Association and Reconstruction Programme for the five countries of the Western Balkans (CARA Programme), under the Phare programme and exploiting INTERREG; not only should regional economic projects be promoted, but particular attention should also be devoted to projects in the first subject area - democratisation and promotion of civil society as well as the third - regional disarmament, mine-clearance, improving police work and anti-corruption measures. Parliament calls for particular emphasis to be laid on regional cooperation and programmes for several countries and cross-border projects to remain feasible in the context of the Stability Pact. It takes the view that the sphere of responsibility of the European Agency for Reconstruction should be extended beyond Kosovo to the whole region covered by the new association process and that the Agency must be responsible for implementing the horizontal EU programmes as well as for coordination with projects devised by other international donors. Parliament considers with respect to the FRY that the selective lifting of sanctions might be a way of strengthening the Serb opposition and weakening the Milosovic regime and that a distinction should be made between sanctions on the establishment in Yugoslavia and sanctions against the people of the country, so that the latter sanctions may be gradually lifted, thus allowing democratic dialogue in Yugoslavia to be promoted. It also supports the participation of Montenegro in the political dialogue launched with the democratic forces in the FRY. The EP requests, in the interests of the whole region, the earliest possible re-establishment of conditions for ensuring the navigability of the Danube. Parliament welcomes the democratic developments in Croatia and encourages the new government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the EU can extend its aid towards the country and the negotiations for a Stabilisation and Association Agreement to commence. It calls on the Council and the Commission to ensure their active participation in the Conference on the Security and Development of the Adriatic and Ionian Seas as a valid contribution to the work of the Stability Pact. It also asks for the Republic of Moldova to be given an opportunity to participate directly in the Stability Pact. Parliament considers the combating of corruption and organised crime to be a decisive precondition for creating a civil society based on the rule of law and democracy and, in this context, requests that appropriate attention be given to recruitment, training and adequate levels of pay for police forces. It calls on the Council, the Commission and the Pact coordinator to promote a specific initiative for drawing up common agreements on police and judicial cooperation between the European Union and the countries concerned and to offer active support for the projects needed for its achievement. The importance of the independent media for the development of civil society is stressed and the draft Charter for Media Freedom in the context of the Stability pact is welcomed; the EP considers that it should also receive tangible support in the form of precisely targeted projects. Parliament calls for the teaching of tolerance and cooperation, not least in schools, and calls for

particular attention to be devoted to this when school books, curricula, etc. are being drawn up. The EP supports the formation of concrete plans aimed at contributing to the cultural and religious approach between the five countries and stresses the need for protection of the monuments and the cultural heritage treasures in the region with precise actions. The important role of internation and local NGOs in economic and social reconstruction is stressed by the Parliament, as well as the need for the greater participation of as many local NGOs as possible in the reconstruction projects, retaining on the other hand strict and efficient control over their financial procedures in order to avoid corruption. Parliament reiterated its demand for active regional aid from the EU in the context of the Stability Pact, to promote regional infrastructure projects, such as the extension of European corridors 8 and 10, cross-border energy, environment and water projects and the joint improvement of border management and customs. The Commission is called upon to ensure that there are no barriers to trade between the countries in the region, in particular between the applicant countries and the other countries. Lastly, the EP supports the efforts of the Commission to create an effective mechanism for civilian crisis management.