Romania's progress towards accession. Strategy paper and 2003 report

2003/2203(INI) - 11/03/2004 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by Baroness Emma NICHOLSON (ELDR, UK) on Romania's progress towards accession by 374 votes in favour, 10 against and 29 abstentions. Although pleased with the replacement of the Romanian justice minister and other changes in the Romanian government in a bid to intensify reforms necessary for joining the EU, the European Parliament nevertheless warned Bucharest that accession in 2007 would not be possible unless it met a number of essential conditions. Parliament said Romania will have to deal with the high level of corruption, ensure the independence and proper functioning of the judiciary, guarantee freedom of the media and stop ill-treatment at police stations. MEPs recommended that the Commission and Council "reorient (...) the accession strategy with Romania" while still aiming for accession in 2007. They reminded Romania that Parliament has to decide whether to approve Romania's accession. Parliament called on the Romanian government to adhere strictly to human rights. It said the EU should give full priority to the establishment of the rule of law. The Commission should monitor closely the implementation of EU legislation which has already been adopted by Romania, particularly in the field of justice and home affairs. This should be accompanied by clear benchmarks, regular review periods and assistance in the fight against corruption. MEPs voiced grave concern over the apparent passivity of services responsible for investigating corruption cases. They also pointed out that corruption can only be rooted out if there is a political will to do so. As regards the independence of the media, MEPs called on the Romanian government to track down those responsible for physical attacks on journalists and asked the Commission to make a study of the working conditions of journalists. The setting up of an effective child protection system that only has the interests of children at heart was seen as paramount. Parliament called for the recognition of the rights of families affected by the moratorium on adoptions. The Romanian government was urged to publish two reports by the Council of Europe on children detained by public authorities and on police stations, in prisons and in mental hospitals. MEPs also condemned child marriages, particularly among Roma, and called on the Romanian authorities to actively fight organised crime, particularly the trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation. Another problem evoked by the Parliament was the treatment of minorities. Although it supported the government in its Roma strategy, Parliament asked for regular monitoring of the results and referred to the lack of integration of Roma into society and the mostly appalling conditions in which they live. MEPs also called for steps to allow the Hungarian minority to use its own language in schools and at university and to solve the questions of property rights of churches. Lack of progress was also noted in the transposition of EU environmental legislation. MEPs specifically mentioned the planned gold-mining project in Rosia Montana and demanded an environmental impact assessment.