Resolution on the future of the Northern Dimension

2005/2638(RSP) - 16/11/2005 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the Northern Dimension by 634 votes for, 17 against 18 abstentions, stressing that the Northern Dimension must be given a higher profile in order to attain its objectives. The enlargement of the EU has changed the geopolitical map of Northern Europe and shifted the EU's geographical focus towards the north-east. Enlargement has brought with it a new emphasis on cooperation around the Baltic Sea, since all the Baltic Sea States other than Russia are members of the European Union. The principal objectives of the future Northern Dimension policy are to provide a common framework for the promotion of dialogue and cooperation, aimed at promoting stability, well-being and sustainable development in Northern Europe and the Arctic, to stimulate trade, investment and infrastructure, to exploit energy resources, to ease the flow of people and goods across borders while working closely together to combat organised crime, and to promote productive employment as well as social and cultural exchange.

Parliament felt that the previously stated policy objectives of the European Parliament concerning the Northern Dimension have only been partially attained. Its calls for greater involvement of parliamentarians and other elected representatives are still to be met by the establishment of the Northern Dimension Forum, and Northern Dimension policies continue to have a low profile and suffer from a lack of coordination between the various actors.

Parliament stated that improved coordination between the various actors involved remains a key challenge and that the Northern Dimension should receive the same attention as other regional cooperation models. It called on the Commission and the current and incoming Presidencies-in-Office to guarantee the successful continuation of the ongoing negotiations on the future of the Northern Dimension and to fully involve the European Parliament in that work. There must be improved coordination between the EU, the Arctic Council, the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the Nordic Council, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and other bodies involved in cooperation in the northern regions. The Commission should be more active in participating in their meetings.

Parliament stressed the special status of Russia as a key partner while underlining the important role of the other northern neighbours, Iceland and Norway, as well as the other Arctic partners, Canada and the United States. The Commission is asked to allocate adequate resources to the Northern Dimension policy in order to allow new future partnerships to be envisaged, inter alia in the fields of transport, logistics, energy and culture. It must seriously consider whether a separate budget line for the Northern Dimension would help to raise its profile, while being in line with the Northern Dimension's character as a framework policy for the northern region. Such a proposal must take account, and increase the transparency, of the various sources of financing, including co-financing from third parties.

The Commission is also asked to include a Baltic Sea Strategy in its forthcoming Northern Dimension proposal, in order to strengthen cooperation around the Baltic Sea, reap the full benefits of the recent enlargement of the Union and firmly link the infrastructure with the rest of the EU. This strategy would primarily deal with internal policies of the European Union, while cooperation with Russia would fall under the external policies of the EU. Parliament welcomed the fact that the agreement with Moscow on the roadmaps covering each of the Four Common Spaces provides for an updated framework for the relationship between the EU and Russia. The Northern Dimension will reflect the regional aspect of those spaces. This process needs to be carried out in real cooperation with Russia.

Finally, Parliament reminded the Commission of the forthcoming International Polar Year 2007-2008, and called on the Commission to use that opportunity to take new initiatives together with the Arctic partners, including Canada and the United States, in particular as regards the work on a 'Charter for Arctic Governance'.