

PARLIAMENT OF ROMANIA
CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES
DECISION

on the Joint Communication of the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 'Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy' (JOIN (2015) 50)

Pursuant to Articles 67 and 148 of the Romanian Constitution, republished, Law No 373/2013 on cooperation between Parliament and the Government in the area of European affairs, and Rules 160 to 185 of the Rules of Procedure of the Chamber of Deputies, republished,

the Chamber of Deputies hereby adopts this Decision.

Sole Article. Having regard to Opinion No 4 c-19/361, adopted by the Committee for European Affairs at its meeting of 31 March 2016, the Chamber of Deputies:

1. notes that developments in the region since 2004, and in particular in recent years, have shown that the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) has not always been able to provide a timely and appropriate response to rapid change and challenging circumstances;

- notes that the ENP has encountered serious difficulties in achieving its main goals of promoting peace, stability and prosperity; points out that the ENP therefore needs to be readjusted/reviewed;

2. takes the view that the ENP should be fully consistent and in line with the Global Security Strategy currently being developed; notes that the policy requires changes in substance and concepts, not just form and shades of meaning;

3. recalls that before 2008 we witnessed a soft-power, transformative EU policy that encouraged the export of values and influence, which had major effects on the enlargement and neighbourhood policies by increasing the EU's attractiveness. That European Union was extrovert and showed solidarity with its neighbours, even though its neighbourhood policy was consistently underfinanced.

After the sovereign debt crisis, the Russian Federation's withdrawal from the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in 2007 and the events in Georgia, we witnessed a kind of implosion whereby the EU turned in upon itself and its own problems. As a result, people in neighbouring countries looked instead to their own salvation and found the Union less appealing;

4. notes that, while NATO switched its focus from peacekeeping to crisis management two years ago, the EU has been sticking, out of inertia, to its peace-focused leadership, apt to favour solutions agreed by society at large, implemented through lengthy and meticulous processes, and manifestly inadequate at a time of overlapping and interdependent major crises with considerable public impact;

- takes the view that a crisis leadership is needed that can reassure European citizens by tackling big themes and managing crises effectively and in a timely manner;

- stresses that deterrence is much less expensive than actual war, whether military or civilian, or even than the cyberwar or informational war that Europe and the countries on its Eastern borders are already waging;

- takes the view that the actual investment in the neighbourhood and in Europe itself should be made along these lines, should be credible, and should inspire trust among Member States,

particularly those on the Eastern border, and among the countries covered by the neighbourhood policy;

5. notes with great concern the gravity and exceptional character of the crises in the proximity of the EU's external borders, both to the east and to the south, which have resulted in the death of hundreds of thousands of people in wars, shipwrecks and terrorist attacks, and considers that the risk of further loss of lives is very high;

6. believes that the EU cannot be blamed for this situation and points out that, on the contrary, the Union has managed to mitigate conflicts and save lives. A global actor of the highest calibre and a peacemaker and negotiator of the highest quality and moral stature, the EU cannot and must not respond to violence in a primitive way, but needs to reinforce its rapid reaction and response capacity, including on a military level, to discourage those criminal groups and states that have elevated barbarism to the status of a political strategy for an indefinite period.

At the same time, the EU should organise awareness-raising campaigns commensurate with its ambitions as a global actor. Such campaigns should counteract the propaganda of the destabilising forces in the south and east and present the benefits of an association with the EU;

- considers that an example of poor communication can be found in the very text presented by the Commission: 'Poverty, inequality, a perceived sense of injustice, corruption, weak economic and social development and lack of opportunity, particularly for young people, can be roots of instability, increasing vulnerability to radicalisation'; calls on the Commission and the High Representative to qualify such statements, as the terrible killings committed by terrorists cannot be relativised by economic and social justifications, just as they cannot even be explained;

7. notes that, ever since it was launched twelve years ago, the ENP has been a tool intended to help partners converge towards European values and prosperity, and that this policy was not developed to operate in such extreme circumstances;

8. recalls that, in all its opinions and analyses, the Romanian Parliament has maintained that the right to life ranks first in the hierarchy of human rights and that all EU policies and measures should consider the right to life as their main priority; stresses that it continues to hold this view;

9. notes that the current review of the ENP is the most comprehensive reform of this policy since its inception and that the review has reduced the EU's transformative ambition, has introduced provisions on adjusting the policy's concepts to the neighbourhood's realities, and has marked a move away from the enlargement approach to a more pragmatic one;

10. still believes that the EU must continue to offer associated countries in eastern Europe prospects for accession, especially as this cannot be achieved through bilateral relations between EU Member States and partner countries; such prospects might encourage associated countries to continue along the European path and might increase the EU's attractiveness;

11. regrets, however, that the emphasis placed by some Member States on the neighbourhood policy is offset by the lack of support for any membership prospects for eastern partner states that are making progress in moving closer to the EU;

12. is in favour of the EU's commitment to support neighbouring partners that have concluded association and free trade agreements, and welcomes the intention to further promote an enhanced, differentiated commitment of the EU to the Eastern Partnership countries progressing on the path of democratic reform; points out, however, that following the annexation of Crimea, the Eastern Partnership is no longer able to provide solutions to large-scale problems, but only to specific problems;

13. takes the view that the ENP reform should ensure that there is an integrated and

comprehensive approach to all EU policies and actions in the neighbourhood, especially as regards cohesion policy and its cross-border cooperation component, development cooperation policy, enlargement policy, the Black Sea Synergy Initiative as a regional cooperation initiative and dialogue forum, and the Danube Strategy;

14. takes the view that EU support for Eastern partners that have concluded association agreements obliges them to carry out the reforms to which they have committed themselves, irrespective of how the social environment changes as a result of external interventions that pile on all kinds of pressure and enjoy excessive financing; takes the view that the resources committed by the Russian Federation to destabilise Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia should be addressed with appropriate support measures and mechanisms and in a key that is specific to the European Union's standards and values;

15. welcomes the ratification of the Association Agreement of the European Union with the Republic of Moldova and the recommendations made by the Council to Moldova on 15 February 2016, encouraging the country to speed up reform, especially in terms of de-politicising state institutions, combating systemic corruption, ensuring independence of the judicial system and law-enforcement authorities, resolving fraud cases that affected the country's banking system in 2014, and recovering misappropriated funds; encourages pro-EU politicians in Chisinau to make the Republic of Moldova – through unity, general-interest options and morality – a 'success story' of the neighbourhood policy once again;

16. welcomes the entry into force on 1 January 2016 of the Association and Free Trade Agreement between the European Union and Ukraine, and hopes that the Dutch referendum scheduled for 6 April 2016 will not affect the ratification process; deplores the political instability in Ukraine, compounded by the lack of unity within the Government, the cyber attacks, the debt created by the default in respect of the Russian Federation, and, in particular, the slow pace of reform;

17. welcomes the progress recorded in the Commission's latest reports of December 2015, which state that Georgia and Ukraine currently meet the requirements set out in the visa liberalisation action plans; expresses the hope that both the Council and the Member States will approve visa-free travel for the two countries as soon as possible;

18. shares the opinion of the Report of the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs on [the] Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy (2015/2002(INI)) that the EU should develop effective mechanisms of support for performing partner countries affected by repressive measures, trade coercion or outright military aggression from third countries;

19. takes the view that the Republic of Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine, as associated countries, should be the beneficiaries of the major part of the ENP, which should include clear prospects for European integration, transforming the ENP into a future enlargement policy;

20. notes that Romania is one of the Member States that most actively advocate placing the ENP high on the European Union's agenda;

21. takes the view that Romania can offer the Republic of Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine guidance and support in implementing their association agreements, thereby promoting the interests of the European Union in the East. More specifically, the EU is able to offer expertise in the energy, administration, governance, justice, banking and economic fields, in particular;

22. recalls that the ENP and the Eastern Partnership will be calibrated according to the European Security Strategy to be adopted by the European Council this summer;

23. supports the proposals to develop the security component and deepen cooperation with

partner countries on issues relating to the reform of the security sector, conflict prevention, the annihilation of terrorist, organised crime and human trafficking networks, and counteracting extremism/radicalism in those countries;

- notes, however, that the new focus on security and migration is likely to increase existing coherence challenges, as an effective contribution to the ENP in those fields will require intense coordination with representatives of the European Commission, the European External Action Service (EEAS), Member States, EU agencies and relevant international organisations;

24. supports the need for a strategic approach to the ENP, which should strike a balance between its Mediterranean and Eastern components, but notes that it should be applied distinctively, based on the principles of differentiation and responsibility, taking into account in a more specific manner each partner's aspirations, political will and actual progress, particularly as regards the need to guarantee the rule of law and the independence and effectiveness of its judicial systems;

25. notes the departure from the 'more for more' approach in the ENP owing to the impossibility of making up for the lack of political will; doubts that it will be possible to identify 'more effective ways to make its case for fundamental reforms with partners' in such cases;

26. notes that the new ENP format is neither an overhaul of the old ENP, nor a strategic vision of the European Union's relations with its neighbours;

- notes that in its effort to strike a more pragmatic tone, the new ENP should focus more on significant realities, such as how the EU should relate to the neighbours of its neighbours; given the uncertainty over the redefinition of relations with, for instance, Russia, it is uncertain whether the High Representative will be able to make the necessary amendments to the EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy, which she is expected to submit to the European Council in June 2016;

- is concerned that, instead of promoting the European model, the reviewed ENP appears to be moving more towards the traditional foreign policy model, which only involves bilateral political and economic cooperation with third countries;

27. is doubtful that the new approach is more realistic, as lowering the EU's ambitions might result in a departure from its own values and principles. This might lead to the conclusion that achieving 'more effective partnerships' is tantamount to denying the values and principles underpinning the Union;

28. notes that, in the reviewed ENP, the partnership's priorities could be the lowest common denominator between the EU and its partner countries: the latter might opt for a customised neighbourhood policy, avoiding the ENP's sensitive issues such as frozen conflicts, democracy and human rights;

29. notes that, to simplify ENP methodology, annual progress reports should be replaced with a new assessment model that should focus on achieving jointly agreed objectives, and that country reports will concentrate on jointly agreed objectives, while issues related to European values will be evaluated regularly in separate reports; draws attention to the risk that, in the absence of clear conditionality, some partner countries might reduce compliance with EU standards to unacceptable levels;

30. advocates strengthening mobility partnerships within the neighbourhood, including circular migration, which would open safe and legal routes for migrants, provided however that the authorities of partner states experiencing radicalisation show genuine commitment to the fight against terrorism;

31. welcomes the idea of establishing forms of dialogue and cooperation with the neighbours of our neighbours through thematic frameworks, as these prioritise dialogue and cooperation in various areas of cross-cutting interest; notes that the key topics identified respond to the current challenges in the neighbourhood, such as migration, energy, security, etc.; considers it useful that these ad-hoc discussion formats will bring together stakeholders from the southern and eastern neighbourhood, the EU, ENP countries and regional partners, international financial institutions, international organisations and other donors;

- wonders, however, about the degree of institutionalisation of these frameworks and the relationship between the new frameworks and existing cooperation platforms, such as those on energy within the Union for the Mediterranean and within the Eastern Partnership or the Rabat and Khartoum processes on migration;

- points out that establishing parallel organic forms of regional cooperation that go beyond the Eastern Partnership and the Union for the Mediterranean frameworks weakens the importance of the old model of the static formations of countries grouped together under the two platforms, so that it is unclear whether the new frameworks will supplement or shut down the old regional cooperation platforms;

32. regrets that, while the Communication is intended to achieve a clearer focus on crisis prevention and management, it does not provide for a platform for decisive political, humanitarian and security-related intervention; notes that there are limits to how much European action within the ENP can be adapted to current realities; notes that the absence of such a platform can be offset by synergies with other policies, but notes that when the majority, and the most serious, of those realities have to be covered by other policies, the usefulness of the ENP itself is called into question;

33. notes that in order to build a more strategic ENP that can strike the necessary balance between its values and interests, the EU should:

- support variable geometry, by providing substantial financial and political incentives to performing partner States and maintaining a simplified framework with less ambitious partners;

- connect the political agendas effectively by strengthening strategic and financial links between the ENP, common foreign and security policy, and migration policy;

- keep Member States engaged by presenting a policy roadmap with concrete proposals for thematic frameworks complementing the ENP's multilateral frameworks;

34. notes that, as the main priority of the ENP for the next three to five years is to stabilise partner states, the EU needs, in order to achieve this goal, to take a firm position and make use of its diplomatic means and political resources, while Member States must refrain from blocking majority decisions;

35. notes that stabilisation includes economic stabilisation and that the resources available to the EU until 2020 for action in its capacity as a 'global actor' account for only 6 % of the total budget under the multi-annual financial framework and cover all related programmes, including development cooperation assistance, which means that massive economic support measures will not be possible and that partner states will have to build their development strategies using their own resources;

- believes, in this context, that statement such as 'the [neighbourhood] policy should help make partner countries places where people want to build their future' will be very difficult to turn into a reality without substantial fund allocation;

- notes that the development cooperation policy, under which the EU has invested hundreds of

billions of euros in the neighbouring countries over the years, has failed to produce the expected outcome. Therefore, the framework for fund allocation should be reviewed so that countries that use such funds improperly are no longer financed;

- calls for an integrated use of the budgets allocated to these policies, under EEAS coordination, and suggests that thresholds and priority lists should be used in line with the objectives of the EU in the regions concerned;

36. welcomes the idea of a common framework for developing relations with the eastern and southern neighbourhoods, but is against the idea that the reviewed ENP should continue to be a single framework for EU relations with the ENP as a whole, given that, faced with the resistance of a regional power that is very much involved both in the east and in the south, it is uncertain that the new ENP will be able to achieve its major goals. Other instruments and regional cooperation platforms should remain active in case the ENP fails, such as the Black Sea Synergy, whose objectives are complementary to those of the ENP;

37. takes the view that a quantitative approach to determine the intensity of EU action and allocated resources, possibly depending on the number of victims or the number of inhabitants, would disadvantage partner countries in the east, which are the closest to European values and which can reach the EU standards of the rule of law and good governance the fastest; - believes that securing the Union's eastern flank of the EU might be the key to success in the south; therefore rejects the proposed method for allocation based on a 'two-thirds for the south, one-third for the east' algorithm, as this would break a basic principle of the neighbourhood policy, i.e., adapting allocations according to the success of reforms and the human rights situation;

- believes that the EU cannot make compromises in terms of its values and must avoid creating double standards with respect to the neighbouring countries; takes the view that the future ENP should provide a regional integrating platform for debating human rights issues in line with its basic principles;

38. welcomes the consistent, firm and solidarity-based position of the European Parliament on the sanctions imposed on the Russian Federation and the assessment of the European Union's relations with the Russian Federation based on the full application of the Minsk agreements;

- takes the view that the position of some Member States on the revision of sanctions blatantly contradicts the commitments made to the European Union by those Member States;

39. notes that, through its aggressive behaviour in recent years, the Russian Federation has acquired a de facto veto on EU action, which means that certain processes will only be possible with the approval of the Russian Federation;

- notes that, through a combination of military means, a policy of force and subversive action, the Russian Federation is in control of the situation in Syria and eastern Ukraine and is trying to destabilise partners in the Union's neighbourhood and the Union itself; in this context, calls on the Commission and the High Representative to publish a report on the European Union's foreign policy objectives, including those of the ENP, that cannot be achieved owing to the Russian Federation's policy; this report should propose solutions to each of the hostile actions in question.

This Decision was adopted by the Chamber of Deputies at its sitting of 13 April 2016, in compliance with Article 76(2) of the Romanian Constitution, republished.

President of the Chamber of Deputies

Valeriu Ștefan Zgonea

Bucharest, 13 April 2016

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