

Thursday 17 February 2000

10. Stabilisation and association agreement with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

A5-0031/2000

European Parliament resolution on the Commission recommendation for a Council Decision authorising the Commission to negotiate a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (SEC(1999) 1279 – C5-0166/1999 – 1999/2121(COS))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission recommendation (SEC(1999) 1279 – C5-0166/1999),
 - having regard to the report by the Commission on the feasibility of negotiating a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (COM(1999) 300 – C5-0118/1999),
 - having regard to Rule 47(1) of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy and the opinions of the Committee on Industry, External Trade, Research and Energy and the Committee on Legal Affairs and the Internal Market (A5-0031/2000),
- A. whereas the Commission is proposing to place relations between the EU and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on an entirely new contractual basis and to afford that country the prospect of full integration in the structures of the EU,
- B. whereas this is the first specific implementation of the concept of a stabilisation and association process for the countries of South-Eastern Europe through which the EU seeks to make its contribution to the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe,
- C. whereas in its feasibility report of 16 June 1999 (COM(1999) 235) the Commission concludes that in the light of the political and economic reforms that have already been implemented under the cooperation agreement, and provided there are transitional periods in certain areas, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia could satisfy the conditions for a stabilisation and association agreement,
- D. Pointing out the constructive and responsible conduct of Macedonia during the war that ravaged the countries of former Yugoslavia and stressing that its delayed approach march to the EU was due to problems with a Member State rather than to any lack of will to join the Union,
- E. acknowledging the stabilising role which the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has played in the region during the Yugoslav wars, in particular with regard to integrating the Albanian minority into the political and social life of the country and the willingness to engage in regional cooperation,
- F. Underlining the important role that the Albanian minority could play in this country and the positive repercussions that this model of coexistence could have in the neighbouring countries, with regard in particular to Albania and Kosovo,
- G. Whereas the development and consolidation of a strong interethnic civil society is a key factor that could contribute to the internal stabilisation of this country,

Thursday 17 February 2000

- H. having regard to the economic disadvantages under which the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has been suffering for many years as a result of the sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia,
- I. Whereas regional cooperation concerning FYROM can only develop positively if the population and the economy of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia are included in this cooperation and whereas therefore the existing sanctions against this country have to be concentrated on its regime and the negative impact of these sanctions on the people and the economy should be reduced,
- J. acknowledging the role in support of peace which the country played during the Kosovo crisis by accepting the stationing of NATO troops and an influx of refugees from Kosovo,
- K. acknowledging the evident willingness of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to engage in regional cooperation as demonstrated by its bilateral agreements with Slovenia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Bulgaria and through active participation in the Stability Pact with multilateral project proposals jointly with Greece, Bulgaria and Albania,
- L. supporting the fundamental approach that the principle of 'integration instead of disintegration' should apply to the future political and economic shape of South-Eastern Europe, and therefore that further development of the Regional Approach which the EC took in 1996 towards five countries in the region (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, FYROM and Albania) is not only a key feature of the regional concept of the Stability Pact but also reflects the overall philosophy of EU integration,
- M. whereas, however, given the major differences in the pace and variety of development in the individual countries of the region, in the first instance the principle should be that no country should be hindered in its efforts to draw closer to the EU by the behaviour of other countries,
- N. whereas the recent problems which occurred during the presidential elections show that improvements have still to be made in the field of democracy, political participation and transparency,
1. Welcomes the negotiating mandate for a stabilisation and association agreement with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and calls for a speedy start to negotiations;
 2. Recommends that the Stabilisation and Association Agreement should take the form of a joint agreement based on Article 310 of the EC Treaty;
 3. Recommends, in view of the fact that the question of the legal personality of the EU has not yet been clarified, that the use of Articles 24 and 38 of the EU Treaty be ruled out as a legal basis for the Stabilisation and Association Agreement in conjunction with any other provision of the Treaty establishing the European Communities;
 4. Regards the opening of stabilisation and association negotiations with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as an important contribution to the political consolidation and economic development of the country, as an important signal for stability and as an important contribution to the establishment of a just international order in the region;
 5. Stresses the exemplary character which the agreement with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has for the other countries of the region and supports the agreement's approach towards regional cooperation;
 6. Is opposed, however, to the creation of a multilateral cooperation structure as the prerequisite for the conclusion of a bilateral stabilisation and association agreement or as an additional accession criterion over and above the Copenhagen criteria, as referred to by the Commission in the general document on the progress report on enlargement;

Thursday 17 February 2000

7. Stresses that in view of the unequal development and specific features of the countries in question (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, FYROM and Albania) each country needs to be considered on its own merits and no country must become the hostage of its neighbours where the process of approximation to EU structures is concerned;
8. Takes the view that the Regional Approach proposed by the EU for the countries of South-Eastern Europe should become a commitment on both sides and that there should not be a one-way street towards satisfying the *acquis* by the countries in question, but that the EU itself should provide material support through specific regional aid measures; this mutual obligation should therefore be expressed in the stabilisation and association agreement;
9. Advocates therefore active EU regional aid under the Stability Pact to support, for example, regional infrastructure projects such as the expansion of European corridors eight and ten, cross-border energy, environment and water projects, joint improvement of the management of borders and customs or joint multilateral police training;
10. Takes the view that the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia should participate, as an equal partner, in the process of rebuilding Kosovo;
11. Is opposed to separating the countries of South-Eastern Europe, even in a symbolic way, from the general enlargement process;
12. Takes the view that a future stabilisation and association agreement should contain an evolutionary clause opening up the prospect of EU membership for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia;
13. Suggests that the parallel enlargement that the countries in the region are offered through a step-by-step integration into EU structures should include institutional arrangements, such as the possibility for countries to send junior lawyers and civil servants to the European Court of Justice and to the European Commission;
14. Advocates continuation of the multi-beneficiary, cross-border programmes under PHARE beyond the year 2000 so that the process of regional cooperation can actually be implemented;
15. Takes the view that the stabilisation and association process should also receive appropriate financial support from the EU in the form of appropriate aid programmes, and therefore proposes for the five countries of the Western Balkans a uniform stabilisation and partnership programme which would retain the name 'PHARE' (PHARE-SAP: Stabilisation and Association Programme, or PHARE South-Eastern);
16. Insists that the aid and assistance the world gives to the region must have as its overriding priority to benefit the recipients, and therefore that the aid given must not be dependent on reciprocal orders from the donor country;
17. Takes the view that the stabilisation and association programme should ensure that contacts and cooperation with associated countries can continue and be further developed;
18. Takes the view that the continuity of cross-border cooperation projects and multi-country programmes must be duly ensured;
19. Proposes to include FYROM in a number of cultural and educational programmes — for example, Leonardo, Socrates, Youth for Europe;
20. Regards the development of civil society and assistance to democracy and media projects as an area requiring strong attention;

Thursday 17 February 2000

21. Takes the view that implementation of the stabilisation and association agreement should be accompanied by a White Paper to serve as a precise guide for the country in its efforts to approximate to the *acquis communautaire* and to assess progress in implementation not merely after a period of five years in a Commission report, but continuously on a biennial basis;
 22. Takes the view that implementation of the programmes should be decentralised and shifted from Brussels to Skopje, with due attention being paid to enhanced coordination between programming, management, implementation and follow-up, with as short-term priorities improving the civil service, customs and frontier management and promoting small and medium-sized enterprises;
 23. Is of the opinion that in order to enhance and strengthen coexistence a specific programme should be directed to the development of interethnic initiatives and projects both in civil society and the economic field;
 24. Repeats its call for the Commission representation in Skopje to be upgraded to delegation status;
 25. Hopes that the dialogue now being conducted between Greece and the FYROM within the UN will result as soon as possible in a name which is acceptable to both sides;
 26. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission and the Council.
-

(¹) OJ L 184, 17.7.1999, p. 23.

(²) OJ C 279, 1.10.1999, p. 404.

