

EU/Euratom/Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement

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The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted the own-initiative report by László TKÉS (EPP, HU) containing a motion for a non-legislative resolution on the draft Council decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the Union, of the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Armenia, of the other part.

The current framework for relations between Armenia and the European Union is the 1996 Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, which entered into force in 1999 and is to be replaced by the proposed Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement.

The proposed new agreement sets a new legal basis to reinvigorate the political dialogue and broaden the scope of economic cooperation, as well as cooperation in sectors such as energy, transport, infrastructure and the environment.

Core values and conflict resolution: Members warmly welcomed the signature of the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement, which constitutes a significant step forward in EU-Armenian relations and embodies a commitment to a further deepening of political and economic relations. However, there remain concerns about Armenia's full respect for some of the EU's core values, notably as regards democracy and the rule of law, which are being undermined by corruption, vote-buying, organised crime and abusive oligarchic control. Significant progress in these areas is key to unlocking further prospects for cooperation.

In this respect, Members look forward to the EU considering, in due course, the opening of visa liberalisation dialogue with Armenia, provided that the conditions for well-managed and secure mobility are in place, including the effective implementation of visa facilitation and readmission agreements between the parties.

Financial support: the Commission is called on to follow through on the conditionality of the EU's financial assistance by systematically linking EU support – including through the European Neighbourhood Instrument, macrofinancial assistance and other instruments – to the effective implementation of reforms, progress in which should be the subject of thorough monitoring.

Nagorno-Karabakh conflict: both sides are urged to increase, in good faith, the pace and output of their negotiations following the 2018 elections in both countries, in order to make history by ending a conflict which cannot be solved militarily yet has claimed too many lives, especially of civilians, and which has not only prevented the establishment of peace and stability, but also hampered socio-economic development in the region for almost three decades.

Members supported all initiatives conducive to peace and to developing good neighbourly relations, including high-level talks and a ceasefire monitoring mechanism. They called on the EEAS and the Commission to **increase EU support** for programmes to enable increased contacts between Armenian and Azerbaijani NGOs and youth organisations, while ensuring that EU Member States avoid indirect exports of dual-use goods and technology to parties to the conflict.

Political reform: the report called on both Armenia and the EU to attach a high priority to domestic reforms so as to ensure in particular a smooth transition from a presidential to a parliamentary system and the non-politicisation of state institutions. It encouraged the Armenian government to ensure that major reforms – such as those related to the structure and activities of the government or to the criminal code – are subject to greater **transparency** and to an inclusive dialogue with the opposition and civil society, in the interests of Armenian society at large.

Members emphasised the need to ensure a level playing field for the opposition and an environment in which civil society, including media representatives and human rights defenders can operate **free from fear of reprisals**.

The Armenian authorities are urged to swiftly and fully implement all the recommendations of the international observation missions led by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) in particular in relation to allegations of vote-buying, voter intimidation, pressuring of civil servants and private-sector employees, and undue interference in the voting process by party representatives or law enforcement officers resulting in failure to improve public confidence in the country's electoral system.

Trade and economic cooperation: Members welcomed the deepening of trade and economic relations between the EU and Armenia and the fact that the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement in some instances goes beyond WTO commitments in terms of transparency and market access for EU products and operators, in areas such as trade in services, intellectual property rights and public procurement. They encouraged Armenia to engage in a trustful trade relationship with the EU, in line with its commitments taken on with WTO accession.

Members regretted that the Agreement cannot include the removal of tariff barriers because of Armenia's membership of the Eurasian Economic Union. However, they stressed that it does not prevent the EU to be the main Armenia's trading partner and first donor, thus demonstrating that the EU does not hold as a prerequisite for partner to choose deeper relations with the EU at the expense of their relations with third parties.

Communication: the EU and the Armenian authorities are called on to step up their communication efforts regarding the aims and objectives of this new agreement, in order to further improve public awareness, both in Armenia and in the EU, of the expected opportunities and benefits that would arise from its conclusion.