

Annual implementing report on the EU association agreement with Ukraine

2019/2202(INI) - 17/11/2020 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted the own-initiative report by Michael GAHLER (DE, EPP) on the implementation of the EU Association Agreement with Ukraine.

The Association Agreement/Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (AA/DCFTA) reflects the shared ambition of the EU and Ukraine to move towards political association and economic integration, which can serve as a blueprint for reform.

The EU's assistance to Ukraine is subject to strict conditionality and reiterated the need for Ukraine to show a renewed commitment to reform and adherence to the EU's principles.

The report noted that while Ukraine has made substantial advancements in its implementation of AA-related commitments and integration with the EU, several of the reforms initiated need to be completed, in particular in the areas of the rule of law, good governance and anti-corruption, as, despite notable progress, widespread corruption continues to hamper Ukraine's reform process. Moreover, the report noted that some additional measures still need to be adopted to avoid any backsliding, with a focus on the judiciary.

Reforms and institutional framework

The report stressed the importance of pro-democratic reforms and trust in institutions as the most efficient security mechanisms. Members called on the Commission to use the mechanisms in place to facilitate and support Ukraine's implementation of reforms. They recommended focusing on a limited number of priorities on which to concentrate political efforts, financial support and technical assistance with a view to effectively building up the institutional capacity required to secure the long-term success of reforms, not only in legislation, but also in practice. They also supported strengthening EU-Ukraine sectoral cooperation in priority areas, such as the digital economy, energy, climate change and trade and welcomed Ukraine's ambitions to approximate to the EU's digital single market and European Green Deal policies by implementing the relevant acquis.

Cooperation in the field of the common foreign and security policy (CFSP)

Members called on the EU and Ukraine to boost cooperation in security and defence and devote particular attention to the conflict in eastern Ukraine and Russia's attempts to subvert Ukraine's territorial integrity, by means of reconciliation, cooperation in the sphere of cyber security and the fight against disinformation. They welcomed the enhanced cooperation between the Ukrainian authorities and the European public and private sector to combat hybrid threats, primarily from Russia, which aim to, *inter alia*, spread false information, incite violence and push anti-government and anti-European sentiments.

While continuing to condemn the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol and the de facto occupation of certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk, Members called on Russia to fulfil its international obligations, to withdraw its military forces from the territory of Ukraine and to fully implement the resolutions of the UN General Assembly on the territorial integrity of Ukraine and on Crimea and Sevastopol.

They strongly condemned Russia's destabilising actions and military involvement in Ukraine.

The Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) were called on to enhance their efforts in peaceful conflict resolution, by supporting the efforts of all sides in the peace process, as well as increasing confidence-building measures and backing a mandate for deploying a UN peacekeeping mission throughout the occupied territory of Ukraine.

Human rights and fundamental freedoms

The committee strongly condemned the large-scale and permanent violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms such as freedom of expression, religion or belief and association, as well as the right to peaceful assembly, perpetrated by the Russian occupying forces in the temporarily occupied territory of Crimea and by the so-called separatist forces in the non-government-controlled areas of Donbas, including forced conscription, deportation, passportisation, restrictions on education rights, arbitrary detention, torture and other harsh detention conditions, as well as restrictive measures such as the unilateral closure of checkpoints and denied access to UN and humanitarian missions, which are particularly worrying during the current pandemic.

Institutional provisions

Members welcomed the outcome of the EU-Ukraine summit of 6 October 2020 and the clear declarations of both sides of their continued commitment to strengthening the political association and economic integration of Ukraine with the European Union. They called for all EU institutions, Member States and the Ukrainian authorities to build campaigns to better inform citizens about the opportunities stemming from the Eastern Partnership initiative and AA/DCFTA implementation, raising awareness about the benefits of closer association and linking them to the positive developments on labour markets in Ukraine and the other associated countries.

The Ukrainian central and local governments are invited to foster close cooperation with civil society, including by providing increased financial support for its activities. In this regard, Members welcomed the ‘Civil Society Facility’ programme comprising EUR 20 million, which will support the strengthening of civil society organisations’ capacity to participate in decision making and public life.