

Thursday 20 November 2003

P5_TA(2003)0521

The Northern dimension

European Parliament resolution on the Northern dimension

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Second Northern Dimension Action Plan 2004-2006 as endorsed by the European Council held in Brussels on 16/17 October 2003,
 - having regard to its resolution of 16 January 2003 on the Northern Dimension — New Action Plan 2004-2006 ⁽¹⁾,
 - having regard to the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament of 11 March 2003 on Wider Europe — Neighbourhood: A Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours (COM(2003) 104),
 - having regard to Rule 37(4) of the Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas, since its creation in 1999, the Northern Dimension has shown great potential but has not yet reached the desired level in developing the northern areas of our continent and the Arctic,
- B. whereas in March 2003 the Commission published its first outline for the Wider Europe — Neighbourhood policy, and the European Council conclusions of 16 June 2003 now serve as the basis for the Commission's further work; whereas this policy places a new emphasis on relations with current and future neighbours of the enlarged Union, and the Northern Dimension forms an integral part of this,
- C. whereas the principal objective of the future Northern Dimension policy is to address the opportunities and challenges posed by enlargement, which extends the EU border with Russia and makes Belarus and Ukraine new neighbouring countries to the EU, and whereas several of the Northern Dimension partner countries will become members of the EU, thus increasing the importance of the internal aspects of the Northern Dimension,
- D. whereas the new border regions have great human and economic potential and it is therefore important to step up efforts to stimulate sustainable development and economic growth, to facilitate the movement of people and goods across borders while working closely together to combat organised crime, to reduce poverty and social disparities, to improve public health and social wellbeing and to promote productive employment as well as social and cultural exchange, the overall aim being the strengthening of democracy and stability in the area,
- E. whereas maritime safety remains an important issue, especially as regards the Baltic Sea, where oil transport by tanker is increasing rapidly; whereas the Baltic Sea is already heavily polluted and its position as an inland sea makes it especially vulnerable,
- F. whereas in the Northern and Arctic regions the effects of global climate change could be dramatic,
- G. whereas the scope of the Northern Dimension covers much more than north-western Russia, extending also to the entire Arctic region and the Baltic basin,

⁽¹⁾ P5_TA(2003)0020.

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- H. whereas increased interaction at all levels between Russia and the EU in the context of the Northern Dimension is essential to achieve these overall objectives and will act as a catalyst for Russia's closer ties with the EU,
- I. whereas, at its meeting in Luxembourg on 9 April 2001, the General Affairs and External Relations Council decided to set up a Northern Dimension Forum, and whereas this decision still remains to be implemented,
1. Welcomes the Second Action Plan for the Northern Dimension as an important part of the development of the Northern Dimension policies and an important contribution to the region concerned;
 2. Emphasises in this regard the key purpose of the present Action Plan, which is to provide a clear operational framework for all Northern Dimension stakeholders, setting out strategic objectives and priorities;
 3. Underlines that the forthcoming accession of the 10 new Member States will further increase the importance of the Northern Dimension, as will the further development and implementation of the Union's Wider Europe – New Neighbourhood policy; considers that the New Neighbourhood policy and the New Neighbourhood Instrument must be implemented in relations with all EU neighbours, thus enhancing the financing of Northern Dimension policies;
 4. Supports the present Action Plan's specific activities, taking into account all major points made by the European Parliament in its previous resolutions and covering six broad priority sectors:
 - the economy, business and up-to-date infrastructure,
 - human resources, education, scientific research and health and social questions,
 - energy cooperation,
 - the environment, nuclear safety and natural resources,
 - cross-border cooperation and regional development,
 - justice and home affairs,as well as paying special attention to regions with specific needs such as Kaliningrad and the Arctic region;
 5. Welcomes the environmental aspects presented in the Action Plans, in particular concerning maritime safety in the Baltic Sea, the decision to propose the designation of the Baltic Sea as a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area within the International Maritime Organisation and the overall emphasis on sustainable development and sustainable use of natural resources; supports, in particular, the goal of enhanced monitoring of pollutants and more effective waste water management;
 6. Expresses its concern at the tendency to over-emphasise the exploitation of fossil fuels and neglect the significant role which renewable sources of energy could play in the region;
 7. Welcomes, in particular, the approach adopted in the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership, including the NDEP support fund; welcomes, therefore, the establishment of the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being in Oslo on 27 October 2003;
 8. Welcomes the signature on 21 May 2003 of the Multilateral Nuclear Environmental Programme (MNEPR) as a major step towards greater transparency, efficiency and speed in internationally financed nuclear clean-up and dismantlement programmes in Russia; encourages Russia to ratify this agreement without delay; stresses the importance of environmental impact and risk assessment in the implementation of projects;

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9. Regrets the lack of coordination between the existing international environmental, nuclear safety and non-proliferation programmes; calls on the European Union to take an initiative to examine the establishment of an International Environmental and Non-Proliferation Oversight Agency for the purposes of coordination of efforts to help Russia to tackle the serious environmental problems caused by radioactive waste;
 10. Welcomes the emphasis on increased cooperation in the field of Justice and Home Affairs, in particular with reference to the fight against organised crime, trafficking in human beings, cooperation in border management and civil protection;
 11. Welcomes the attention paid to the question of trafficking in women and gives its support to the idea presented in the Action Plan of projects aimed at improving the situation of victims and potential victims and at discouraging demand for sexual services from women and children;
 12. Recognises the special role north-western Russia has in the Northern Dimension policies, but points out that both the development of the Arctic Window and the need for increased political and scientific cooperation with Canada and the United States remain unaddressed in the Action Plan;
 13. Calls for 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 Arctic and regional matters on the one hand, and a clear division of responsibilities among all relevant public bodies in the EU on the other;
 14. Regrets the lack of concrete proposals explicitly targeted to benefit the indigenous peoples in the area, with regard in particular to the Sami, whose political representation should be increased;
 15. Believes that stronger links between the Northern Dimension policies and the EU budget are necessary, and calls for adequate funding of the former;
 16. Is concerned at the implementation difficulties affecting the TACIS cross-border cooperation budget line; stresses the need to improve the regulatory and budgetary framework for implementation of the TACIS cross-border programme along the lines suggested for the New Neighbourhood Instrument and will closely examine proposals to extend lending facilities for the TACIS countries; also stresses the importance of cooperation between Interreg and TACIS operations, and expects that some pilot projects could be carried out in parts of the border region even before the launch of the New Neighbourhood Instrument;
 17. Calls on all parties to work actively to connect the EU and Russian energy, transport and information networks, which will require greater involvement of the European Investment Bank; calls on the Council to establish a broader mandate for the EIB as soon as possible so as to enable it to become even more involved in Russia;
 18. Underlines the importance of including projects with a northern dimension in the TEN package proposed by the Commission; recalls that in developing the transport infrastructure in the Northern Dimension region, special attention must be paid to the environmental sustainability of proposed solutions by giving rail and sea transport priority;
 19. Calls for further involvement of elected representatives at all levels in the implementation and evaluation of the Action Plan; regrets that this democratic dimension is missing;
 20. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments of the Member States, the 10 new Member States, Russia, Belarus, Canada and the USA.
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