



No EU cash for undemocratic neighbours

Plenary sessions

Emergency financial assistance from the EU for cash-strapped neighbours must depend on respect for human rights and democracy, said Parliament on Thursday. MEPs also oppose plans to cut Parliament out of future decisions on granting this aid.

Metin Kazak (ALDE, BG), author of Parliament's position on the proposed new macro-financial assistance regulation, said in the debate: "Too often in the past this assistance has been granted with little concern for EU values, as with the assistance granted to Ukraine in 2002 and Tajikistan in 2000".

"My report is clear, only those countries with a strong commitment to the strengthening of democratic institutions, human rights, transparency and the fight against corruption should receive emergency loans and grants from the EU", said Mr Kazak.

Tougher conditions and scrutiny by Parliament

Parliament hopes that the regulation will be amended to ensure that countries close to the EU, in practice chiefly in the Balkans and the Eastern Neighbourhood, will be obliged to meet stricter conditions in order to get cash injections. They must commit to using the money they receive for measures such as fighting forced child labour or poverty or corruption.

MEPs also slam the Commission's plans to cut Parliament out of the decision-making process. They stress that they must continue to have a say in each individual decision on micro-financial assistance, in order to retain democratic oversight, as well as ensuring that the countries get their money promptly and efficiently.

Stricter monitoring

Parliament is concerned that the EU has given money to neighbouring countries in the past without carrying out adequate checks. It wants the European External Action Service (EEAS) to assess the democracy and human rights record of each recipient country, taking into account reports adopted by Parliament.

What is MFA?

The EU has been helping out countries with serious, short-term financial difficulties since 1990. This supplements other programmes, such as International Monetary Fund aid. 23 countries have benefited so far from a total of €7.2 billion. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Armenia, Ukraine and Moldova are recent recipients

What next?

Following Parliament's indicative vote on Thursday, MEPs will begin formal negotiations with the Council, in an effort to reach a final agreement on the proposed amendments to the regulation.

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