# Association of the overseas countries and territories with the European Union ("Overseas Association Decision")

2012/0195(CNS) - 27/02/2013 - Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading/single reading

The Committee on Development adopted, in the framework of a special legislative procedure (Parliament consultation), a report drafted by Patrice TIROLIEN (S&D, FR) on the proposal for a Council decision on the association of the overseas countries and territories with the European Union ('Overseas Association Decision').

The committee proposes to amend the Commission proposal as follows:

**Objectives**: in order to ensure that the objectives of the association of the overseas countries and territories (OCTs) with the Union are met, Member calls for the **identity and geographical position** of each OCT to be taken into account, together with its **political, economic and social situation**. They also call for priority to be given to cooperation in areas of mutual interest, such as the promotion of **green growth and green jobs** in all green-growth industries.

**Promotion of the association**: with an aim to strengthen the relations between themselves, the Union shall ensure effective OCT participation in information and communication programmes, with particular reference to the 'Europe Direct' information centres, in order to bring Europe closer to its citizens in the OCTs.

**Regional cooperation**: the Union shall also involve the OCTs in its **political dialogue** with OCT neighbours, and shall inform them of the agendas and resolutions or recommendations of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly.

Members consider it crucial that the **members of parliament** representing OCTs at national and Union level must be involved in the process in order to ensure that it is as democratic as possible.

To fulfill the objective of strengthening regional cooperation and promoting OCTs as outposts of the EU in their respective regions, action should be taken to facilitate access by ORs and neighbouring ACP and non-ACP States to the **annual OCT-EU Forum**, where appropriate.

**Sustainable management**: in the context of the association, Members insist that cooperation in the field of sustainable management and conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem services may concern aid to SMEs engaged in sustainable economic activities, particularly in the **research, farming, crafts and tourism sectors**. In the field of **integrated coastal zone management** may concern conciliation of economic and social activities such as agriculture, maritime and air transports, industry, mining activities and regional planning with the potential of marine and coastal zones in terms of renewable energy, raw materials, whilst taking into account impacts of climate change and land pollution from human and animal activities.

The report underlines the need to strengthen the coordination and cooperation of the Commission and the OCTs associated with the EU thus needs to be strengthened in order to **combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing effectively**.

When it comes to investing in road infrastructure, Members state that the emphasis should be on **improving public transport and sustainable forms of road transport**.

**Areas of cooperation**: in the context of the association, cooperation and dialogue should also:

- strengthen the ties between young people living in the OCTs and the Union, among others by **promoting educational and initial, vocational or continuing training**, learning exchanges and mobility of OCT youth and by fostering intercultural learning and mutual understanding between young people;
- ensure that young people are **actively engaged on the labour market** in order to avoid youth unemployment;
- boost **job creation, particularly in SMEs**, by promoting ambitious social standards. The dialogue shall encourage all innovative measures which protect the environment and the health of workers and citizens, aimed at enabling job creation in areas where OCTs have an asset;
- cooperate in order to **exchange best practices** for active labour market policies, a strong social dialogue, labour standards and social protection in order to safeguard the rights of workers.

The association decision should include provisions on: (i) the **free movement of workers** between OCTs and EU Member States; (ii) the establishment of **social dialogue** and the development of social democracy; (iii) cooperation in the area of **health and safety at work**.

The report stresses that emphasis should be placed on the economic impact, particularly in terms of tourism, of exploiting the **potential of heritage sites** in a sustainable way.

**Negotiation of trade agreements with third countries**: when negotiating a trade agreement with a third country, the Union shall strive to provide for the **extension of the tariff preferences** granted to Union products to products originating in OCTs. Where trade agreements currently being negotiated with third countries risk endangering the traditional trade sectors characteristic of OCTs, the Commission shall carry out **prior impact assessments** of the potential consequences. When completed, those prior impact assessments shall be forwarded by the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council and the governmental and local authorities of the OCTs before the conclusion of the international agreements in question.

**Technical assistance**: the Commission shall organise at least once a year, preferably in connection with the EU-OCT Forum, a technical meeting of regional authorising officers and authorising officers by delegation with a view to **strengthening the institutionalised technical dialogue** and streamlining the programming and implementation of funds. The Commission shall ensure that the programming rules take account of the OCTs' limited human and administrative resources and their institutional ties with the Member State to which they are linked. In this connection, the **programming document** shall be the subject of an exchange of views between the OCT, the Member State concerned and the Commission. Parliament should be informed of decisions adopted by the Commission.

**Breakdown between different instruments**: in line with Parliament's mandate in respect of the financial framework, Members call for a **5% increase in overall EDF funding is requested (from EUR 343.4 million to EUR 360.57 million)**. They propose that an additional EUR 2 million should be allocated to technical assistance (**EUR 10 million** instead of EUR 8 million).

Members would like to see the funds allocated to support regional cooperation and integration increased from EUR 105 million to **EUR 120.17 million**.

**Derogations**: Members call for derogations to be granted to OCTs in respect of fisheries products within the limit of an annual quota of 2 500 tonnes for fisheries products which require automatic derogations: frozen fillets of cod; salted and dried, but not smoked, cod; salted, but not dried or smoked, cod; frozen fillets of halibut, lemon sole, plaice; crab; frozen meat of scallops.

**Implementation**: although it does not play a co-legislative role in connection with Council decisions of this kind, Members consider that Parliament has the right to be informed of the adoption of delegated acts by the Commission, of any objections to such acts formulated by the Council and of any Council decision to revoke the delegation of powers.