

EU/West African States, ECOWAS and the UEMOA Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)

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PURPOSE: to conclude the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between the West African States, ECOWAS and the UEMOA, of the one part, and the European Union and its Member States, of the other part.

PROPOSED ACT: Council Decision.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: Council may adopt the act only if Parliament has given its consent to the act.

BACKGROUND: on 12 June 2002, the Council authorised the Commission to open negotiations for Economic Partnership Agreements with the ACP countries.

The negotiations have been concluded and the Economic Partnership Agreement between the West African States (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), of the one part, and the European Union and its Member States, of the other part, (hereinafter referred to as the 'EPA') was initialled on 30 June 2014.

The EPA with the whole West African region was negotiated in line with the objectives laid down in the EU-ACP Partnership Agreement signed in Cotonou on 23 June 2000 and revised

in Luxembourg on 25 June 2005 and in Ouagadougou on 22 June 2010 (Cotonou Agreement), and in the negotiating directives concerning EPAs with the ACP States adopted by the Council on 12 June 2002.

The negotiations were completed at the level of the Chief Negotiators on 6 February 2014 in Brussels. The Agreement was initialled on 30 June 2014 in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.

It is now appropriate to conclude the Agreement on behalf of the European Union.

CONTENT: the proposal invites the Council to adopt a decision aiming to approve, on behalf of the European Union and its Member States, an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between the West African States, ECOWAS and the UEMOA, of the one part, and the European Union and its Member States, of the other part.

Scope and objectives of the Agreement: the objective of this Protocol is to specify the implementation arrangements for the **EPA Development Programme** (PAPED) in a spirit of partnership and the Cotonou Agreement.

The implementation of PAPED shall promote:

- diversification and growth of production capacities;
- development of intra-regional trade and facilitation of access to international markets;

- improvement and reinforcement of regional and national trade-related infrastructure;
- implementation of the necessary adjustments and consideration of other trade related needs;
- implementation and monitoring/evaluation of the EPA by the West African region.

Provisions are also laid down to set out the framework of the programme and its implementation.

Trade provisions: the EPA contains specific provisions on:

- trade in goods,
- customs and trade facilitation,
- technical barriers to trade,
- sanitary and phytosanitary measures,
- agriculture and fisheries.

The provisions concerning cooperation for the implementation of the development dimension lay down the priority areas of action for the implementation of the EPA, which are set out in an EPA Development Programme (PAPED), the financing arrangements for which are specified in the Agreement.

The Council declarations of 10 May 2010 and 17 March 2014 confirm the commitment of the European Union and its Member States to **provide financial support for the development of West Africa**.

Regional integration: the Agreement contains commitments relating to regional integration, with the West African States undertaking to apply to each other the preferential treatment granted to the European Union under this Agreement.

It also provides for negotiations to be continued at regional level on:

- investment,
- services,
- intellectual property and innovation,
- current payments and capital movements,
- protection of personal data,
- competition,
- consumer protection,
- sustainable development,
- public procurement.

Institutional provisions: the institutional provisions include the establishment of a Joint Council of the West Africa-European Union EPA, which is to be responsible for supervising the implementation of the EPA. This Council will comprise members of the Ministerial Monitoring Committee of the West Africa-European Union EPA and members of the Council of the European Union and of the Commission. It will be assisted by a Joint Implementation Committee of the EPA. A West Africa-European Union parliamentary committee will act as a forum for members of the European Parliament and of the regional parliaments of ECOWAS and the UEMOA.

A Joint West Africa-European Union Consultative Committee will also assist the Joint Council of the EPA with a view to promoting dialogue and cooperation between representatives of civil society and the private sector.

Monitoring: the EPA makes provision for its impact to be monitored comprehensively and to be examined every five years.

Replacement of the existing interim Agreements: as soon as the Agreement enters into force, it will replace the two existing interim EPAs in the region, namely the Stepping Stone Agreement with **Côte d'Ivoire**, which was initialled on 7 December 2007, signed on 26 November 2008 and approved by the European Parliament on 25 March 2009, and the Stepping Stone Agreement with **Ghana**, which was initialled on 13 December 2007.

Cape Verde currently benefits from the special incentive arrangement for sustainable development and good governance in the scheme of generalised tariff preferences (GSP+), and **Nigeria** currently benefits from the scheme of generalised tariff preferences (GSP). The Agreement will take over from these schemes as soon as it enters into force.

The other countries of the region currently benefit from the 'Everything But Arms' initiative, since they are classified among the Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

The entry into force of the Agreement will ensure a harmonised trade regime between the European Union and the West African region, thereby supporting regional integration and the implementation of the ECOWAS Common External Tariff.

BUDGETARY IMPLICATION: the proposal has no financial implications on expenditure but has a **financial implication on revenue**, that is EUR 4.3 million/year during 5 years.

This estimate is based on the volume of imports in 2012. Accordingly, with the exception of a very limited number of products imported from countries which are not Least Developed Countries and which have not signed interim economic partnership agreements, almost all imports from West Africa already enter the European Union duty free.