Marrakesh Agreement establishing the World Trade Organization (WTO): Agreement on Trade Facilitation. Protocol

2015/0029(NLE) - 22/07/2015 - Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading/single reading

The Committee on International Trade adopted the report by Pablo ZALBA BIDEGAIN (EPP, ES) on the draft Council decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the European Union, of the Protocol Amending the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization.

The committee recommended that the European Parliament **give its consent** to the conclusion of the Agreement.

The trade facilitation agreement (TFA) which was concluded at the 9th WTO Ministerial Conference in December 2013 is the first multilateral agreement since the WTO was established in 1995. The issue first appeared on the WTO agenda during the Ministerial in Singapore in 1996 and subsequently found its way into the Doha Declaration where WTO members committed to concluding a deal on this issue.

The Agreement demonstrates the ability to be innovative in recognising differences in implementation capacity across nations. In particular, by:

- allowing developing and least developed countries to categorise commitments and determine the timing of their implementation;
- linking implementation of some disciplines to the provision of technical assistance;
- calling for joint action by donor countries, development assistance providers and developing and least developed country WTO members to assist the latter in implementing some provisions of the agreement;
- incorporating an Expert Group to assess the situation in a Member once notified implementation periods have expired, and the use of the TFA Committee as a forum for the exchange of experiences and deliberation.

The TFA will require increased transparency and greater cooperation between customs authorities. It focuses on cooperation aimed at achieving a set of good practices that governments can support and comply with.

In order for the TFA to enter into force, it needs to be ratified by two thirds of the 160 WTO members who agreed it at the 9th Ministerial Conference.