EU/Moldova Association Agreement

2014/0083(NLE) - 23/05/2016 - Final act

PURPOSE: to conclude an Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and Moldova, of the other part.

NON LEGISLATIVE ACT: Council Decision (EU) 2016/839 on the conclusion, on behalf of the European Union, of the Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Moldova, of the other part.

BACKGROUND: relations between the EU and the Republic of Moldova based until recently on the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement which entered into effect in July 1998.

On 15 June 2009 the Council authorised the Commission to open negotiations with Moldova for the conclusion of a new Agreement with the European Union to replace the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement.

Those negotiations were successfully finalised, and the Association Agreement between the EU and Euratom and their Member States, of the one part, and Moldova, of the other part was initialled on 29 November 2013.

In accordance with Council Decision 2014/492/EU, the Agreement was signed on 27 June 2014, subject to its conclusion at a later date.

The Agreement must be concluded.

CONTENT: with this Decision, the Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and Moldova, of the other part, is approved on behalf of the Union.

Objectives of the Association Agreement: the Agreement establishes an association between the Parties, aiming at **political association and economic integration** and leaving open the way for further progressive developments.

The overall aims of the association focus on:

- strengthening political dialogue between the Parties;
- promoting, and strengthening peace and stability in both the regional and international dimensions;
- promoting cooperation on peaceful conflict resolution;
- establishing conditions for enhanced economic and trade relations leading towards Moldova's gradual economic integration with the EU internal market in selected areas;
- enhancing justice, freedom and security cooperation with the aim of reinforcing the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and
- establishing conditions for increasingly close cooperation in other areas of mutual interest.

Sectoral cooperation: the Association Agreement also provides for a wide range of sectoral cooperation, focusing on support to core reforms, economic recovery and growth, governance and sector cooperation in 28 areas, such as:

- public administration reform,
- management of public finances,
- energy and transport,
- environmental protection and direct action,
- industrial and small and medium enterprise cooperation,
- social policies,
- consumer protection,
- agriculture and rural development,
- cross-border and regional level cooperation,
- education and training,
- civil society cooperation and youth as well as cultural cooperation.

In all of these areas, enhanced cooperation starts from the basis of current frameworks, both bilateral and multilateral, with the aim of **more systematic dialogue and exchange** of information and good practice.

Gradual approximation of legislation: key to the sectoral cooperation chapters is gradual approximation with the EU acquis, which will form the core of Moldova's domestic reform and modernisation agenda.

Free trade area: a free trade area between the EU and Moldova is envisaged. Approximation of Moldovan with EU legislation, norms and standards, will be the method.

Geographical indications: the Agreement sets out the relevant procedures for the protection of geographical indications that are given protection pursuant to the Agreement. The Agreement should not be construed as conferring rights or imposing obligations that can be directly invoked before Union or Member State courts and tribunals.

It is stipulated that a name protected under the “Geographical Indications” of the Agreement may be used by any operator marketing agricultural products, foodstuffs, wines, aromatised wines or spirits conforming to the corresponding specification.

Member States and the institutions of the Union shall enforce the protection provided for in the Agreement, including at the request of an interested party.

Institutional framework: the Agreement includes an updated institutional framework encompassing cooperation and dialogue fora. Specific decision-making roles are envisaged for an Association Council, and by delegation for an Association Committee, which may also meet in a specific configuration to address trade issues. Provision for fora for civil society and parliamentary cooperation is also made. The Agreement includes provisions on monitoring, fulfilment of obligations and dispute settlement (including separate provisions for trade-related issues).

ENTRY INTO FORCE: the Decision enters into force on 23.05.2016. The Agreement enters into force when all procedures necessary to effect this have been carried out.