

EC/Pacific States Interim Partnership Agreement: accession of Samoa

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The Committee on International Trade adopted the report by David MARTIN (S&D, UK) on the draft Council decision on Samoa's accession to the Interim Partnership Agreement between the European Community, of the one part, and the Pacific States, of the other part.

The committee recommended that the European Parliament **approve Samoa's accession to the agreement.**

On 12 June 2002, the Council authorised the Commission to open negotiations for Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with the members of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States.

The Interim Partnership Agreement between the European Community, of the one part, and the Pacific States, of the other part, which establishes the framework for an Economic Partnership Agreement, was signed in London on 30 July 2009. The Agreement has been provisionally applied by Papua New Guinea and Fiji since 20 December 2009 and 28 July 2014 respectively.

The Interim Partnership Agreement provides for the possibility for other Pacific islands to join the Agreement. As a result, on 5 February 2018, Samoa submitted an application for membership and an offer of market access. The Commission concluded negotiations with Samoa on behalf of the Union on 23 April 2018.

The **main elements of the EPA** are as follows:

- a restriction of the scope to trade in goods;
- duty-free and quota-free access to the European market;
- the asymmetrical and progressive liberalisation of customs duties adapted to the level of development of the Pacific States; Samoa will liberalise 82.6% of its merchandise exports (in tariff lines) over a 20-year period; the country's sensitive products (such as meat, fish, fruit and vegetables, alcohol, mineral water, etc.), which represent 17.4% of the total, are excluded;
- trade defence provisions, which include a bilateral guarantee provided in the event that imports cause or threaten to cause economic or social injury or destabilisation to a sector or party to the agreement;
- provisions on cooperation on technical barriers to trade (TBT) and sanitary and phytosanitary measures (SPS);
- provisions concerning customs and trade facilitation;
- a guarantee concerning food security and a derogation in the event of a balance of payments imbalance;
- global sourcing for fisheries;
- the recognition of sustainable development as an underlying objective;
- a procedure for monitoring the implementation of the EPA, including its impact on sustainable development, conducted by the relevant institutional bodies;
- a stable framework for economic and trade relations with the EU;
- a regional integration component that will become increasingly relevant as other Pacific states join the agreement.