Conclusion of an agreement under GATS on the modification of schedules of specific commitments

2022/0174(NLE) - 10/11/2022 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 503 votes to 93, with 12 abstentions, a legislative resolution on the draft Council decision on the conclusion on behalf of the European Union, of an agreement on the modification of schedules of specific commitments under the General Agreement on Trade in Services to incorporate Annex 1 of the Declaration on the Conclusion of Negotiations on Services Domestic Regulation of 2 December 2021.

Parliament **gave its consent** to the conclusion of the agreement.

Article VI of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) contains built-in mandate to develop necessary disciplines with a view to ensuring that measures relating to qualification requirements and procedures, technical standards and licensing requirements do not constitute unnecessary barriers to trade in services. The Members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) have been negotiating such domestic regulation disciplines for many years.

At the 11th Ministerial Conference and later on, a group of 59 WTO Members, including the European Union, issued a Joint Ministerial Statement on Services Domestic Regulation reaffirming their commitment to advancing negotiations on services domestic regulation, with a view to incorporating the outcome of the work into their respective schedules of specific commitments by the 12th Ministerial Conference.

The negotiations of this Joint Statement Initiative were successfully concluded on 2 December 2021. In a declaration on the conclusion of negotiations on services domestic Regulation issued on 2 December 2021, 67 WTO Members (accounting for more than 90% of the global trade in services) noted the conclusion of the negotiations on the Reference Paper which forms Annex 1 of the Declaration. They also welcomed the Schedules of Specific Commitments which were submitted as their contributions to finalise the negotiations. Those 67 WTO members account for more than 90% of the global trade in services.

The participants to the Declaration confirmed their intention to incorporate the disciplines agreed on as additional commitments into their GATS Schedules. Subject to the completion of any required domestic procedures, the participants aim to submit their Schedules of Specific Commitments for certification, within twelve months of the date of the Declaration. Through the certification, the participants will give legal effect to the disciplines of Annex 1 of the Declaration.

The agreement will thus allow the disciplines listed in Annex 1 of the declaration to be incorporated into the GATS schedule applicable in the territory of the European Union.