EC/Malta Framework Agreement: participation in Community programmes

2001/0194(AVC) - 20/11/2001 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: To conclude a framework agreement allowing Malta participation on Community specific programmes. CONTENT: The Helsinki Council of December 1999 confirmed that enlargement between the European Union and 13 applicant countries should proceed as soon as possible. As part of this process, applicant countries should be offered the opportunity to participate in Community programmes. To give legal definition to applicant's participation, the Council has authorised the Commission to negotiate a bilateral Framework Agreement with Malta laying down the general principles to the participation of Malta in all Community programmes. Negotiating a "framework" settlement is a new option. Under this new approach, framework instruments are agreed with candidate countries, in this case Malta, which establishes the general principles for their participation in Community programmes. The terms and conditions of participation in specific programmes are then negotiated bilaterally between the Commission and Malta. Without such a framework agreement, a large number of new international instruments would be needed. This would lead to institutional decision making overload and significantly lengthen the time span for a final settlement. To date, Malta has started to participate in programmes dealing with education (Socrates), vocational training (Leonardo da Vinci), Youth and more recently in certain research programmes. Financial assistance is envisaged under Council Regulation 555/2000 on the implementation of operations in the framework of the pre-accession strategy for Malta. The terms of the proposed draft framework agreement for Malta are: - the programmes concerned will allow for the participation of candidate countries from Central and Eastern Europe; - Malta will pay an annual contribution to the programmes, to be determined between the Commission and Maltese government; - the Commission will be assisted by a special committee appointed by the Council; - the contribution made will not be reimbursed to Malta if at the end of the year, the results fall short of the contribution paid; - representatives from Malta will be invited to attend meetings of the Programme Committees as observers; - projects and initiatives submitted by Malta shall be subject to the same conditions, rules and procedures pertaining to the programmes concerned as are applied to Member States, regarding in particular the submission, assessment and selection of applications and projects; - the Framework Agreement will apply for an unspecified period, subject to a classical clause of denunciation. Specific duration of participation in programmes will be determined in the terms and conditions concluded between the Commission and the Government of Malta.