EC/Tunisia Euro-Mediterranean association agreement

1995/0132(AVC) - 06/07/1995 - Legislative proposal

The proposal of the Council and the Commission concerns the conclusion of a Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and Tunisia, of the other part. The agreement replaces the cooperation agreement and the agreement on ECSC products signed in 1976, which are still in force. General principles: the agreement is concluded for an unlimited period and strengthens existing ties between the European Communities and the Member States, of the one part, and Tunisia, of the other part, by establishing relations based on reciprocity and partnership; Democracy clause: respect for democratic principles and human rights constitutes the fundamental element of the agreement; Main elements: - regular political dialogue at all levels; - the creation of a free-trade zone: this is to be established gradually, in accordance with WTO rules, between the Community and Tunisia over a maximum period of 12 years. Tunisia, which hitherto has not granted any concessions to the Community, will gradually eliminate barriers to trade affecting the Community's exports of industrial goods and will apply preferential tariffs to its agricultural exports. The Community preferential regime currently in force (complete opening of its market to Tunisia's industrial exports and concessions for the bulk of its agricultural exports) is confirmed, but is also improved as far as agricultural products are concerned. As regards olive oil, the preferential regime has been renewed for a period of 4 years. The parties will have to reconsider the situation before deciding what regime is to apply thereafter. A specific clause stipulates that the agricultural trade situation is to be reviewed from 1 January 2000 with a view to determining new reciprocal concessions and attaining greater liberalization; - the agreement contains provisions on freedom of establishment and liberalization of services: the Association Council will be asked to make recommendations in this field. Meanwhile, the parties will consult together with the aim of ensuring completely free movement of capital. The Agreement also provides for Community competition rules to apply to Tunisian businesses; - economic cooperation: the existing economic cooperation will be stepped up on the widest possible basis in all fields of interest to both parties and will be the subject of regular dialogue; - social cooperation is provided for which exceeds the existing provisions: a regular dialogue will be initiated to implement those provisions which relate to all social topics of common interest. This dialogue will be backed up by cultural cooperation; - financial cooperation is also provided for, using appropriate arrangements and funding. An Association Council and an Association Committee with powers of decision are to be set up to implement the Agreement. Cooperation between the European Parliament and the ESC and their Tunisian counterparts will also be facilitated.