

# **Relations EU/Western Balkan countries: partnerships in the framework of the stabilisation and the association process**

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The committee adopted the report by Joost LAGENDIJK (Greens/EFA, NL) broadly approving the proposal under the consultation procedure, subject to a few amendments. It felt that the introductory article should stipulate that the European Partnerships "shall represent a further, visible step in these countries' preparation for complete integration into the European Union". Although the CARDS regulation remained the legal basis for financial assistance, the committee said that the Partnerships should contain an explicit reference to the EU budget resources available to assist the country concerned in implementing the priorities and objectives identified. MEPs also called for Parliament to be consulted on the principles, priorities and conditions to be contained in the European Partnerships as well as on any subsequent adjustments. Lastly, they said that the legal base of the CARDS programme should be adjusted in order to ensure the financing of the priorities and conditions of the Partnerships.