EC/Turkey relations: implementation of measures to intensify customs union

1998/0299(CNS) - 16/03/2000 - Modified legislative proposal

The Commission's amended proposal accepts 16 out of the 22 amendments adopted by the European Parliament, 8 of which were accepted in their entirety (in particular, the amendments which add to the Commission's recitals and consolidate and add detail to certain provisions). These amendments include: - taking the work of the Council (General Affairs) of 13.09.1999 into consideration (which dealt with the financial instruments for Turkey); - taking account of new provisions on the 1999 committee procedure ("comitology provisions"); - taking account of the Mediterranean allocations (including MEDA) as a financial reference for Turkey; - the role of the Commission to inform the other institutions about the indicative programme of projects to be financed in Turkey; - facilitating the take-up of grants by small, non-profit making NGOs. Parliament wishes to give small NGOs easier access (the amended text provides greater opportunity for the Commission to finance technical assistance operations to improve NGOs' management capabilities). On the other hand, the Commission has rejected the amendments relating to the conditions for Turkey's eligibility to the accession process. The Luxembourg Summit did not set conditions attached to eligibility. The criteria applied to all applicant countries are attached to accession itself, and the beginning of the negotiating process. In addition, the Commission did not accept the amendments relating to: - the provisions of the Regulation, which according to the Parliament, should be based on respect for democratic principles, the rule of law, fundamental human rights and freedoms, the rights of minorities, and respect for international law and international treaties which underpins the policies of the European Union and its Member States. The Commission is rejecting this amendment. It is adhering to its original proposal, which uses a standard clause, to avoid giving the impression that a particular partner is being discriminated against compared to other partners; - the eventual suspension of all cooperation under this Regulation, (EP initiative), in case of obstacles placed to the implementation of projects, operations and measures in the field of the promotion of democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the protection of minorities. The Commission believes that there is no legal or institutional basis for any form of EP initiative to propose to the Council that cooperation under this Regulation be suspended. In addition, it is only logical that the provisions be the same as those for the MEDA programme, in order to avoid having more than one procedure for one single country; - the support for programmes to repair damage caused by the recent earthquakes. The areas affected by the earthquakes are obviously eligible for EU aid in the same way as any other region. However, post-earthquake reconstruction does not fall within the scope of this Regulation; - the submission of an annual report on progress with regard to respect for democratic principles, the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms and international law. TheCommission points out that it publishes an annual "regular report" on all the applicant countries, including Turkey. The report includes a section on developments in the human rights situation; - the submission of evaluation reports to the European Parliament specifically highlighting whether the objectives of the operations have been achieved and to provide guidelines for improving the effectiveness of future operations. It should be noted that the Commission added a reference to the Helsinki European Council in December 1999 on the eligibility of Turkey to the accession process.