EEA agreement and related agreements: participation of the acceding countries in 2004

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PURPOSE :to conclude an Agreement on the participation of the accession countries in the European Economic Area and four related agreements. CONTENT : Article 128 of the Agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA) stipulates that all countries becoming members of the European Union must also apply to become contracting parties to the EEA Agreement. Following the successful conclusion of the enlargement negotiations at the December 2002 Copenhagen European Council, Cyprus, the Czech republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, the Slovak republic and Slovenia ("Acceding Countries") applied to join the EEA Agreement. As the EEA Agreement is a mixed agreement, the Council adopted, on 9 December 2002, a mandate, enabling the Commission to negotiate both for the Community and for the current Member States. The EEA EFTA countries, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway negotiated individually, as did the Acceding Countries. Nevertheless, the Commission ensured close cooperation with the Acceding Countries and the current Member States throughout the negotiations. The EEA enlargement negotiations were officially launched on 9 January 2003 and concluded on 3 July 2003. The EEA enlargement "package" consists of a main agreement together with four related agreements, each of the five agreements being linked to one another: 1) Main agreement : the agreement on the participation of the Acceding Countries defines the amendments to the EEA Agreement in the context of EEA enlargement. The bulk of the amendments originate from the EU Act of Accession. The arrangements for the application of Community acquis by the Acceding Countries upon accession to the EU, such as technical adaptations and transition periods, which have been agreed in the EU enlargement negotiations, are taken over from the Act of Accession in the EEA Agreement. The concerned acts are listed in annexes A and B to the main agreement. The EEA EFTA countries will also contribute EUR 600 million over a five-year period to alleviating social and economic disparities in the enlarged EEA. The elements of the negotiation result that are not incorporated into the EEA Agreement itself are contained in four related agreements: - A bilateral EC-Norway agreement on a Norwegian financial mechanism in the form of an exchange of letters; - an additional protocol to the EC-Iceland Free Trade Agreement of 1972; - an additional protocol to the EC-Norway Free Trade Agreement of 1973; - a bilateral EC-Norway agreement on certain agricultural products. According to the bilateral EC-Norway agreement on a Norwegian Financial Mechanism for the period 2004 - 2009, Norway will make a bilateral financial contribution of EUR 567 million over this five-year period, in addition to the EUR 600 million of the multilateral EEA financial mechanism for the same period. Both the multilateral and the bilateral contributions will be administered separately, but in close co-ordination, using identical application procedures and criteria. The Additional Protocols to the EC-Iceland and the EC-Norway Free Trade Agreements set out the negotiation results in the field ofmarine products with respect to Iceland and Norway. The Community will open duty free quotas for the processing industry on frozen round mackerel and frozen filet of herring for Norway and whole frozen herring for Norway and Iceland. According to the bilateral EC-Norway agreement in the form of an exchange of letters, concerning certain agricultural products. Lastly, it should be added that a provision according to which each of the above texts should enter into force simultaneously has been introduced in the main agreement and the four related agreements. The final act also includes various declarations made by one, more or all contracting parties to the agreement.