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

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OBJECTIVE: to implement measures to intensify the EC-Turkey Customs Union as part of the strategy to further develop and strengthen relations between the European Union and Turkey. CONTENT: With a financial framework of EUR 15 million over 3 years (1999-2001), this specific aid will help Turkey in its efforts to prepare for accession by strengthening its relations with the European Union in all areas linked to the intensification of Customs Union. In particular, the aid will target: - support for aligning Turkish legislation with the Community acquis and the institutional development of this adjustment; - access to the internal market (in particular, introduction of the instruments needed in the field of quality and certification); - deregulation of the movement of capital; - the integration of Turkey in the pan-European system of rules of origin (participation of Turkey in conventions on transit etc.); - the adaptation of Turkish agricultural policy to the requirements of the CAP; - cooperation in the veterinary and plant health sectors; - the participation of Turkey in certain programmes or Community agencies (environment, research, education,...), - cooperation in the field of competition, consumers, new technologies etc.; - cooperation in the field of justice and internal affairs; - cooperation with a view to defending and promoting democracy, respect for the law, human rights and the protection of minorities. The aid is subject to compliance with the Community democracy clause. This means that if a fundamental factor for continuing aid is missing, the Council may decide by a qualified majority to take appropriate steps. Funds will take the form of non-refundable aid under technical assistance, training or other service or works programmes. As well as the Turkish state, associations, cooperatives or any other non-governmental organisation and members of Turkish civil society will be eligible for the programmes and actions. Turkish partners will be asked to make whatever contribution in cash (or in kind) they can afford. It is also hoped that other fund holders will help with joint financing. The Commission will be responsible for managing this aid. It will be assisted by the MEDA Committee already set up under Regulation (EC) No 1488/96 (MEDA Regulation). The Commission will take account of a number of criteria (mainly the efficiency and viability of the programme or equal opportunities for men and women) when choosing which projects to finance. Measures should be taken with a view to highlighting the Community aspect of the aid. The Commission will also be required to monitor the aid and draft annual reports on the programmes funded. Provision is also made for final assessment of the aid 3 years after the entry into force of the regulation, accompanied by proposals for its possible continuation.