Association of the overseas countries and territories OCTs : mid-term review of Decision 91 /482/EEC

1996/0043(CNS) - 24/11/1997 - Final act

OBJECTIVE: to amend Decision 91/482/EEC on the overseas countries and territories to adjust and introduce innovations into the basic text with regard to trade arrangements, tariff concessions and financial aid following a mid-term review. COMMUNITY MEASURE: Council Decision 97/803/EC amending at mid-term Decision 91/482/EEC on the association of the overseas countries and territories with the European Economic Community. SUBSTANCE: In accordance with Decision 91/482/EEC, the Decision reviews after an initial period of five years the provisions concerning the association of the overseas countries and territories (OCT) with the Community. The principal effect of the Decision is to alter the financial assistance granted by the Community for a further five-year period (from 01.03.1995 to 28.02.2005) and to lay down new provisions in other fields. The main changes may be summarized as follows: -financial provisions: ECU 165 m is allocated under the 8th EDF for the period in question, and ECU 35 m in loans from the EIB from own resources to finance development programmes and projects in the OCT; -partnership: a partnership is to be established between the Commission, Member States and the OCT to make it possible to consult local authorities in the OCT regularly concerning any subject of mutual interest; participation by the Member State responsible for a country or territory in any activities covered by the partnership agreement; -tariff concessions: establishment of a new framework more conducive to the regularity of trade compatible with the common agricultural policy (the free access to the Community market granted to all products originating in the OCT by Decision 91/482/EEC and the combination of these concessions with the preferential regime granted to ACP products had seriously disrupted the Community market, leading to safeguard measures. The new arrangements will tackle this problem); -trade rules: following the mid-term review of the Lomé Convention, a number of amendments were made to the Convention to improve the effectiveness of cooperation, promote local initiatives better by means of greater decentralization of cooperation and of the development of trade and services. Similar changes are made in the present decision; -social provisions: several clauses are designed to take better account of the human dimension of the association between the OCT and the Community. Particularly, OCT nationals will be admitted to certain Community programmes (Socrates, Leonardo, etc.) and a process is to be initiated which will ultimately make it possible for diplomas obtained in the OCT to be recognized in the Community. ENTRY INTO FORCE: the Decision enters into force on 30.11.1997 (except for the financial provisions which depend on an internal agreement).