

Agenda 2000: CEEC applicant countries, pre-accession aid for agriculture and rural development SAPARD

1998/0100(CNS) - 19/11/1998 - Text adopted by Parliament, partial vote at 1st reading/single reading

Following confirmation by the Commissioner, Mr Hans van den BROEK, that the Commission could not accept all the amendments adopted by plenary, the rapporteur, Mr Jan SONNEVELD (EPP, NL), requested referral back to committee of his report, which was agreed. A more flexible attitude on the part of the Commission with regard to the demands was hoped for. In its amendments Parliament stressed in particular the conditions for the granting of pre-accession aid. Parliament considered that the measures funded should be compatible with the reformed CAP and should not cause any distortion of competition with EU producers. Investments should be in accordance with Community legislation, in particular with regard to improving the efficiency of agricultural structures. Aid should also be designed to allow rapid adaptation of the sector to world and Community food standards. Parliament also stressed that pre-accession aid should be implemented as quickly as possible so as to avoid delaying the integration of the applicant countries into the Community market. It stressed the importance of rapid programming and flexible implementation of measures to take account of rapid economic and social development in the applicant countries. The beneficiary countries should respect their undertakings to implement the necessary reforms and should not grant the products of a third country more favourable financial or commercial treatment than that granted to Community products. Parliament also stressed various aspects not included by the Commission: - hygiene of food products and respect for quality standards, - reafforestation, - organic farming, - genetic diversity, - water quality, - veterinary and plant health checks, - food safety, - vocational training, - establishment of a rural banking system and book-keeping in farming, - legal assistance for protection of private ownership. It also pointed out that the decentralisation of the management of aid should be undertaken with caution so as to ensure that the administrations of the applicant countries apply the same levels of checks as apply at Community level. Parliament also made amendments relating to procedures for payment of aid and comitology. It also urged that job creation measures should be planned from the programming stage onwards. Agri-environmental measures should also be planned throughout all the countries concerned. It did not share the Commission's view that up to 100% of the total eligible costs of certain measures should be covered. Lastly, it stressed that the measures financed under the EAGGF Guarantee Section should relate to the farming population, the agricultural area, GDP in per capita purchasing power and exceptional factors specific to the country.