Relations Union/Industrialised countries of North America, Far East and Australasia: trade relations and cooperation projects

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PURPOSE: to report on the implementation of Council Regulation 382/2001/EC concerning the implementation of projects and programmes promoting cooperation and commercial relations between the European Union and the industrialised countries of North America, the Far East and Australasia.

CONTENT: this report covers implementation from 2001 to 2003 of Council Regulation 382/2001/EC which provides a legal framework for the development of cooperation and the consolidation of the EU's trade relations with the United States, Canada, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand.

The Community's activities can be broken down into two main areas:

- Cooperation activities potentially cover a large range of areas for each of the six partner countries: education, information, cultural and academic links, environment, transport, energy, customs, science and technology etc. The general objective here is to foster a climate conducive to the strengthening and expansion of relations between the EU and its partners in line with the objectives laid down by the various bilateral instruments that give structure to those relations (e.g. cooperation agreements, joint political declarations, action plans etc.)

- Activities aimed at promoting trade relations that relate only to Japan and Korea. The objective is to take action that complements Member States' initiatives, in such a way as to improve the market presence of European companies in Japan and Korea and boost their exports to those countries.

The Regulation makes it possible to take an integrated approach to programmes promoting trade relations and a whole range of cooperation activities with the industrialised countries, resulting more often than not in pilot projects with no separate legal basis.

A programme evaluation was carried out in 2004. It focussed on the EU centres, the ETP and "Gateway to Japan", which together account for more than 90% of EU funding under Regulation 382/2001/EC. The main lessons are as follows:

- For the EU centres in the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, the initiative is developing satisfactorily as a whole and delivers a good return on investment. It should be continued and, if possible, the idea of EU centres should be extended to other countries and regions.

- Executive Training Programme and Gateway to Japan: both these programmes serve to increase European exports to Japan and Korea and they are deemed to be sufficiently effective on the whole. Although conditions and practices on the Japanese and Korean markets have changed, special support for European businesses is still warranted. These Community initiatives complement initiatives at Member State level and enlargement has created new scope for developing them. Both of these programmes are seen as being relevant and worth continuing.

The Commission has begun to implement the recommendations resulting from the evaluation on how to take the programmes and initiatives forwards and develop them further.

The ratio of cooperation activities to trade-promotion activities (around 1:3) is broadly the same as before 2001. The total budget over the three years in question was EUR 48 065 000. The average implementation rate was 98.70%.