EC/Albania Stabilisation and Association Agreement

2006/0044(AVC) - 21/03/2006 - Initial legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to conclude a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Albania.

PROPOSED ACT : Council Decision.

CONTENT : The proposed Stabilisation and Association Agreement is similar to those already concluded with Croatia (please see **AVC/2004/0119**) and with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (**AVC/2001 /0049**).

Negotiations for the Agreement were launched in 2003, and were felt by the Commission to be the best way of helping to maintain the momentum of political and economic reform, and of encouraging Albania to continue its constructive and moderating influence in the region. Following seven official rounds of negotiation, the Stabilisation and Association Agreement was initialled in Tirana on 18 February 2006.

The Stabilisation and Association Agreement focuses on the following main elements:

- § provision for political dialogue with Albania;
- § provisions on enhanced regional co-operation, including the perspective of establishing free trade areas between the countries of the region;
- § the perspective of the establishment of a free-trade area between the Community and Albania within ten years of the entry into force of the Agreement;
- § provisions on the movement of workers, freedom of establishment, supply of services, current payments and movement of capital;
- § the commitment by Albania to approximate its legislation to that of the EC, notably in key areas of the internal market;
- § provisions on co-operation with Albania in a wide range of fields, including justice, freedom and security;
- § provision for the establishment of a Stabilisation and Association Council which supervises the implementation of the Agreement, of a Stabilisation and Association Committee and a Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee.

Amongst the main general clauses on which the Agreement is based, there is the traditional clause on respect for **democratic principles and human rights** as well as a new clause on **international and regional peace** and stability, which requires the development of good neighbourly relations between Albania and its Balkan neighbours. This commitment constitutes a key factor in the development of the relations and cooperation between the Parties and thus contributes to regional stability.

The Parties also reaffirm the importance that they attach to the fight against terrorism and the implementation of international obligations in this area. The preamble to the Agreement refers to Albania' s status as a potential candidate for European Union membership on the basis of the Copenhagen criteria, subject to the successful implementation of the Agreement, notably regarding regional cooperation.