Basic information

2024/0048(NLE) NLE - Non-legislative enactments	Procedure completed, awaiting publication in Official Journal
EC/Pacific States Interim Partnership Agreement: accession of Tonga **Subject** 3.15.15.06 Fisheries agreements with Pacific countries 6.20.05 Multilateral and plurilateral economic and trade agreements and relations 6.40.06 Relations with ACP countries, conventions and generalities **Geographical area** Tonga	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
INTA International Trade	JOŃSKI Dariusz (EPP)	30/09/2024
	Shadow rapporteur ASSIS Francisco (S&D) FRAGKOS Emmanouil (ECR) COWEN Barry (Renew) KENNES Rudi (The Left) AUST René (ESN)	

Former committee responsible	Former rapporteur	Appointed
INTA International Trade		

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
DEVE Development	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
PECH Fisheries	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	

Former committee for opinion	Former rapporteur for opinion	Appointed

	DEVE Development	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
	BUDG Budgets	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	

Council of the European Union	

European Commission	Commission DG	Commissioner
	Trade and Economic Security	DOMBROVSKIS Valdis

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
01/03/2024	Preparatory document	COM(2024)0092	Summary
19/06/2024	Legislative proposal published	07921/2024	Summary
16/09/2024	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
03/12/2024	Vote in committee		
05/12/2024	Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading/single reading	A10-0023/2024	
18/12/2024	Decision by Parliament	T10-0068/2024	Summary
18/12/2024	Results of vote in Parliament		
27/01/2025	Act adopted by Council after consultation of Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2024/0048(NLE)
Procedure type	NLE - Non-legislative enactments
Procedure subtype	Consent by Parliament
Legal basis	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union TFEU 207-p4 Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union TFEU 218-p6a
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed, awaiting publication in Official Journal
Committee dossier	INTA/10/00354

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary

Committee draft report		PE765.179	14/11/2024	
Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading/single reading		A10-0023/2024	05/12/2024	
Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading		T10-0068/2024	18/12/2024	Summary

Council of the EU

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Legislative proposal	07921/2024	19/06/2024	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Preparatory document	COM(2024)0092	01/03/2024	Summary

Additional information		
Source	**Document**	**Date**
European Commission	EUR-Lex	

EC/Pacific States Interim Partnership Agreement: accession of Tonga

2024/0048(NLE) - 18/12/2024 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 545 votes to 41, with 26 abstentions, a legislative resolution on the draft Council decision on the accession of the Kingdom of Tonga to the Interim Partnership Agreement between the European Community, of the one part, and the Pacific States, of the other part.

Parliament **gave its consent** to the accession of Tonga to the Agreement.

Given that Tonga classifies as an upper middle-income country and no longer benefits from the Union's Generalised Scheme of Preferences, the accession of Tonga to the interim Economic Partnership Agreement will facilitate its economic growth path by integrating it further to regional and global trade.

The interim EPA is a development-oriented trade agreement, which offers asymmetric market access to Tonga and allows it to shield sensitive sectors from liberalisation, while providing a large number of safeguards and a clause for infant industry protection.

In particular, the interim EPA:

- contains the rules of origin that facilitate Tonga's exports into the EU;

- establishes the conditions for EU economic operators to take full advantage of the opportunities between the respective economies;

- establishes a set of disciplines in the areas of sustainable development; Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT); and Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary measures (SPS), among others.

EC/Pacific States Interim Partnership Agreement: accession of Tonga

2024/0048(NLE) - 19/06/2024 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to approve, on behalf of the European Union, the accession of Tonga to the Interim Partnership Agreement between the European Community, of the one part, and the Pacific States, of the other part, subject to Tonga's deposit of the act of accession pursuant to Article 80(2) thereof.

PROPOSED ACT: Council Decision.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: Council may adopt the act only if Parliament has given its consent to the act.

BACKGROUND: on 12 June 2002, the Council authorised the Commission to open negotiations for Economic Partnership Agreements with the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States. The Interim Partnership Agreement between the European Community, of the one part, and the Pacific States, of the other part, which establishes a framework for an Economic Partnership Agreement, was signed in London on 30 July 2009. The Interim Partnership Agreement has been provisionally applied by the Independent State of Papua New Guinea and the Republic of Fiji since 20 December 2009 and 28 July 2014, respectively.

As a consequence of the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon on 1 December 2009, the European Union has replaced and succeeded the European Community and from that date exercises all rights and assumes all obligations of the European Community.

Article 80 of the Interim Partnership Agreement lays down the provisions regarding the accession of other Pacific Islands States. Accordingly, the Independent State of Samoa and Solomon Islands have acceded to the Interim Partnership Agreement and have been provisionally applying it since 31 December 2018 and 17 May 2020, respectively. On 13 July 2023, Tonga submitted an accession request together with a market access offer to the Union.

The Commission assessed Tonga’s offer and found it acceptable. Accordingly, the Commission concluded negotiations with the Kingdom of Tonga on 27 September 2023.

In accordance with Article 76(3) of the Interim Partnership Agreement, the Union and Tonga are to provisionally apply the Interim Partnership Agreement 10 days after notifying each other in writing of the completion of the procedures necessary for that purpose.

It is now necessary to approve, on behalf of the European Union, the accession of the Kingdom of Tonga to the Interim Partnership Agreement.

CONTENT: the Council draft concerns the approval, on behalf of the Union, of the accession of Tonga to the Interim Partnership Agreement between the European Community, of the one part, and the Pacific States, of the other part.

The interim EPA:

- is a development-oriented trade agreement, which offers asymmetric market access to Tonga and allows it to shield sensitive sectors from liberalisation, while providing a large number of safeguards and a clause for infant industry protection. It contains provisions on the rules of origin that facilitate Tonga’s exports into the EU;

- establishes the conditions for EU economic operators to take full advantage of the opportunities between the respective economies. Over the course of its implementation, the interim EPA will largely relieve EU exporters of industrial products to Tonga from paying customs duties;

- establishes a set of disciplines in the areas of sustainable development; Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT); and Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary measures (SPS), among others. Furthermore, the Parties to the interim EPA participate in the Trade Committee established under the Agreement.

Lastly, Tonga will benefit from full duty-free and quota-free access to the EU market for all products, in exchange for gradually opening up of its market to EU products.

EC/Pacific States Interim Partnership Agreement: accession of Tonga

2024/0048(NLE) - 01/03/2024 - Preparatory document

PURPOSE: to approve, on behalf of the European Union, the accession of Tonga to the Interim Partnership Agreement between the European Community, of the one part, and the Pacific States, of the other part (the ‘Interim Partnership Agreement’), subject to Tonga’s deposit of the act of accession pursuant to Article 80(2) thereof.

PROPOSED ACT: Council Decision.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: Council may adopt the act only if Parliament has given its consent to the act.

BACKGROUND: on 12 June 2002, the Council authorised the Commission to open negotiations for Economic Partnership Agreements with the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States.

On 30 July 2009, the EU signed an interim EPA between the Union, of the one part, and the Pacific States, of the other part. The interim EPA has been provisionally applied by Papua New Guinea and the Republic of Fiji since 20 December 2009 and 28 July 2014, respectively.

Article 80 of the interim EPA provides for the possibility for other Pacific Islands to accede to the Agreement. Accordingly, the Independent State of Samoa and Solomon Islands acceded to the Agreement and are provisionally applying it since 31 December 2018 and 17 May 2020, respectively.

On 13 July 2023, Tonga submitted a request for accession together with a market access offer to the Union. The Commission assessed the offer and, after amendments, found it to be acceptable. Accordingly, it concluded negotiations on behalf of the Union on 27 September 2023.

In accordance with Article 76(3) of the Agreement, the Union and Tonga are to provisionally apply the Agreement 10 days after notifying each other in writing of the completion of the procedures necessary for this purpose.

The accession of Tonga to the Interim Partnership Agreement should be approved on behalf of the Union, subject to Tonga’s deposit of the act of accession pursuant to Article 80(2) thereof,

It is now necessary to approve the accession of Tonga to the Interim Partnership Agreement on behalf of the European Union.

CONTENT: the Commission proposes that the Council decide to approve on behalf of the Union, the accession of Tonga to the Interim Partnership Agreement between the European Community, of the one part, and the Pacific States, of the other part, subject to Tonga's deposit of the act of accession pursuant to Article 80(2) thereof.

The proposal contains provisions on the approval, on behalf of the Union, of the accession of Tonga to the interim EPA and on notifications in order to express the consent of the European Union to accession and the provisional application of the Agreement. It specifies that the approval of the accession must not be construed as conferring rights or imposing obligations which can be directly invoked before the Union or Member State courts or tribunals.

The interim EPA is a development-oriented trade agreement, which offers asymmetric market access to Tonga and allows it to shield sensitive sectors from liberalisation, while providing a large number of safeguards and a clause for infant industry protection.

In particular, the interim Agreement:

- contains provisions on the rules of origin that facilitate Tonga's exports into the EU;

- establishes the conditions for EU economic operators to take full advantage of the opportunities between the respective economies. Over the course of its implementation, the interim EPA will largely relieve EU exporters of industrial products to Tonga from paying customs duties. It satisfies the criteria established in Article XXIV of the GATT 1994 (to eliminate duties and other restrictive regulations of commerce with respect to substantially all trade between the parties). The offer is largely within the range of WTO threshold, i.e. 78.9% of liberalisation (in tariff lines), corresponding to 81% in volume of EU exports over 20 years. Tonga will benefit from maintaining its duty-free and quota-free access to the EU market;

- establishes a set of disciplines in the areas of sustainable development; Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT); and Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary measures (SPS), among others. Furthermore, the Parties to the interim EPA participate in the Trade Committee established under the Agreement.

The possibility of the EU to avail itself of the bilateral dispute settlement mechanism foreseen under the Agreement contributes to the objective of securing a transparent, non-discriminatory and predictable environment for EU operators in the Pacific countries.

Budgetary implications

Tonga will benefit from full duty-free and quota-free access to the EU market for all products, in exchange for gradually opening up of its market to EU products. There will be no budgetary implications, as the accession to the Agreement will largely continue Tonga's market access (as previously under the standard GSP arrangement) to the EU on the same terms of preferences.