Accession Partnership with Republic of Macedonia

The Accession Partnership – an instrument of the stabilisation and association process – is intended to provide additional, tailored support to the Government of the Macedonia with a view to helping the country, which is a candidate for accession to the EU, in its preparations for future membership. The Accession Partnership identifies the priority areas where reforms and efforts are required. It also provides a basis for targeting the Community’s assistance to the country.

ACT

Council Decision 2008/212/EC of 18 February 2008 on the principles, priorities and conditions contained in the Accession Partnership with Republic of Macedonia and repealing Decision 2006/57/EC.

SUMMARY

The Accession Partnership with Republic of Macedonia is the main instrument for helping the Government of the Republic of Macedonia to realise the country's prospect of joining the European Union (EU). After submitting its application for membership on 22 March 2004, the Republic of Macedonia was granted candidate-country status by the European Council on 17 December 2005.

The Accession Partnership with the Republic of Macedonia is an instrument of the stabilisation and association process set up under the Thessaloniki agenda (2003) for the western Balkan countries. The European Partnerships and the Accession Partnerships for the western Balkan countries have Regulation (EC) No 533/2004 as their legal basis.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the Partnership is to register in a common reference framework:

- the priority areas where reforms and efforts are required; these are identified according to the country’s requirements and involve the adoption and implementation of appropriate legislation;
- guidelines for financial assistance for taking action in these priority areas;
- the principles and conditions governing implementation of the Partnership.
The Council of the European Union adopts the Accession Partnership, as well as its subsequent amendments, by a qualified majority on the basis of a proposal from the Commission.

The current Partnership supersedes the Partnership of 2006 and updates it by identifying new priorities. European Partnerships are flexible instruments designed to reflect the progress made by the countries concerned and to highlight the efforts still required in other areas as identified by the Commission’s evaluations.

With a view to achieving the objectives identified in the Accession Partnership, the Republic of Macedonia must adopt an action plan setting out procedures and a programme for implementing the priorities of the Partnership.

Implementation of the Partnership is monitored within the framework of the stabilisation and association process and its mechanisms, in particular the annual evaluation report presented by the Commission.

**PRIORITIES**

The Accession Partnership establishes priorities which are both realistic and attainable goals. In this regard, a distinction is made between short-term and medium-term priorities, which are expected to be achieved within one to two years and within three to four years respectively.

The priorities identified for the Republic of Macedonia relate to its capacity to meet:

- the **Copenhagen criteria** of 1993;
- the conditions set for the Stabilisation and Association Process (Council conclusions of 27 April 1997 and 21 and 22 June 1999);
- the **Zagreb declaration** of 2000;
- the Thessaloniki agenda of 2003.

The short- and medium-term priorities are classified as follows:

- the **key priorities** are short-term priorities. They focus on the application of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA), the establishment of a constructive political dialogue, the implementation of the police law, the demonstration that sustainable progress has been made in implementing judicial reforms and anti-corruption legislation, the civil service, including the prevention of
political interference in the recruitment and the career of officials, the creation of jobs and the consolidation of the rule of law in order to improve the business climate;

- the requirements relating to the political criteria cover democracy and the rule of law (implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, the electoral process, the public authorities, the administration, the judicial system, the fight against corruption); respect for human rights and the protection of minorities (through compliance with international and European standards, such as those of the Council of Europe; the creation of law-enforcement bodies and judicial and prison administrations; the fight against discrimination; the protection of human, women's and children's rights; the equitable representation of communities and access to education for minorities); regional questions and international obligations (cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY); regional cooperation and dialogue, including the implementation of the Central European Free Trade Agreement; good neighbourly relations, and in particular finding a negotiated and mutually acceptable solution for the country's name; implementation of cooperation agreements with neighbouring countries, notably on cross-border cooperation, the fight against organised crime, trafficking and smuggling, the management of external borders, readmission and the environment);

- the requirements relating to the economic criteria for strengthening legal certainty for economic operators (the registration of land and real estate) and the functioning of the market economy; the improvement of public services (creation and modernisation of infrastructures); the viability of the electricity market; the quality of public spending and of education; labour market performance and the reduction of unemployment; the integration of the informal economy into the formal economy and the modernisation of national infrastructures for improving the economy's competitiveness, particularly with regard to energy and transport;

- the ability to assume the obligations of membership concerning the adoption and implementation of the Community acquis regarding a certain number of EU policies classified under headings.

**FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK**

The Republic of Macedonia receives financial assistance to help it fulfil the accession criteria. The Accession Partnership serves as a reference instrument for determining the different areas where funds are allocated (according to identified priorities). The decisions which establish the various financial instruments and programming documents provide the actual legal framework for the financial assistance.
The Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) is the sole financial instrument for candidate countries and potential candidate countries for the period 2007-2013. It replaces the CARDS Programme, the financial instrument of the stabilisation and association process for the countries of the western Balkans covering the period 2000-2006. Over this period, a total of EUR 298.2 million was allocated to the Republic of Macedonia under CARDS.

Financial assistance for national programmes under the IPA for 2007-2010 should be EUR 401.1 million, in line with the multiannual indicative financial framework (MIFF) for 2009-2011 (including 2007 and 2008).

Community assistance is conditional on recipient countries abiding by the essential elements which govern their relations with the EU, particularly the effective implementation of reforms. Under the Accession Partnership, the FYROM is required to comply with the Copenhagen criteria and the priorities defined by the Partnership. Failure to meet these requirements could result in the Council suspending financial assistance.

The Republic of Macedonia also receives funding from the European Investment Bank (EIB), principally within the framework of the mechanism for granting regional loans to the EU’s south-eastern neighbours. This mandate covers the candidate countries and the countries of the western Balkans. The financing provided by the EIB takes the form of grants and loans.

REFERENCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Act</th>
<th>Entry into force</th>
<th>Deadline for transposition in the Member States</th>
<th>Official Journal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

RELATED ACTS


BILATERAL RELATIONS

Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, of the other part [Official Journal L 84 of 20.3.2004].

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE


Multiannual indicative financial framework (MIFF) for: