

**Proposal for a Council Decision on the Community position in relation to the establishment of a Joint Consultative Committee to be decided on by the Association Council established by the Europe Agreement between the European Communities and the Republic of Estonia**

(2002/C 262 E/34)

COM(2002) 387 final — 2002/0144(ACC)

(Submitted by the Commission on 11 July 2002)

**EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM**

1. The Europe Agreement establishing an association between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Estonia, of the other part, which entered into force on 1 February 1998, provides, in Article 114 thereof, that the Association Council may decide to set up any other special committee or body that can assist it in carrying out its duties.
2. Though the establishment of a consultative mechanism for dialogue between the regional and local authorities of the two parties is not explicitly provided for in the aforementioned Europe Agreement, the Commission proposes that a Joint Consultative Committee representing the regional and local authorities of both parties be set up by the Association Council in support of the keen interest expressed, in this respect, by both sides, represented by the Committee of the Regions, of the part of the Community, and by the Estonian Liaison Committee for Co-operation with the Committee of the Regions of the European Communities, of the part of the Republic of Estonia.
3. The proposed Joint Consultative Committee is intended to constitute a forum for dialogue and cooperation between the regional and local authorities in the European Community and regional and local authorities in the Republic of Estonia, which can make a major contribution to the development of their relations and to the integration of Europe. The dialogue and cooperation will prepare for future work with the Committee of the Regions and for membership of the European Union; facilitate exchanging information on current issues of mutual interest, in particular on up-to-date state of play concerning EU regional policy and accession process; encourage information exchange in practical implementation of the principle of subsidiarity in all aspects of life on regional and local level; discussing any other relevant matters proposed by any side, as they can arise in the context of implementation of the Europe Agreement and in the framework of the Pre-accession Strategy. The Association Council may also consult the proposed Joint Consultative Committee before taking decisions in areas of obvious regional interest. Consultation of the committee remains, however, at the discretion of the Association Council.
4. The establishment of the proposed Joint Consultative Committee does not have any financial impact on the Community budget, the Estonian participants being responsible for their own expenses and the expenses on the Community side being covered by the budget of the Committee of the Regions.
5. The text of the proposal for a Council decision on the position to be taken by the Community in the Association Council, as provided for by Article 2(1) of the Council and Commission decision of 19 December 1997 on the conclusion of the aforementioned Europe Agreement, is attached hereto. The Council is asked to adopt this text.

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing a European Community, the Treaty establishing a European Coal and Steel Community <sup>(1)</sup> and the Treaty establishing a European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom),

Having regard to Article 300, paragraph 2, second and third subparagraphs, of the Treaty establishing the European Community,

Having regard to Article 2 (1) of the Council and Commission Decision of 19 December 1997 concerning the conclusion of a Europe Agreement establishing an association between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Estonia, of the other part,

Having regard to the Commission proposal,

Whereas:

- (1) Article 114 of the said Europe Agreement provides that the Association Council may decide to set up any special

committee or body that can assist it in carrying out its duties;

- (2) Dialogue and cooperation between regional and local authorities in the European Community and the Republic of Estonia can make a major contribution to the full implementation of the Europe Agreement;
- (3) It seems appropriate that such cooperation should be organised between the members of the Committee of the Regions of the European Communities and of the Estonian Liaison Committee for Cooperation with the Committee of the Regions of the European Communities,

HAS DECIDED AS FOLLOWS:

The position to be adopted by the Community within the Association Council established by Article 109 of the Europe Agreement establishing an association between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Estonia, of the other part, in relation to the establishment of a Joint Consultative Committee shall be based on the draft decision of the said Association Council which is annexed to the present decision.

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<sup>(1)</sup> ECSC Treaty expires on 23 July 2002.

**DRAFT DECISION No .../2002****of the Association Council**

**between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Estonia, of the other part, of ... 2002 amending, through the setting up of a Joint Consultative Committee between the Committee of the Regions and the Estonian Liaison Committee for Cooperation with the Committee of the Regions, Decision No 1/98 adopting the rules of procedure of the Association Council**

THE ASSOCIATION COUNCIL,

Having regard to the Europe Agreement establishing an association between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Estonia, of the other part <sup>(1)</sup>, and in particular Article 114 thereof;

Whereas:

- (1) Dialogue and cooperation between regional and local authorities in the European Community and those in the Republic of Estonia can make a major contribution to the development of their relations and to the integration of Europe;
- (2) It seems appropriate that such cooperation should be organised at the level of the Committee of the Regions, of the one part, and of the Estonian Liaison Committee for Cooperation with the Committee of the Regions, of the other part, by the setting up of a Joint Consultative Committee;
- (3) This means that the rules of procedure of the Association Council, adopted by Decision 1/98, need to be amended accordingly,

HAS DECIDED AS FOLLOWS:

*Article 1*

The following Articles shall be added to the rules of procedure of the Association Council:

*'Article 18*

A Joint Consultative Committee (hereinafter referred to as "Committee") is hereby established with the task of assisting the Association Council with a view to promoting dialogue and cooperation between the regional and local authorities in the European Community and those in the Republic of Estonia. Such dialogue and cooperation shall be aimed in particular at:

1. preparing Estonian regions and local authorities for activity in the framework of future membership of the European Union;
2. preparing Estonian regions and local authorities for their participation in the work of the Committee of the Regions after accession of the Republic of Estonia;
3. exchanging information on current issues of mutual interest, in particular on up-to-date state of play concerning EU regional policy and accession process as well as preparation of Estonian regions and local authorities for these policies;
4. encouraging multilateral structured dialogue between (a) Estonian regions and local authorities and (b) regions and local authorities from EU Member States, including through networking in specific areas where direct contacts and cooperation between regions and local authorities from the Republic of Estonia and EU Member States might prove the most effective way of solving particular problems;

<sup>(1)</sup> OJ L 68, 9.3.1998, p. 3.

5. providing regular exchange of information on inter-regional cooperation between regional and local authorities from the Republic of Estonia and Member States;
6. encouraging exchange of experience and knowledge in the field of regional policy and structural interventions, between (a) Estonian regions and local authorities and (b) regions and local authorities from EU Member States, in particular know-how and techniques concerning preparation of regional and local development plans or strategies and most efficient use of Structural Funds;
7. assisting Estonian regional and local authorities by means of information exchange in practical implementation of the principle of subsidiarity in all aspects of life on regional and local level;
8. discussing any other relevant matters proposed by any side, as they can arise in the context of implementation of the Europe Agreement and in the framework of the Pre-accession Strategy.

#### *Article 19*

The Committee shall comprise eight representatives of the Committee of the Regions, on the one hand, and eight representatives of the Estonian Liaison Committee for Cooperation with the Committee of the Regions, on the other hand. An equal number of alternate members shall be appointed.

The Committee shall carry out its activities on the basis of consultation by the Association Council or, as concerns the promotion of the dialogue between the regional and local authorities, on its own initiative.

The Committee may make recommendations to the Association Council.

Members shall be chosen to ensure that the Committee is as faithful a reflection as possible of the various levels of regional and local authorities in both the European Community and the Republic of Estonia.

The Committee shall adopt its own Rules of Procedure.

The Committee shall meet at intervals, which it shall itself determine in its Rules of Procedure.

The Committee shall be co-chaired by a member of the Committee of the Regions of the European Community and a member of the Estonian Liaison Committee for cooperation with the Committee of the Regions.

#### *Article 20*

The Committee of the Regions, on the one hand, and the Estonian Liaison Committee for Cooperation with the Committee of the Regions, on the other hand, shall each defray the expenses they incur by reason of their participation in the meetings of the Committee with regard to staff, travel and subsistence expenditure and to postal and telecommunications expenditure.

Expenditure in connection with interpreting at meetings, translation and reproduction of documents shall be borne by the Committee of the Regions, with the exception of expenditure in connection with interpreting or translation into or from Estonian, which shall be borne by the Estonian Liaison Committee for Cooperation with the Committee of the Regions.

Other expenditure relating to the material organisation of meetings shall be borne by the Party which hosts the meetings.

#### *Article 2*

This Decision shall enter into force on the first day of the second month following the date of its adoption.

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