Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 665 (1977)[1]

Reply to the 16th and 17th annual reports of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA)

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Having regard to the 16th and 17th annual reports of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) (Docs. 3883, and Doc. 4013), and to the report of its Committee on Economic Affairs and Development (Doc. 4034).

2. Welcomes the final abolition of tariffs for most industrial products on 1 July 1977 in accordance with the free trade agreements concluded between EFTA countries and EEC, thus establishing a free trade area for these products consisting of sixteen European countries ;

3. Considers that the existence of such a free trade area will make little impact on public opinion in Europe so long as the regulations of EEC and individual EFTA countries on minor non-commercial imports by travellers remain different, and reiterates the proposal in its Resolution 658 (1977) on European co-operation in the field of tourism to seek uniformity in these regulations,

4. Calls on the European Communities and EFTA to study the possibility of bringing agricultural products gradually within the scope of the free trade agreements ;

5. Calls on EFTA in its next progress report to provide some information on trade in fish and other marine products, and on relations with Council of Europe member states not members of EFTA ;

6. Considers that the EFTA countries can, in co-operation, be more effective in promoting a better international economic co-operation, thus contributing to the achievement of a more satisfactory economic and social environment ;

7. Concerned at the persisting large current account deficits of almost all EFTA countries, proposes that EFTA governments intensify efforts and co-operation with a view to reducing these deficits ;

8. Notes the Declaration issued by the Conference of Members of Governments of EFTA Countries held on 13 May 1977, and welcomes in particular the statement that "the EFTA governments are resolved also to strengthen the role of the organisation as a framework for consultation on subjects of common economic interest related to the objectives of the Association" ;

9. Notes with interest the study of the Economic and Social Sub-Committee of the EFTA Consultative Committee on the problems of inflation and employment, which constitute a valuable basis for economic policy measures in the EFTA countries ;

10. Stresses the need for a better consultation and co-ordination within EFTA on economic policy issues, and welcomes in this connection the initiative taken by the Association's Consultative Committee to organise in February 1977 a special meeting with representatives of governments and the main sectors of economic life in order to discuss the present economic problems facing EFTA and the industrialised world as a whole ;

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1. Assembly debate on 11 October 1977 (14th Sitting) (see Doc. 4034, report of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development). Text adopted by the Assembly on 11 October 1977 (14th Sitting).

11. Reiterates its support for the valuable work of EFTA for the abolition of non-tariff barriers to trade, and in particular on the further improvement and simplification of the "rules of origin" provided for in the Stockholm Convention establishing EFTA and the free trade agreements between each of the EFTA countries and EEC ;

12. Invites the European Communities to respond favourably to the proposals made by EFTA in 1975 designed to simplify the "rules of origin" as provided for in the free trade agreements and to adapt them to the evolution of manufacturing techniques and to the conditions of international trade ;

13. Invites the Council of Europe member states which are not yet contracting parties to examine the possibility of adhering to :

the Convention for the Mutual Recognition of Inspections in respect of the Manufacture of Pharmaceutical Products (1970) ;

the Convention on the Control and Marking of Articles of Precious Metals (1972) (Hallmarking Convention) ;

14. Calls on all Council of Europe member states which have not yet done so to adhere to the various reciprocal recognition schemes drawn up by EFTA, thus helping to overcome technical barriers to trade and reducing occupational hazards ;

15. Invites EEC and EFTA to make an effort to set up a common hallmarking system ;

16. Invites the Council of Europe member states to raise in the Customs Co-operation Council the re-examination of the Council nomenclature, to ensure that statistical sub-headings are provided which improve the usefulness of trade statistics to business and governments ;

17. Expresses the hope that the negotiations for the conclusion of a multilateral trade agreement between Spain and EFTA countries will be successful ;

18. Supports the efforts of EFTA to assist Portugal in its economic development ;

19. Stresses the importance of the extension of the free trade system to other European market economy countries, in order to eliminate mutual trade discrimination while taking account of the specific needs of the developing Mediterranean countries.