

Address given by George Vassiliou at the third EU-Cyprus Intergovernmental Conference (19 April 1999)

Caption: On 19 April 1999, during the third Intergovernmental Conference between the European Union (EU) and Cyprus, George Vassiliou, former President of the Republic of Cyprus and Chief Negotiator for the island's accession to the EU, emphasises the efforts made by his country to comply with the Community acquis.

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Address by George Vassiliou, the Chief Negotiator at the 3rd EU-Cyprus Intergovernmental Conference (19 April 1999)

"We, in Cyprus, also are working very hard in order to progress on the road to harmonisation. The results achieved since our last meeting justify our conviction that we will be ready for accession on time.

Within this spirit we have reviewed our request for a small one year extension for complete liberalisation of the telecommunications sector.

We have taken due notice of the EU's position and decided to resign our request. Thus we will meet the acquis by 1.1.2003. A new harmonisation programme has been prepared and will be adhered to. A similar legislative programme based on the EU's requirements for the postal services has also been prepared.

Accordingly we expect that after the above statement this chapter will close. We understand of course that the EU will continue monitoring our progress in the harmonisation process.

We would like to express our appreciation for the EU's position that the chapter on Statistics does not require further negotiations. We would like to inform the conference however that despite the high degree of compliance of the Cyprus Statistics Department with the acquis we are fully aware of the work to be done. Accordingly a detailed programme for harmonisation has been prepared which is being implemented.

Thus we have already achieved full harmonisation with the adoption of a number of classification systems used by the EU and are completing the P.P.P. survey 5 months ahead of time.

Furthermore, we are in the final stages of preparing the new Statistics Law which will be in full accordance with the EU and between others will envisage the setting up of a Statistical Advisory Council.

We are convinced that the monitoring of our work by the Union will establish the progress achieved.

Regarding the Consumer and Health Protection chapter, we fully understand the Union's request to Cyprus to provide further clarification on some points raised in their common position.

All these points have been clarified in an explanatory note already submitted to the Conference but not in adequate time for the member-states to prepare their common position.

Overall, our explanations are considered satisfactory but I would like, with your permission, to briefly refer to some of them.

The legislation on product safety concerning the Directive of June 92 and the one on products that may endanger the health of the consumer (Directive of June 1987) has already been enacted and is being enforced as of 1.1.1999.

Other legislation concerning liability for defective products (Council Dir. July 85) and contracts negotiated away from business premises (Dir. Dec. 85) are well advanced and will be implemented within this year although in the Harmonogram we spoke of 1.1.2001.

The same is valid for legislation on consumer credit, distant selling and time-sharing which will all be implemented 1-2 years ahead of stated time.

Finally I would like to confirm that consumers have the right of redress and our Consumers Association is a full member of Consumers International since 1980.

Overall, therefore, we either already conform to the acquis, or where a new amended legislation was required, we are ahead of indicated time. We therefore expect that this chapter will also close at our next session.

Finally, on Fisheries I would like to reconfirm that Cyprus will adopt the acquis and notes the Community's exclusive competence over Fisheries. In due course we will provide information both on the access to the 12 nautical miles territorial waters and concerning markets.

I would also like to point out a particularity concerning the fishing industry in Cyprus. Our main interest is for Cypriot owned vessels licensed to fish in the territorial waters of Cyprus or have permits to land in Cyprus their catch from the Eastern Mediterranean. For all the above we are following a rational management of fishing resources and protection and conservation of marine life and biodiversity.

We do not foresee any problems in conforming to the acquis and the limited state-aid provided to Cypriot fishermen, we are confident, is in full conformity with EU practices.

At the same time however, there are a number of high seas fishing vessels registered in the Register of Cyprus Ships under the Cyprus flag. Altogether there are 104 such vessels of 24m. and over, out of which only 4 are of beneficial EU ownership. For all these vessels, as it is stated in the relevant note that we have circulated, we intend to establish a separate fishing fleet register. The fees to be charged will be such as to fully cover the control of these vessels' activities in international waters. We expect that on this basis most of these vessels will abandon the Cyprus register. Those that may choose to remain will have to abide by the full controls of the EU.

In the memorandum we have distributed only last week we give full details of all ships, their exact length and tonnage, when they were built and who is their owner. We understand that after giving all this information we have fully satisfied the requirements of the 15 member-states as outlined in their common position.

Accordingly we hope this chapter also will be closed."