

FREE TRADE AGREEMENT BETWEEN BULGARIA AND ESTONIA

The following text reproduces the Free Trade Agreement between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Estonia.¹

FREE TRADE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA AND THE REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA

PREAMBLE

The Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Estonia, hereinafter called the Contracting Parties,

Reaffirming their firm commitment to democracy based on the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Recalling their intention to participate actively in the process of economic integration as an important dimension of the stability on the European continent and expressing their preparedness to co-operate in seeking ways and means to strengthen this process,

Considering the rights and obligations arising out of the Europe Agreement for Association between the European Communities and their Member States, on the one part, and the Republic of Bulgaria, on the other part, and the Europe Agreement for Association between the European Communities and their Member States, on the one part, and the Republic of Estonia, on the other part,

Reaffirming their firm commitment to the principles of market economy, which constitutes the basis for their relations,

Recalling their firm commitment to the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Paris Charter, and, in particular, the principles contained in the final document of the Bonn Conference on Economic Co-operation in Europe,

Resolved to this end to eliminate progressively the obstacles to substantially all their mutual trade, in accordance with the provisions of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 1994 (GATT 1994) and the Agreement establishing the World Trade Organization (WTO),

Firmly convinced that this Agreement will foster the intensification of mutually beneficial trade relations between them and contribute to the process of integration in Europe,

Considering that no provision of this Agreement may be interpreted as exempting the Parties from their obligations under other international agreements and organizations, especially the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 1994 and the Agreement establishing the World Trade Organization,

Determined to implement this Free Trade Agreement with the objective to preserve and protect the environment and to ensure an optimal use of natural resources in accordance with the principle of sustainable growth,

Hereby agreed as follows:

Article 1 Objectives

1. The Contracting Parties shall establish a free trade area in accordance with the provisions of this Agreement and in conformity with Article XXIV of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 1994 and with the Understanding on the Interpretation of Article XXIV of the Agreement establishing the World Trade Organization.

2. The objectives of this Agreement are:

- (a) to promote through the expansion of mutual trade the harmonious development of economic relations between the Contracting Parties and thus to foster the advance of economic activity in the Contracting Parties, the improvement of living and employment conditions, and increased productivity and financial stability;
- (b) to provide fair conditions of competition for trade between the Contracting Parties;
- (c) to contribute in this way, by the removal of barriers to trade, to the harmonious development and expansion of world trade;
- (d) to enhance the co-operation between the Contracting Parties.

CHAPTER I INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTS

Article 2 Scope

1. The provisions of this Chapter shall apply to industrial products originating in the Contracting Parties.

2. The term "industrial products" means for the purpose of this Agreement the products falling within Chapters 25 to 97 of the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System, with the exception of the products listed in Annex I to this Agreement.

Article 3

Customs Duties On Imports And Charges Having Equivalent Effect

1. No new customs duties on imports or charges having equivalent effect shall be introduced in trade between the Contracting Parties.

2. The Contracting Parties shall abolish between them on the date of entry into force of this Agreement all customs duties on imports and all charges having equivalent effect.

Article 4

Fiscal Duties

The provisions of Article 3 shall also apply to customs duties of a fiscal nature.

Article 5

Customs Duties On Exports And Charges Having Equivalent Effect

1. No new customs duties on exports or charges having equivalent effect shall be introduced in trade between the Contracting Parties.
2. The Contracting Parties shall abolish between them on the date of entry into force of this Agreement all customs duties on exports and all charges having equivalent effect.

Article 6

Quantitative Restrictions On Imports And Measures Having Equivalent Effect

1. No new quantitative restrictions on imports or measures having equivalent effect shall be introduced in trade between the Contracting Parties.
2. All quantitative restrictions and measures having equivalent effect on imports of products originating in the Contracting Parties shall be abolished on the date of entry into force of this Agreement.

Article 7

Quantitative Restrictions On Exports And Measures Having Equivalent Effect

1. No new quantitative restrictions on exports or measures having equivalent effect shall be introduced in trade between the Contracting Parties.
2. All quantitative restrictions and measures having equivalent effect on exports of products originating in the Contracting Parties shall be abolished on the date of entry into force of this Agreement.

Article 8

Technical Barriers To Trade

1. The Contracting Parties shall cooperate and exchange information in the field of standardisation, metrology, conformity assessment and accreditation, with the aim of reducing technical barriers to trade.
2. The rights and obligations of the Contracting Parties related to standards, technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures shall be stipulated as governed by the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade of the WTO.
3. Each Contracting Party, upon a request by the other Contracting Party, shall submit information on particular individual cases of standards, technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures.

4. To eliminate technical barriers and effectively implement this Agreement, the Contracting Parties can on the basis of this Article conclude an agreement on mutual recognition of test results, certificates of conformity and other documents directly or indirectly related to conformity assessment of products which are the subject of the goods exchange between the Contracting Parties on the basis of the regulations in force in the importing state.

5. A specification of conditions and methods for conformity assessment shall be prepared in the mutual agreement by the competent national authorities for carrying out procedures of conformity assessment on the basis of the regulations in force in the exporting state.

CHAPTER II AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS

Article 9 Scope

1. The provisions of this Chapter shall apply to agricultural products originating in the Contracting Parties.

2. The term "agricultural products" means for the purpose of this Agreement the products falling within Chapters 1 to 24 of the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System including the products listed in Annex I to this Agreement.

Article 10 Exchange Of Concessions

1. The Contracting Parties declare their readiness to foster, in so far as their agricultural policies allow, the harmonious development of the trade in agricultural products, and to discuss this issue periodically within the Joint Committee.

2. For the achievement of this objective, the Contracting Parties shall grant each other the concessions specified in Protocol A to this Agreement, providing for measures to promote the trade in agricultural products, in accordance with the provisions of this Chapter and those laid down in Protocol A.

3. Taking account of:

- (a) the role of agriculture in their economies;
- (b) the development of trade in agricultural products between the Contracting Parties;
- (c) the particular sensitivity of the agricultural products;
- (d) the rules of their agricultural policies;
- (e) the harmonisation of the agricultural policies of the Contracting Parties with the EU Common Agricultural Policy;
- (f) the consequences of the multilateral trade negotiations under the GATT and the WTO,

the Contracting Parties shall examine the possibilities of mutually granting further concessions.

Article 11

Concessions And Agricultural Policies

1. Without prejudice to the concessions granted under Article 10 of this Agreement, the provisions of this Chapter shall not restrict in any way the pursuance of the respective agricultural policies of the Contracting Parties or taking of any measures under such policies, including the implementation of the respective provisions of the Agreement on Agriculture within the framework of the WTO.

2. The Contracting Parties shall notify the Joint Committee of any changes in their respective agricultural policies pursued, or measures applied which may affect the conditions of agricultural trade between them as provided for in this Agreement. Prompt consultations within the Joint Committee shall be held, upon request of any Contracting Party, to examine the situation.

Article 12

Specific Safeguards

Notwithstanding other provisions of this Agreement and, in particular Article 25, if, given the particular sensitivity of the agricultural products, imports of products originating in a Contracting Party, which are subject to concessions granted under this Agreement, cause serious disturbances to the markets of the other Contracting Party, the Contracting Party concerned shall enter into consultations immediately to find the appropriate solution. Pending such solution, the Contracting Party concerned may take the measures it deems necessary.

Article 13

Veterinary, Sanitary And Phytosanitary Measures

1. Measures concerning veterinary and phytosanitary control between the Contracting Parties shall be harmonised on the basis of the respective EU legislation.

2. The veterinary and sanitary measures and the work of the veterinary services shall be in accordance with the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the International Office of Epizootics and other international conventions in this field.

3. The phytosanitary measures and the work of the plant protection service shall be in accordance with the International Plant Protection Convention and other international conventions in this field.

4. The Contracting Parties shall implement the sanitary and phytosanitary measures in a way corresponding to the Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures of the WTO.

5. The Contracting Parties shall apply their regulations in veterinary, sanitary and phytosanitary matters in a non-discriminatory fashion and shall not introduce any new measures that have the effect of unduly obstructing trade.

CHAPTER III GENERAL PROVISIONS

Article 14 Rules Of Origin And Co-Operation In Customs Administration

1. Protocol B to this Agreement lays down the rules of origin and related methods of administrative co-operation.
2. The Contracting Parties shall take appropriate measures, including regular reviews by the Joint Committee and arrangements for administrative co-operation, to ensure that the provisions of Protocol B to this Agreement and Articles 3 to 8, 10 to 13, 15 and 26 of this Agreement are effectively and harmoniously applied, and to reduce, as far as possible, the formalities imposed on trade, and to achieve mutually satisfactory solutions to any difficulties arising from the operation of those provisions.
3. The mutual assistance between administrative authorities in customs matters shall take place in accordance with the provisions of Protocol C to this Agreement.

Article 15 Internal Taxation

1. The Contracting Parties shall refrain from any measure or practice of an internal fiscal nature establishing, whether directly or indirectly, discrimination between the products originating in the Contracting Parties.
2. Products exported to the territory of one of the Contracting Parties may not benefit from repayment of internal taxation in excess of the amount of direct or indirect taxation imposed on them.

Article 16 General Exceptions

This Agreement shall not preclude prohibitions or restrictions on imports, exports or goods in transit justified on the grounds of:

- (a) the protection of public morality or public security;
- (b) the protection of health and life of humans;
- (c) the protection of animals and plants;
- (d) the environmental protection;
- (e) the preservation of exhaustible natural resources if such measures are made effective in conjunction with restrictions on domestic production or consumption;
- (f) the protection of national treasures of artistic, historic or archaeological value;
- (g) the protection of intellectual, industrial and commercial property;
- (h) the importations or exportations of gold and silver.

Such prohibitions or restrictions shall not, however, constitute a means of arbitrary discrimination or a disguised restriction on trade between the Contracting Parties.

Article 17

Security Exceptions

Nothing in this Agreement shall prevent a Contracting Party from taking any appropriate measure, which it considers necessary:

- (a) to prevent the disclosure of information contrary to its essential security interests;
- (b) for the protection of its essential security interests or for the implementation of international obligations or national policies;
 - (i) relating to the traffic in arms, ammunition and implements of war, provided that such measures do not impair the conditions of competition in respect of products not intended for specifically military purposes, and to such traffic in other goods, materials and services as is carried on directly or indirectly for the purpose of supplying a military establishment; or
 - (ii) relating to the non-proliferation of biological and chemical weapons, nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices; or
 - (iii) taken in time of war or other serious international tension, constituting threat of war.

Article 18

State Monopolies

1. The Contracting Parties shall adjust progressively any State monopoly of a commercial character so as to ensure that no discrimination regarding the conditions under which goods are procured and marketed exists between nationals of the Contracting Parties. The Contracting Parties shall inform each other about the measures adopted to implement this objective.

2. The provisions of this Article shall apply to any body through which the competent authorities of the Contracting Parties, in law or in fact, either directly or indirectly, supervise, determine or appreciably influence imports or exports between the Contracting Parties. These provisions shall likewise apply to monopolies delegated by a Contracting Party to other bodies.

Article 19

Payments

1. Payments in freely convertible currencies relating to trade in goods between the Contracting Parties and the transfer of such payments to the territory of the Contracting Party, where the creditor resides, shall be free from any restrictions.

2. The Contracting Parties shall refrain from any exchange or administrative restrictions on the grant, repayment or acceptance of short and medium-term credits related to trade in goods in which a resident of a Contracting Party participates.

3. Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph 2, any measures concerning current payments connected with the movement of goods shall be in conformity with the conditions laid down under Article VIII of the Articles of Agreement of the International Monetary Fund.

Article 20

Rules Of Competition Concerning Undertakings

1. The following is incompatible with the proper functioning of this Agreement in so far as they may affect trade between the Contracting Parties:

- (a) all agreements between undertakings, decisions by associations of undertakings and concerted practices between undertakings which have as their object or effect the prevention, restriction or distortion of competition;
- (b) abuse by one or more undertakings of a dominant position in the territories of the Contracting Parties as a whole or in a substantial part thereof.

2. The provisions of paragraph 1 of this Article shall apply to the activities of all undertakings including public undertakings and undertakings to which the Contracting Parties grant special or exclusive rights. Undertakings entrusted with the operation of services of general economic interest or having the character of a revenue-producing monopoly, shall be subject to provisions of paragraph 1 in so far as the application of these provisions does not obstruct the performance, in law or in fact, of the particular public tasks assigned to them.

3. With regard to products referred to in Chapter II the provisions stipulated in paragraph 1 (a) of this Article shall not apply to such agreements, decisions and practices which form an integral part of a national market organisation.

4. If a Contracting Party considers that a given practice is incompatible with paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of this Article, and if such practice causes or threatens to cause serious prejudice to the interests of that Contracting Party or material injury to its domestic industry, it may take appropriate measures under the conditions and in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article 29.

Article 21

State Aid

1. Any aid granted by a State being a Contracting Party to this Agreement or through State resources in any form whatever, which distorts or threatens to distort competition by favouring certain undertakings or the production of certain goods shall, in so far as it may affect trade between the Contracting Parties, be incompatible with the proper functioning of this Agreement.

2. The provisions of paragraph 1 of this Article shall not apply to products referred to in Chapter II.

3. The criteria on the basis of which the practices contrary to paragraph 1 of this Article shall be assessed, as well as the rules for their implementation, have to be compatible

with the respective criteria applied within the European Union and the implementing rules agreed between each of the Contracting Parties and the European Union.

4. The Contracting Parties shall ensure transparency in the area of state aid, inter alia, by reporting annually to the Joint Committee the total amount and the distribution of the aid given and by providing to the other Contracting Party, upon request, information on aid schemes and on particular individual cases of state aid.

5. If a Contracting Party considers that a particular practice:

(a) is incompatible with the terms of paragraph 1, and is not adequately dealt with under the implementing rules referred to in paragraph 3, or

(b) in the absence of such rules, referred to in paragraph 3, causes or threatens to cause serious prejudice to the interests of that Contracting Party or material injury to its domestic industry,

it may take appropriate measures under the conditions of and in accordance with the provisions of Article 29. Such appropriate measures may only be taken in conformity with the procedures and under the conditions laid down by the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 1994 and by the Agreement establishing the WTO and any other relevant instruments negotiated under their auspices which are applicable between the Contracting Parties.

Article 22

Public Procurement

1. The Contracting Parties consider the liberalisation of their respective public procurement markets as an objective of this Agreement. The Contracting Parties aim at opening up of the award of public procurement contracts on the basis of non-discrimination and reciprocity.

2. The Contracting Parties shall progressively develop their respective regulations, conditions and practices for procurement with a view to grant suppliers of the other Contracting Party access to contract award procedures on their respective public procurement markets according to the provisions of the Agreement on Government Procurement in Annex IV to the Agreement establishing the WTO.

3. The Joint Committee shall examine developments related to the achievement of the objectives of this Article and may recommend practical modalities of implementing the provisions of paragraph 2 so as to ensure free access, transparency and full balance of rights and obligations.

4. During the examination referred to in paragraph 3, the Joint Committee may consider, especially in the light of international developments and regulations in this area, the possibility of extending the coverage and/or the degree of the market opening provided for in paragraph 2.

Article 23

Protection Of Intellectual Property

1. The Contracting Parties confirm their will to respect the obligations arising from the WTO Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights, constituting Annex Ic to the Marrakesh Agreement establishing the WTO, as well as other conventions on intellectual property protection, signed by both Contracting Parties and listed in Annex II to this Agreement.

2. For the purposes of this Agreement the term "intellectual property" refers to all category of intellectual property such as: copyright, comprising computer programs and databases, and neighbouring rights, inventor's rights, trademarks and decorative patterns, geographical indications, including appellation of origin, industrial designs, utility models, patents, topographies of integrated circuits, undisclosed information, including know-how.

3. In fulfilment of their commitments under international agreements and legislation in the field of intellectual property rights, the Contracting Parties shall not grant to nationals of the other Contracting Party treatment less favourable than that accorded to nationals of any third country.

4. The Contracting Parties shall co-operate in matters of intellectual property. They shall hold, upon request of a Contracting Party, expert consultations on these matters, in particular, on activities relating to the existing or to future international conventions on harmonisation, administration and enforcement of intellectual property and on activities in international organisations, such as the, World Intellectual Property Organization, as well as relations of the Contracting Parties with any third country on matters concerning intellectual property.

5. The implementation of this Article shall be regularly assessed by the Contracting Parties. Upon difficulties in trade in relation to the rights of intellectual property, any of the Contracting Parties may request urgent consultations for finding mutually acceptable solutions.

Article 24 Dumping

If a Contracting Party finds that dumping within the meaning of Article VI of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 1994 is taking place in trade relations governed by this Agreement, it may take appropriate measures against that practice in accordance with Article VI of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 1994 and the Agreement on Implementation of Article VI of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 1994 and in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article 29.

Article 25 General Safeguards

Where any product is being imported in such increased quantities and under such conditions as to cause or threaten to cause:

(a) serious injury to domestic producers of like or directly competitive products in the territory of the importing Contracting Party, or

(b) serious disturbances in any related sector of the economy or difficulties which could bring about serious deterioration in the economic situation of a region, the Contracting Party concerned may take appropriate measures under the conditions and in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article 29.

Article 26

Structural Adjustment

1. Exceptional measures of limited duration which derogate from the provisions of Article 29 may be taken by any of the Contracting Parties in the form of increased customs duties.

2. These measures may only concern infant industries, or certain sectors undergoing restructuring or facing serious difficulties, particularly where these difficulties produce important social problems.

3. Customs duties on imports applicable in the Contracting Party concerned to products originating in the other Contracting Party introduced by these measures may not exceed 25 per cent ad valorem and shall maintain an element of preference for products originating in the other Contracting Party. The total value of imports of the product which are subject to these measures may not exceed 15 per cent of total imports of industrial products from the other Contracting Party as defined in Chapter I during the last year for which statistics are available.

4. These measures shall be applied for a period not exceeding two consecutive years.

5. No such measures shall be introduced in respect of a product if more than three years have elapsed since the entry into force of this Agreement.

6. The Contracting Party concerned shall inform the Joint Committee of any exceptional measures it intends to take and, upon request of the other Contracting Party, consultations shall be held within the Joint Committee on such measures and the sectors to which they apply prior their introduction. When taking such measures the Contracting Party concerned shall provide the Joint Committee with a schedule for the elimination of the customs duties introduced under this Article. This schedule shall provide for a phasing out of these customs duties starting at the latest one year after their introduction, at equal annual rates. The Joint Committee may decide on a different schedule.

Article 27

Re-Export And Serious Shortage

1. Where compliance with the provisions of Articles 5 and 7 leads to:

(a) re-export towards a third country against which the exporting Contracting Party maintains for the product concerned quantitative export restrictions, export duties or measures or charges having equivalent effect; or

(b) a serious shortage, or threat thereof, of a product essential to the exporting Contracting Party;

and where the situations referred to above give rise or are likely to give rise to major difficulties for the exporting Contracting Party, that Contracting Party may take appropriate measures under the conditions and in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article 29.

2. Measures taken as a result of the situation referred to in paragraph 1 shall be eliminated when the conditions no longer justify their maintenance and in case of the situation referred to in a paragraph 1 (b) shall be applied in a non-discriminatory manner.

Article 28

Fulfilment Of Obligations

1. The Contracting Parties shall take all necessary measures required to fulfill their obligations under this Agreement. They shall see to it that the objectives set out in this Agreement are attained.

2. If a Contracting Party considers that the other Contracting Party has failed to fulfil an obligation under this Agreement, the Contracting Party concerned may take appropriate measures under the conditions and in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article 29.

Article 29

Procedure For The Application Of Safeguard Measures

1. Before initiating the procedure for the application of safeguard measures set out in the following paragraphs of this Article, the Contracting Parties shall endeavour to solve any differences between them through direct consultations.

2. In the event of a Contracting Party subjecting imports of products liable to give rise to the situation referred to in Article 25 to an administrative procedure having as its purpose the rapid provision of information on the trend of trade flows, it shall inform the other Contracting Party.

3. Without prejudice to paragraph 7 of this Article, a Contracting Party, which considers resorting to safeguard measures, shall promptly notify the other Contracting Party thereof and supply all relevant information. Consultations between the Contracting Parties shall take place without delay in the Joint Committee with a view to finding a mutually acceptable solution.

4. (a) With regard to Articles 24, 25 and 27, the Joint Committee shall examine the case or the situation and may take any decision needed to put an end to the difficulties notified by the Contracting Party concerned. In the case of absence of such decision within thirty days of the matter being referred to the Joint Committee, the Contracting Party concerned may adopt the measures necessary in order to remedy the situation.
(b) With regard to Article 28, the Contracting Party concerned may take appropriate measures after the consultations have been concluded or a period of three months has elapsed from the date of the first notification to the other Contracting Party.

(c) With regard to Articles 20 and 21, the Contracting Party concerned shall give the Joint Committee all the assistance required in order to examine the case and, where appropriate, eliminate the practice objected to. If the Contracting Party in question fails to put an end to the practice objected to within the period fixed by the Joint Committee or if the Joint Committee fails to reach an agreement within sixty days of the matter being referred to it, the Contracting Party concerned may adopt the appropriate measures to deal with the difficulties resulting from the practice in question.

5. The safeguard measures taken shall be immediately notified to the Joint Committee. They shall be limited with regard to their extent and duration to what is strictly necessary in order to rectify the situation giving rise to their application and shall not be in excess of the injury caused by the practice or the difficulty in question. Priority shall be given to such measures that will least disturb the functioning of this Agreement.

6. The safeguard measures taken shall be the subject of periodic consultations within the Joint Committee with a view to their relaxation as soon as possible or abolition when conditions no longer justify their maintenance.

7. Where exceptional circumstances requiring immediate action make prior examination impossible, the Contracting Party concerned may, in the cases provided for in Articles 24, 25 and 27 apply forthwith the provisional measures strictly necessary to remedy the situation. The measures shall be notified without delay and consultations between the Contracting Parties shall take place as soon as possible within the Joint Committee.

Article 30

Balance Of Payments Difficulties

1. The Parties shall endeavour to avoid the imposition of restrictive measures including measures relating to imports for balance of payments purposes.

2. Where a Contracting Party is in serious balance of payments difficulties or under imminent threat thereof, it may, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 1994 and the Agreement establishing the World Trade Organization adopt restrictive measures, including measures related to imports, which shall be of limited duration and may not go beyond what is necessary to remedy the balance of payments situation. The measures shall be progressively relaxed as balance of payments conditions improve and they shall be eliminated when conditions no longer justify their maintenance. The Contracting Party concerned shall inform the other Contracting Party forthwith of their introduction and, whenever practicable, of a schedule for their removal.

Article 31

Evolutionary Clause

1. Where a Contracting Party considers that it would be useful in the interests of the economies of the Contracting Parties to develop and deepen the relations established by this Agreement by extending them to fields not covered thereby, it shall submit a reasonable request to the other Contracting Party. The Contracting Parties may instruct

the Joint Committee to examine such a request and, where appropriate, to make recommendations, particularly with a view to opening negotiations.

2. Agreements resulting from the procedure referred to in paragraph 1 shall be subject to ratification or the approval by the Contracting Parties in accordance with their internal legislation.

Article 32

Customs Unions, Free Trade Areas And Frontier Trade

1. This Agreement shall not prevent the maintenance or establishment of customs unions, free trade areas or arrangements for frontier trade to the extent that these do not negatively affect trade between the Contracting Parties and in particular the provisions concerning rules of origin provided for by this Agreement.

2. Upon request, consultations between the Contracting Parties shall take place within the Joint Committee, in order to inform each other about any agreement establishing such customs union or free trade area.

Article 33

Services And Investments

1. The Contracting Parties recognise the growing importance of certain areas, such as services and investments. In their efforts to gradually develop and broaden their co-operation, in particular in the context of the European integration, they will co-operate with the aim of achieving a progressive liberalisation and mutual opening of markets for investments and trade in services, taking into account relevant provisions of the General Agreement on Trade in Services.

2. The Contracting Parties shall discuss in the Joint Committee the possibilities to extend their trade relations to the fields of foreign direct investment and trade in services.

CHAPTER IV

INSTITUTIONAL AND FINAL PROVISIONS

Article 34

The Joint Committee

1. Hereby the Contracting Parties agree that a Joint Committee is established in which each Contracting Party shall be represented.

2. The Joint Committee shall supervise and administer the implementation of this Agreement.

3. For the purpose of the proper implementation of the Agreement, the Contracting Parties shall exchange information and, upon request of any Contracting Party, shall hold

consultations within the Joint Committee. The Joint Committee shall keep under review the possibility of further removal of obstacles to trade between the Contracting Parties.

4. The Joint Committee may take decisions in the cases provided for in this Agreement. On other matters the Joint Committee may make recommendations.

Article 35

Procedures Of The Joint Committee

1. For the proper implementation of this Agreement the Joint Committee shall meet whenever necessary but at least once a year. Each Contracting Party may request that a meeting be held.

2. The Joint Committee shall act by common agreement.

3. If a decision of the Joint Committee is subject to the fulfilment of internal legal requirements of either Contracting Party, the decision shall enter into force, if no later date is foreseen therein, on the day of the receipt of the latter diplomatic note confirming that their internal legal requirements necessary for the entry into force of that decision have been fulfilled.

4. For the purpose of this Agreement the Joint Committee shall adopt its rules of procedure, which shall, inter alia, contain provisions for convening meetings and for the designation of the Chairman and his/her term of office.

5. The Joint Committee may decide to set up subcommittees and working groups, as it considers necessary to assist it in accomplishing its tasks.

Article 36

Annexes And Protocols

Annexes and Protocols to this Agreement are an integral part of it.

Article 37

Amendments

1. Amendments to this Agreement shall be made by the consent of the Contracting Parties and shall enter into force on the date of the receipt of the latter diplomatic note confirming that the internal legal requirements of the Contracting Parties for the entry into force of the amendments have been fulfilled.

2. Amendments to the Annexes and Protocols as well as technical amendments to the text of this Agreement may be made by the decision of the Joint Committee.

Article 38

Entry Into Force

1. This Agreement is subject to ratification.

2. This Agreement shall enter into force on the first day of the month following the date of receipt of the latter diplomatic note confirming that the respective internal legal requirements of the Contracting Parties for the entry into force of this Agreement have been fulfilled.

3. Pending the entry into force of this Agreement in accordance with paragraph 2 of this Article, the Contracting Parties agree to apply the Agreement provisionally from 1 January 2002.

Article 39

Validity And Denunciation

1. This Agreement is concluded for an unlimited period of time.

2. Either Contracting Party may denounce this Agreement by a written notification to the other Contracting Party. The denunciation shall take effect on the first day of the sixth month following the date on which the other Contracting Party received the notification.

3. Both Contracting Parties agree that in the event of a Contracting Party to this Agreement becoming a member of the European Union, that Contracting Party will withdraw from this Agreement at the latest the day before membership takes effect, and without any compensation to the other Party.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF the undersigned plenipotentiaries, being duly authorised thereto, have signed this Agreement.

DONE at Sofia this 11th day of December two thousand and one in two originals in English language.

1 The Annexes and Protocols of the Agreement have been submitted to the Secretariat for consultation by interested Members. (Office 1174).

WT/REG149/1

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