

PRESS RELEASE

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At a ceremony held in Luxembourg on 4 October 1993, the European Communities and their Member States signed new European Association Agreements with the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic.

These two Agreements between the Community and each of the two independent Republics were negotiated from 1 January 1993 onwards, following the dissolution of the former Federal State, and are to take the place of the Agreement signed on 16 December 1991 with the latter.

- The Association Agreement with the Czech Republic was signed by:

Mr Josef Zieleniec

Minister for Foreign Affairs

- The Association Agreement with the Slovak Republic was signed by:

Mr Vladimír Meciar

Prime Minister

- The two Agreements were signed
- for the European Communities by:

Mr Willy CLAES

**Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Belgium,
President-in-Office of the Council**

**Sir Leon BRITTAN
Mr Hans VAN DEN BROEK**

**Vice-President of the Commission
Member of the Commission**

- for the Member States of the European Communities by:

Mr Robert URBAIN

Minister for External Trade and European Affairs of the Kingdom of Belgium

Mr Niels HELVEG PETERSEN

Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Denmark

Mr Klaus KINKEL

Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany

Mr Michel PAPACONSTANTINO

Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic

Mr Javier SOLANA

Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Spain

Mr Alain JUPPE

Minister for Foreign Affairs of the French Republic

Mr Dick SPRING

Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ireland

Mr Paolo BARATTA

Minister for Foreign Trade of the Italian Republic

Mr Jacques POOS

Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

Mr Peter KOOIJMANS

Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

Mr José Manuel DURÃO BARROSO

Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Portuguese Republic

Mr David HEATHCOAT-AMORY

Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Mr Jacques DELORS, President of the Commission, was also present at the ceremony.

In essence, the new Agreements with the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic reproduce the content of the previous Europe Agreement of December 1991. However, the new Agreements incorporate adjustments made necessary by the new situation of the two partners and by developments since the signing in December 1991 of the former Europe Agreement with Czechoslovakia.

A significant amendment is the introduction of the clause resulting from a general policy established by the EC Council in May 1992, stating that respect for human rights, democratic principles and the principles of market economy is an essential element of the association.

With regard to trade, the two new Agreements adopt the allocation, established by common accord between the two Republics, of the quotas and ceilings negotiated in 1991 for Czechoslovakia as a whole. The Protocol relating to rules of origin has been amended to allow for cumulation not only between the two Republics, but also with the other Visegrad countries.

For iron and steel products, a specific clause adopts the temporary arrangements which were agreed upon for imports during the period 1993-1995.

The new agreements incorporate the additional trade concessions decided on by the Copenhagen European Council for all the associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe. This involves speeding up the stages laid down for opening up the Community market, thus accentuating the asymmetrical character of the Agreements. Customs duties on sensitive basic industrial products will be reduced in such a way as to result in their total abolition after two years rather than four. Duties on industrial products covered by the consolidation of the GSP will be abolished at the end of the third instead of the fifth year, and the quotas or ceilings for these products will be increased by 30% annually instead of 20%. Regarding textiles, the six-year period for total abolition of customs duties has been brought down to five years and for iron and steel products this period has been shortened from five to four years. In the agricultural sector, the reduction of levies in connection with quotas and the increase in the amount of the quotas will take effect six months earlier than originally planned.

These provisions are part of a more extensive group of measures decided on in Copenhagen for the benefit of the six associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

Another area which had to be clarified in the new Agreements is that of road transit. The previous exchanges of letters between the Community and Czechoslovakia have been taken over, but it is expressly stated that the two new Republics must not create difficulties for the passage of vehicles across their common frontier, alter the total number of transit licences or increase the overall amount of tolls.

The new Agreements require the assent of the European Parliament and will be ratified by the Czech and Slovak Parliaments and by the Parliaments of the Member States of the Community; pending the completion of these procedures, the interim Agreements will remain in force, thus already enabling the two Republics to benefit from the improved trade conditions decided on in Copenhagen.

