

DECISION ON PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Ministers decide to recommend that the Council for Trade in Services at its first meeting adopt the decision set out below.

The Council for Trade in Services,

Recognizing the impact of regulatory measures relating to professional qualifications, technical standards and licensing on the expansion of trade in professional services;

Desiring to establish multilateral disciplines with a view to ensuring that, when specific commitments are undertaken, such regulatory measures do not constitute unnecessary barriers to the supply of professional services;

Decides as follows:

1. The work programme foreseen in paragraph 4 of Article VI on Domestic Regulation should be put into effect immediately. To this end, a Working Party on Professional Services shall be established to examine and report, with recommendations, on the disciplines necessary to ensure that measures relating to qualification requirements and procedures, technical standards and licensing requirements in the field of professional services do not constitute unnecessary barriers to trade.
2. As a matter of priority, the Working Party shall make recommendations for the elaboration of multilateral disciplines in the accountancy sector, so as to give operational effect to specific commitments. In making these recommendations, the Working Party shall concentrate on:
 - (a) developing multilateral disciplines relating to market access so as to ensure that domestic regulatory requirements are: (i) based on objective and transparent criteria, such as competence and the ability to supply the service; (ii) not more burdensome than necessary to ensure the quality of the service, thereby facilitating the effective liberalization of accountancy services;
 - (b) the use of international standards and, in doing so, it shall encourage the cooperation with the relevant international organizations as defined under paragraph 5(b) of Article VI, so as to give full effect to paragraph 5 of Article VII;
 - (c) facilitating the effective application of paragraph 6 of Article VI of the Agreement by establishing guidelines for the recognition of qualifications.

In elaborating these disciplines, the Working Party shall take account of the importance of the governmental and non-governmental bodies regulating professional services.