

Abstract: Legal aspects of cooperation between the EU and ACP countries

The origins of the EU cooperation with the group of Sub-saharan African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (ACP Group) date back to the very beginnings of the European integration with Part IV of the Treaty of Rome establishing association of the former colonies of the several founding member states to the European Economic Community. After the colonies gained their independence, their association to the EEC was given a basis of the international law by means of the conventions from Yaoundé (1963, 1969) and Lomé (1975, 1980, 1985, 1990 – revised in 1995). The cooperation between the EC/EU and ACP countries has progressively evolved into a comprehensive partnership encompassing the political, development and economic cooperation. The relations between the EU and 78 ACP countries are actually ruled by the Cotonou Partnership Agreement (2000, revised in 2005 and 2010) which is to be in force until 2020. The EU-ACP partnership constitutes a specific system of international law and probably can be described as the most comprehensive relationship between developed and developing countries. In many ways, the cooperation with the ACP countries represents a special case in the field of the EU external relations and, due to a specific historical development, it comprises some special features, like for example the European development fund which, unlike all the other financial instruments of the EU external cooperation, is not part of the EU budget and is ruled by a special legal regulation. The EU-ACP partnership is based on three mutually complementary pillars: development cooperation, economic and trade cooperation, and the political dimension. The main objective of the Partnership, according to the Cotonou agreement, is to promote the economic, cultural and social development of the ACP States, with a view to contributing to peace and security and to promoting a stable and democratic political environment. The partnership

should be centred on the objective of reducing and eventually eradicating poverty consistent with the objectives of sustainable development and the gradual integration of the ACP countries into the world economy.

The first part of the thesis provides a brief historical background of the EU-ACP partnership and while the bulk of the study is devoted to analysis of the Cotonou partnership Agreement and three main areas of the EU-ACP cooperation. The aim of the study is to describe the main characteristics of the legal and institutional framework of the partnership, its main principles and goals and to analyse the most important legal issues. The attention is focused mainly on the political dialogue as the primary tool of the political cooperation, the European Development Fund as the tool of the development cooperation and Economic Partnership Agreement as the new and in many ways problematic basis of the economic and trade cooperation.