


Procedure file

| Basic information | | |
|--|----------------|---------------------|
| COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic) | 1997/2050(COS) | Procedure completed |
| Green taxation: environmental taxes and charges in the single market | | |
| Subject 3.70.15 Environmental taxation | | |

| Key players | | | |
|-------------------------------|--|--|---|
| European Parliament | Committee responsible | | Rapporteur |
| | ENVI Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection | | Appointed 09/10/1996 |
| | | | ELDR OLSSON Karl Erik |
| | Committee for opinion | | Rapporteur for opinion |
| | ECON Economic and Monetary Affairs, Industrial Policy | | Appointed 18/06/1997 |
| | | | PSE KUCKELKORN Wilfried |
| | ENER Research, Technological Development and Energy | | 27/05/1997 |
| | | | V HOLM Ulf |
| Council of the European Union | JURI Legal Affairs, Citizens' Rights | | 21/05/1997 |
| | | | V ULLMANN Wolfgang |
| | Council configuration | | Meeting |
| | Environment | | 2033 |
| | Environment | | 1990 |
| | | | Date |
| | | | 16/10/1997 |
| | | | 03/03/1997 |

| Key events | | | |
|------------|--|---|---------|
| 03/03/1997 | Debate in Council | 1990 | |
| 26/03/1997 | Non-legislative basic document published | COM(1997)0009 | Summary |
| 23/04/1997 | Committee referral announced in Parliament | | |
| 16/10/1997 | Debate in Council | 2033 | |
| 20/05/1998 | Vote in committee | | Summary |
| 20/05/1998 | Committee report tabled for plenary | A4-0200/1998 | |
| 14/07/1998 | Debate in Parliament |  | |
| 15/07/1998 | Decision by Parliament | T4-0427/1998 | Summary |
| | End of procedure in Parliament | | |

| | | | |
|------------|---|--|--|
| 15/07/1998 | | | |
| 21/09/1998 | Final act published in Official Journal | | |

Technical information

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Procedure reference | 1997/2050(COS) |
| Procedure type | COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic) |
| Procedure subtype | Commission strategy paper |
| Legal basis | Rules of Procedure EP 142 |
| Stage reached in procedure | Procedure completed |
| Committee dossier | ENVI/4/08761 |

Documentation gateway

| | | | | | |
|---|--|--|------------|-----|---------|
| Non-legislative basic document | | COM(1997)0009 | 26/03/1997 | EC | Summary |
| Economic and Social Committee: opinion, report | | CES0993/1997 OJ C 355 21.11.1997, p. 0079 | 01/10/1997 | ESC | Summary |
| Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading | | A4-0200/1998 OJ C 210 06.07.1998, p. 0006 | 20/05/1998 | EP | |
| Text adopted by Parliament, single reading | | T4-0427/1998 OJ C 292 21.09.1998, p. 0054-0068 | 15/07/1998 | EP | Summary |

Green taxation: environmental taxes and charges in the single market

OBJECTIVE: The Commission has on numerous occasions advocated greater use of fiscal instruments to render environmental policy more effective, especially in cost terms. Most of these instruments have been instituted at Member State level. This communication is intended to support these activities and to ensure that environmental taxes and levies are utilized in accordance with Community law. SUBSTANCE: This communication is the first initiative to come from the Commission on the matter of the utilization of environmental taxes. It sets out the existing legal framework for the utilization of environmental taxes and levies by the Member States in the context of the single market, and specifies Member States' rights and duties in the field. It does not consider the advantages and disadvantages as regards the economic viability and environmental effectiveness of the utilization of environmental taxes at Member State level, it does, however, furnish Member States with a general view of the obligations which should be taken account of when envisaging such taxes or levies. The communication shows that Member States have a wide margin of manoeuvre when introducing these fiscal instruments, even allowing for the need to respect their obligations under the Treaty (the annex to the communication contains a description of the ways in which Member States currently utilize the taxes concerned). The Commission says that it will continue to examine the matter of environmental taxation, in cooperation with all interested parties. This will include: - the systematic gathering of Member States' experiences in the utilization of existing environmental taxes; - the systematic analysis of the environmental effect of such taxation in the Member States; - the systematic analysis of the effects of such taxation on the internal market and the competitiveness of EU industry.. The results of these studies will be used to establish conclusions regarding future policy on the utilization of instruments of this nature at both Community and national level. ?

Green taxation: environmental taxes and charges in the single market

The Committee welcomes the Commission communication whilst making a number of recommendations regarding the future use of environmental taxes and charges. The ESC recalls its earlier opinion that environmental levies should not entail an increase in the overall tax burden in any of the Member States and that consideration should be given to the possible effects of such levies on competitiveness and employment in the community. The Committee then urges the Commission to complete its analysis of the economic and environmental impact of environmental levies in as short a time as possible and to put into practice the general policy conclusions to be drawn therefrom. Secondly, the ESC points to the danger that the lack of clear and precise Commission guidelines will result in the uncontrolled development of environmental levies and pose a threat to the single market. The Committee considers that the legal framework laid down in the communication only partly allays these concerns. The Committee would therefore urge the Commission, as soon as it has completed its analysis of the economic and environmental impact of the levies, to draw up an additional communication setting out precisely and clearly the criteria which should govern the imposition of such levies by the Member States. It would consequently be appropriate for the Commission to submit a prior resolution to the Environment, Ecofin and Single Market Councils underpinning this initiative legally. ?

Green taxation: environmental taxes and charges in the single market

The Commission should promote the use of certain environmental levies (taxes) in Member States, the Committee urged when it unanimously adopted a resolution drafted by Mr Karl Erik OLSSON (ELDR, S) on a Commission communication on the subject. In his report under the consultation procedure, Mr Olsson points out that environmental taxes can correct false price signals in the market by incorporating the costs of pollution and other environmental costs into prices. The result would be to reduce pollution and the non-sustainable use of natural resources. Advocating a shift in taxation from labour to the environment, the resolution adopted requests the Commission to propose EU environmental levies for specific products, such as cars, fuels, pesticides, batteries and packaging. The Commission is also asked to produce a study into the use of environmental levies for water, energy, transport, packaging, construction, chemical pesticides, fertilizers and chlorinated compounds. A tax on carbon dioxide emissions should be introduced without delay and hidden subsidies for heavily polluting economic processes or products should be abolished. The resolution recognizes, however, that the use of environmental levies could distort competition between those Member States which introduced them and those which did not, thus making it desirable for such levies to be introduced by all Member States together. "It is in the interest of all Member States to avoid a renationalization of environmental policy and to view this communication as an incentive for a common environmental policy in the fiscal sphere," it said. The committee also believes that it is important for the European Union to promote the use of environmental taxes internationally, eg in the World Trade Organisation. In addition, the Commission should survey the environmental taxes levied in the candidate countries of central and eastern Europe. The resolution notes that the Court of Justice has so far interpreted environmental levies very restrictively within the Community's legal framework. It requests the Commission to assess the compatibility of environmental taxes in Member States with EU legislation. In the event of conflict between the internal market and the environment, the Commission should use its scope for interpretation to benefit environmental policy.?

Green taxation: environmental taxes and charges in the single market

In adopting the report by Mr Karl Erik OLSSON (ELDR, S) by 418 votes to 80 with 19 abstentions Parliament called on the Commission to encourage the use of environmental taxes in the Member States. While it welcomed the Commission communication it regretted that it only clarified how national environmental taxes and charges could be brought into line with Community law. It called on the Commission to examine the question of the economic impact of environmental taxes and charges and their effect on the creation and destruction of jobs and on international competitiveness. Parliament called on the Commission to:

- put forward binding and non-binding common guidelines as to how environmental taxes, aiming in the same direction and neutral with regard to competition might be introduced by a large number of Member States;
- base its proposals as regards environmental taxation on Article 130s of the Treaty;
- bring forward immediately proposals concerning the application by all Member States of economic instruments aimed at reducing pollution and non-sustainable use of natural resources;
- assist, by means of recommendations to the Member States, in transferring the tax burden away from the labour component towards the environmental consumption component;
- take measures to facilitate harmonised economic policies in sectors such as energy and transport;
- propose environmental levies for certain specific products;
- produce a study concerning the use of environmental levies on water, energy, transport, packaging, construction, chemical pesticides, fertilisers and chlorinated compounds. A CO₂ energy tax should also be introduced.

In the interim Parliament called on the Commission to consider whether a change could be made to the VAT Directive to introduce a higher rate of value added tax on energy. Parliament considered that it was important for the European Union to promote the use of environmental taxes on an international level, for example in the framework of the World Trade Organisation. The Commission should also consider the environmental taxes and charges in use in the countries of central and eastern Europe. The Court of Justice of the European Communities had made a very restrictive interpretation of environmental levies within the Community's legal framework. Parliament therefore called on the Commission to ensure the compatibility of environmental taxes in Member States with EU legislation. In the event of conflict between the internal market and the environment, the Commission should use its scope for interpretation to benefit environmental policy. ?