Procedure file

Basic information

COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic)	1996/2039(COS)	Procedure completed
Trade and environment Subject 3.70 Environmental policy 5.03 Global economy and globalisation 6.20.01 Agreements and relations in the context of the World Trade Organization (WTO)		

Key players

European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	RELA External Economic Relations	V KREISSL-DÖRFLER Wolfgang	21/03/1996
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	ECON Economic and Monetary Affairs, Industrial Policy	ELDR RIIS-JØRGENSEN Karin	24/04/1996
	ENVI Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection	ELDR PIMENTA Carlos	24/04/1996
	DEVE Development and Cooperation		
Council of the European Union	Council configuration	Meeting	Date
	General Affairs	1943	16/07/1996
	Environment	1939	26/06/1996

Key events

28/02/1996	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(1996)0054	Summary
27/03/1996	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
26/06/1996	Debate in Council	1939	
16/07/1996	Resolution/conclusions adopted by Council		
10/10/1996	Vote in committee		Summary
10/10/1996	Committee report tabled for plenary	A4-0319/1996	

13/11/1996	Debate in Parliament		
14/11/1996	Decision by Parliament	T4-0599/1996	Summary
14/11/1996	End of procedure in Parliament		
02/12/1996	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information

Procedure reference	1996/2039(COS)
Procedure type	COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic)
Procedure subtype	Commission strategy paper
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 148
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	RELA/4/07685

Documentation gateway

Non-legislative basic document		COM(1996)0054	28/02/1996	EC	Summary
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A4-0319/1996 OJ C 347 18.11.1996, p. 0006	10/10/1996	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T4-0599/1996 OJ C 362 02.12.1996, p. 0225-0245	14/11/1996	EP	Summary

Trade and environment

OBJECTIVE: to lay down the Commission's guidelines on relations between trade and the environment. SUBSTANCE: the Commission communication lays down the guidelines for an appropriate Community policy which takes into account the current international discussions in preparation for the first WTO ministerial conference, which is scheduled to take place in Singapore in December 1996. The key idea which emerges from the Commission document is that trade policy and environmental policy may complement one another in pursuit of the objective of sustainable development and that economic performance and environmental performance are not necessarily incompatible. While recognizing that achieving environmental benefits may in some cases entail additional short-term costs, the Commission considers there to be a wide range of 'win-win' opportunities in the design and implementation of environmental policies: efficient use of resources, competitiveness and employment. Similarly, differences in environmental policies cannot justify the introduction of eco-duties levied on imported products as a means of compensating for the unfair competitive advantage which could result from the existence of lower environmental standards in the exporting countries than in the importing countries. According to the Commission the most effective way of tackling international environmental problems is to conclude international multilateral agreements and not to adopt unilateral trade measures. It also considers that the situation and the particular needs of developing countries and economies in transition should be taken into consideration as regards the question of trade and the environment. The EU is called upon to provide these countries with technical assistance which will enable them to adopt cleaner technologies. ?

Trade and environment

As part of the preparations for the WTO conference in Singapore, the Committee on External Economic Relations adopted a report by Mr KREISS-DÖRFLER advocating that a separate United Nations agency be set up specifically to monitor multilateral environmental agreements. In the interim, WTO panels considering trade and environmental matters should ensure greater transparency and participation by environmental experts. The proposal for a resolution attached to the report calls for a code of conduct for transnational corporations as well as a general ban on domestically prohibited goods. It also considered that environmental impact costs should be internalized in energy prices and welcomed the adoption of border taxes on manufactured products. Member States could continue to restrict or ban imports of goods for reasons of consumer health and environmental protection, provided that these measures were not discriminatory. Finally, the committee emphasized that the social and human rights dimension was inseparable from the environmental dimension of trade issues and called on the Commission and the Member States to seek the revision of the relative article of the GATT at the conference.?

Trade and environment

In adopting the report by Mr Wolfgang KREISSL-DÖRFER (Greens, D), Parliament advocated the establishment of a separate UN agency

specifically to monitor international environmental agreements. In the interim, WTO panels considering trade and environment matters should ensure greater transparency and participation by environmental experts. The resolution calls for the establishment of a code of conduct for transnational corporations, as well as a general ban on the export of domestically prohibited goods. The EP also considered that environmental impact costs should be internalized in the prices of energy, and welcomed the adoption of border taxes on manufactured products. Member States may continue to restrict or prohibit the import of goods for reasons of consumer health and environmental protection provided that such measures are non-discriminatory. Finally, the EP emphasized that the social and human rights dimension is inseparable from the environmental dimension of trade issues. The Commission and the Member States were called upon to seek the revision of Article XX of the GATT Agreement at the Singapore Ministerial Conference in December 1996. ?