


Procedure file

Basic information	
COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic)	1997/2243(COS)
Amsterdam Treaty: increased cooperation	Procedure completed
Subject	8.40.10 Interinstitutional relations, subsidiarity, proportionality, comitology

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	INST Institutional Affairs		19/01/1998
		ELDR FRISCHENSCHLAGER Friedhelm	
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	LIBE Civil Liberties and Internal Affairs		05/02/1998
		ELDR GOERENS Charles	
Council of the European Union			

Key events			
02/10/1997	Non-legislative basic document published	AMSTERDAM	
05/11/1997	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
24/06/1998	Vote in committee		Summary
24/06/1998	Committee report tabled for plenary	A4-0257/1998	
15/07/1998	Debate in Parliament		
16/07/1998	Decision by Parliament	T4-0437/1998	Summary
16/07/1998	End of procedure in Parliament		
21/09/1998	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	1997/2243(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	INST/4/09415

Documentation gateway					
Non-legislative basic document		AMSTERDAM	02/10/1997	EU	Summary
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A4-0257/1998 OJ C 292 21.09.1998, p. 0004	24/06/1998	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T4-0437/1998 OJ C 292 21.09.1998, p. 0105-0143	16/07/1998	EP	Summary

Amsterdam Treaty: increased cooperation

The Committee adopted the own-initiative report by Friedhelm FRISCHENSCHLAGER (ELDR, A) on the subject of "closer cooperation", which is provided for in the Amsterdam Treaty and allows a group of Member States to go further than the rest in certain policy areas. MEPs, however, want this option to be exceptional and limited in nature, so as to ensure that the EU's policies remain coherent. They are particularly keen to emphasise the conditions which must be respected if this procedure is to be used: it must only be used as a last resort, it must not affect the rights and interests of non-participating Member States and it must be neutral with respect to conditions of competition between Member States. At the same time, the committee warns against using the right of veto granted under the Treaty to Member States which wish, for important reasons of national policy, to oppose any specific use of the provisions on closer cooperation. It believes that this right should only be used exceptionally and as a last resort in cases of political emergency. It calls on the Commission to include, in its report containing proposals for comprehensive reform of the Treaties, the abolition of this virtual veto. The process for launching closer cooperation, argues the committee, must be subject to democratic scrutiny by the European Parliament and the principle of the unity of the budget must be respected. The report also says that it is unrealistic to expect that closer cooperation can provide a suitable framework for meeting the main challenges that lie ahead for European integration, such as enlargement and the economic aspects of EMU. It therefore calls on the Commission to make a study of the potential applications of closer cooperation with a view to entry into force of the Amsterdam Treaty. ¿

Amsterdam Treaty: increased cooperation

Adopting the report by Mr Friedhelm Frischenschlager (ELDR, A) by 372 votes to 75 with 33 abstentions, Parliament wished this closer cooperation to be 'exceptional and temporary' for the sake of the coherence of EU policies. It stressed compliance with the conditions for recourse to the provisions on closer cooperation, in particular: respect for the *acquis communautaire* and the single institutional framework, use only as a last resort, respect for the rights and interests of non-participating Member States and neutrality with respect to conditions of competition between Member States. Parliament considered that closer cooperation might lend itself better to implementing action programmes in areas such as police and judicial cooperation, industrial policy, research, education, vocational training or the environment, than to enactment of legislation and warned against the option provided by the Amsterdam Treaty for Member States to oppose recourse to the provisions on closer cooperation for important reasons of national policy, considering that this could only be an exceptional option of last resort in cases of political emergency. The plenary rejected Paragraph 12 of the report calling on the Commission to propose deleting this quasi-veto in its report on a reform of all the Treaties. The process of engaging in any closer cooperation would have to be subject to democratic scrutiny by Parliament. In first pillar matters, the Commission must undertake to withdraw any proposal for closer cooperation where Parliament delivered a negative opinion. Where close cooperation took place, the principle of the unity of the budget must be adhered to. Parliament also considered that it would be unrealistic to expect that closer cooperation could provide a suitable institutional framework for meeting the main challenges that lay head for European integration (enlargement and deepening the economic aspects of EMU). Consequently, it called on the Commission to make a study of the potential applications of closer cooperation with a view to entry into force of the Amsterdam Treaty. ?