


Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2002/2223(INI)	Procedure completed
Analysis and open method of coordination in the fields of employment and social matters		
Subject		
4.10 Social policy, social charter and protocol		
4.15 Employment policy, action to combat unemployment		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	EMPL Employment and Social Affairs		12/06/2002
		PPE-DE SMET Miet	
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	FEMM Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities		26/11/2002
		PSE GILLIG Marie-Hélène	

Key events			
21/11/2002	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
24/04/2003	Vote in committee		Summary
24/04/2003	Committee report tabled for plenary	A5-0143/2003	
04/06/2003	Debate in Parliament		
05/06/2003	Decision by Parliament	T5-0267/2003	Summary
05/06/2003	End of procedure in Parliament		
18/03/2004	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2002/2223(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	EMPL/5/16909

Documentation gateway					
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A5-0143/2003	24/04/2003	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T5-0267/2003 OJ C 068 18.03.2004, p. 0335-0604 E	05/06/2003	EP	Summary

Analysis and open method of coordination in the fields of employment and social matters

The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Miet SMET (EPP-ED, B) on the analysis of the open coordination procedure in the field of employment and social affairs. The report highlighted the need for proper supervision of new political processes such as the open method of coordination. This method, which has gradually become part of practical policy-making, enables Member States to coordinate certain policies voluntarily without giving rise to binding European legislation. However, many people fear that this process is expanding to the detriment of traditional legislation and hence of democratic scrutiny. MEPs therefore appealed to the European Convention to spell out the ground rules for the use of this method more precisely and to incorporate these in the future constitutional treaty. They also wanted to ensure that the method was not used as a means of replacing more binding forms of Community regulation, thereby side-stepping the latter and undermining the European social model. The committee called for primary law to lay down the precise place for this method among the various Community instruments and to stipulate how the various political and social actors are to take part in it. The open coordination method is currently used in around a dozen areas, although the Treaty only explicitly provides for it in the area of formulating EU employment strategy. Hence, consultation of Parliament is only compulsory in this one policy area. MEPs argued that the future constitutional treaty should provide for consultation of Parliament at all stages of the application of the open coordination method. They also called for the social partners to be consulted at European and national level. Each national report should indicate exactly how civil and social actors have been involved, including the social partners, and how local, regional and national authorities, including the European Parliament, have been consulted. The committee added that satisfactory democratic scrutiny in the field of social affairs was not possible without the involvement of the parliaments of the Member States and that this should include debates between their competent committees and the EP.?

Analysis and open method of coordination in the fields of employment and social matters

The European Parliament adopted the own-initiative report drafted by Miet SMET (EPP-ED, Belgium) by 181 votes in favour, 106 against and 6 abstentions. The resolution analyses the open coordination procedure in employment and social affairs. (Please see the summary of 24/04/03.) Parliament called for the Constitutional Treaty to include an article specifically relating to the open coordination method and stipulating that: - the application of the open method of coordination to any given policy must be decided on a Commission proposal after the European Parliament and the Council have given their approval; -- the Commission proposal must be accompanied by a description of the techniques and methods to be used; - the principal components of the method are: the setting of common targets, guidelines and common indicators, a timetable, the submission at regular intervals of a summary report on the strategy followed, which should summarise and analyse the national reports, and the formulation of recommendations; - Parliament must be formally consulted and the Economic and Social Committee should give an opinion on the guidelines, the summary report and the recommendations; the social partners must be consulted on matters relating to labour market and social policy; - each national report must indicate how representatives of civil society have been consulted; - the recommendations must be lodged with the relevant parliaments within the Member States, and the recommendations must be accompanied by the European Parliament's report. The Commission was asked to draw up a study on the effectiveness of the method, which should examine a number of specified topics. Parliament also asked the Commission to look into the possibility of linking money from the Structural Funds with the performance of the Member States within the recommendations. Parliament noted that the open coordination method tends to favour the proliferation of the preparatory formations and forums known collectively as 'committees' and suggested ways of expanding the expertise available to the committees and safeguarding democratic debate. Parliament asked the Council and the Commission to take greater account of Parliament's observations when establishing guidelines and to ensure that Parliament has the necessary time to draw up informed and high-quality opinions. Parliament will consider adjusting its own practices. All institutions must ensure that the application of the open method of coordination: - does not serve as a fig leaf for a country's failure to take action; and - cannot be used as a means of replacing more binding forms of Community regulation, for the express purpose of avoiding such regulation and, at the same time, undermining the whole concept of the European Social Model. Finally, Parliament emphasised the importance of including equal opportunities for men and women and gender mainstreaming at all levels of formalisation of this new policy management instrument.?