

Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2004/2129(INI)	Procedure completed
Parliament's opinion concerning the draft treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe		
Subject 8.10 Revision of the Treaties, intergovernmental conferences 8.40.01 European Parliament		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	AFCO Constitutional Affairs		27/07/2004
		PPE-DE MÉNDEZ DE VIGO Íñigo	27/07/2004
		PSE CORBETT Richard	
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	AFET Foreign Affairs		13/09/2004
		PPE-DE BROK Elmar	
	DEVE Development		06/10/2004
		PSE MARTÍNEZ MARTÍNEZ Miguel Angel	
	INTA International Trade		14/09/2004
		ALDE CHATZIMARKAKIS Jorgo	
	BUDG Budgets		21/09/2004
		ALDE VIRRANKOSKI Kyösti	
	CONT Budgetary Control		22/09/2004
		PPE-DE POMÉS RUIZ José Javier	
	ECON Economic and Monetary Affairs	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
EMPL Employment and Social Affairs		20/09/2004	
	PSE ANDERSSON Jan		
ENVI Environment, Public Health and Food Safety		20/09/2004	
	PPE-DE GRAÇA MOURA Vasco		
ITRE Industry, Research and Energy		13/09/2004	
	PSE SWOBODA Hannes		
IMCO Internal Market and Consumer Protection	The committee decided not to give an opinion.		

TRAN	Transport and Tourism	The committee decided not to give an opinion.
REGI	Regional Development	31/08/2004 PPE-DE ITURGAIZ Carlos
AGRI	Agriculture and Rural Development	26/07/2004 Verts/ALE GRAEFE ZU BARINGDORF Friedrich-Wilhelm
PECH	Fisheries	22/09/2004 Verts/ALE HUDGHTON Ian
CULT	Culture and Education	The committee decided not to give an opinion.
JURI	Legal Affairs	14/09/2004 PSE BERGER Maria
LIBE	Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs	13/09/2004 PPE-DE ZAPPALA' Stefano
FEMM	Women's Rights and Gender Equality	The committee decided not to give an opinion.
PETI	Petitions	29/09/2004 UEN LIBICKI Marcin

Key events

16/09/2004	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
30/11/2004	Vote in committee		Summary
09/12/2004	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0070/2004	
11/01/2005	Debate in Parliament		
12/01/2005	Results of vote in Parliament		
12/01/2005	Decision by Parliament	T6-0004/2005	Summary
12/01/2005	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2004/2129(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 145; Rules of Procedure EP 54; Rules of Procedure EP 146
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	AFCO/6/22572

Documentation gateway					
Committee opinion	LIBE	PE347.107	26/10/2004	EP	
Economic and Social Committee: opinion, report		CES1445/2004 OJ C 120 20.05.2005, p. 0123-0128	28/10/2004	ESC	
Committee opinion	DEVE	PE347.194	17/11/2004	EP	
Committee of the Regions: opinion		CDR0354/2003 OJ C 071 22.03.2005, p. 0001-0006	17/11/2004	CofR	
Committee opinion	AGRI	PE347.080	23/11/2004	EP	
Committee opinion	EMPL	PE347.178	23/11/2004	EP	
Committee opinion	ITRE	PE347.197	23/11/2004	EP	
Committee opinion	PECH	PE347.105	24/11/2004	EP	
Committee opinion	AFET	PE350.097	24/11/2004	EP	
Committee opinion	ENVI	PE347.227	24/11/2004	EP	
Committee opinion	JURI	PE347.232	25/11/2004	EP	
Committee opinion	CONT	PE347.257	25/11/2004	EP	
Committee opinion	BUDG	PE347.277	25/11/2004	EP	
Committee opinion	REGI	PE347.101	26/11/2004	EP	
Committee opinion	PETI	PE349.787	29/11/2004	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A6-0070/2004	09/12/2004	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T6-0004/2005 OJ C 247 06.10.2005, p. 0028-0088 E	12/01/2005	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2005)698	10/02/2005	EC	
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2005)1070	25/04/2005	EC	

Parliament's opinion concerning the draft treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe

The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Richard CORBETT (PES, UK) and Inigo MÉNDEZ DE VIGO (EPP-ED, ES) on the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe. The committee gave its backing to the Treaty, saying it "wholeheartedly supports its ratification". The report obtained the support of a large majority of committee members (20 votes to 3, with 3 abstentions) after the two co-rapporteurs drew up a number of compromise amendments incorporating many of the remarks contained in some 282 amendments tabled to their draft report.

The resolution as adopted by the committee concluded that: "the Constitution is, globally, a good compromise and a vast improvement on the existing treaties which will, once implemented, bring about visible benefits for citizens (and for the European Parliament and the national parliaments as their democratic representation), for the Member States (including their regions and local authorities), for the effective functioning of the European Union institutions and thus for the Union as a whole."

MEPs highlighted the improvements made by the Constitution, based on four key principles:

- greater clarity about the Union's nature and objectives: the complex set of European treaties would be replaced by a single more readable document, the Union's dual legitimacy - as a Union of States and citizens - would be reaffirmed, the canon of values common to all the Member States would be made explicit and widened, the confusion between the "European Community" and "European Union" would end, European legal acts would be simplified and made more understandable, and a solidarity clause between Member States would allow for support from all parts of the Union in the event of a terrorist attack or a natural or man-made disaster;

- greater effectiveness and a strengthened role in the world: qualified majority voting by the governments meeting in Council would be

extended, the European Council would have a two-and-a-half-year chair instead of a 6-month rotating one, there would be a reduction in the number of members of the Commission, the Union's visibility and capacity as a global actor would be significantly enhanced through the creation of a European "Foreign Minister" responsible for a single external action service and through the conferral of legal personality on the Union;

- more democratic accountability: the European Parliament would as a rule decide on an equal footing with the Council on the Union's legislation, the Council would meet in public when debating and adopting Union legislation, the adoption of all EU legislation would be subject to the prior scrutiny of national parliaments, which would receive all EU proposals in good time before the Council adopts a position, the President of the Commission would be elected by the European Parliament, and all EU expenditure would require the approval of both the Council and the European Parliament;

- more rights for citizens: the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights would be incorporated into the Constitution, the EU would accede to the European Convention on Human Rights, a European citizens' right of initiative would be introduced, and individuals would have greater access to justice in connection with EU law.

Finally, the report rejected certain criticisms as unfounded, stating: "the Constitution will not lead to the creation of a centralised superstate, will strengthen rather than weaken the Union's social dimension and does not ignore the historical and spiritual roots of Europe since it refers to its cultural, religious and humanist inheritance".

Parliament's opinion concerning the draft treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe

The European Parliament adopted a resolution endorsing the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe and said it "wholeheartedly supports its ratification." The report by Richard CORBETT (PES, UK) and Inigo MENDEZ DE VIGO (EPP-ED, ES) was adopted by 500 votes in favour to 137 votes against, with 40 abstentions. (Please see the summary of 30/11/2004).

Parliament adopted an amendment announces its intention of using the new right of initiative conferred upon it by the Constitution to propose improvements to the Constitution.

It hoped that all Member States of the European Union will be in a position to achieve ratification by mid-2006.

Parliament went on to reiterates its request that all possible efforts be deployed in order to inform European citizens clearly and objectively about the content of the Constitution. Thee European institutions and the Member States are invited, when distributing the text of the constitutional Treaty to citizens (in unabridged or summary versions), to make a clear distinction between the elements already in force in the existing treaties and new provisions introduced by the Constitution, with a view to educating the public and informing the debate. Parliament invited them also to recognise the role of civil society organisations within the ratification debates and to make available sufficient support to enable such organisations to engage their constituencies in these debates across the EU in order to promote the active involvement of citizens in the discussions on ratification.