

Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2016/2101(INI)	Procedure completed
European semester for economic policy coordination: implementation of 2016 priorities		
Subject 5.10.01 Convergence of economic policies, public deficit, interest rates		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	 ECON Economic and Monetary Affairs		10/09/2015
		 SANT Alfred	
		Shadow rapporteur	
		 FERBER Markus	
		 STARBATTY Joachim	
		 TREMOSA I  BALCELLS Ramon	
		 URTASUN Ernest	
		 VALLI Marco	
		 KAPPEL Barbara	
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	 BUDG Budgets (Associated committee)	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
	 EMPL Employment and Social Affairs (Associated committee)		09/06/2016
		 RIBEIRO Sofia	
	 IMCO Internal Market and Consumer Protection		24/05/2016
		 STIHLER Catherine	
	 REGI Regional Development		25/05/2016
		 RUAS Fernando	
	 CULT Culture and Education		09/06/2016
		 ZDROJEWSKI Bogdan	

Council of the European Union	Council configuration	Meeting	Date
	Economic and Financial Affairs ECOFIN	3488	11/10/2016
	Economic and Financial Affairs ECOFIN	3480	12/07/2016
European Commission	General Affairs	3478	24/06/2016
	Commission DG	Commissioner	
	Economic and Financial Affairs	KATAINEN Jyrki	

Key events

09/06/2016	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
09/06/2016	Referral to associated committees announced in Parliament		
24/06/2016	Debate in Council	3478	
12/07/2016	Debate in Council	3480	
11/10/2016	Debate in Council	3488	
11/10/2016	Vote in committee		
20/10/2016	Committee report tabled for plenary	A8-0309/2016	Summary
25/10/2016	Debate in Parliament		
26/10/2016	Results of vote in Parliament		
26/10/2016	Decision by Parliament	T8-0416/2016	Summary
26/10/2016	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2016/2101(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Annual report
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	ECON/8/06422

Documentation gateway

Committee draft report		PE585.449	21/06/2016	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE587.444	30/08/2016	EP	
Committee opinion	REGI	PE585.770	13/09/2016	EP	
Committee opinion	IMCO	PE584.229	27/09/2016	EP	
Committee opinion	EMPL	PE585.497	28/09/2016	EP	

Committee opinion	CULT	PE585.720	28/09/2016	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A8-0309/2016	20/10/2016	EP	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T8-0416/2016	26/10/2016	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2017)54	29/03/2017	EC	

European semester for economic policy coordination: implementation of 2016 priorities

The Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs adopted an own-initiative report by Alfred SANT (S&D, MT) on the European Semester for economic policy coordination: implementation of 2016 priorities.

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, exercising its prerogative as associated committee in accordance with [Article 54 of the Rules of Procedure](#), also gave its opinion on the report.

Europe's challenge in the context of the global economic slowdown: Members noted with concern that the EU economy will grow less than expected on the basis of the European economic spring forecast 2016, as GDP in the eurozone is expected to increase by only 1.6 %, reaching 1.8 % by 2017. They underlined the need to improve growth, cohesion, productivity and competitiveness while considering that lack of sustainable investment and the shortcomings in completing the single market are depriving the EU of its full growth potential.

While recognising the importance of coherence between cohesion policy instruments and the wider economic governance framework, Members stressed that measures linking the effectiveness of ESI Funds with sound economic governance should be applied judiciously and in a balanced way, but only as a last resort in order to avoid restricting regional and local investments, which are absolutely essential for the Member States economies.

The report highlighted the need to facilitate investment in areas such as education, innovation and research and development, while enhancing the EU's competitiveness by pursuing sustainable structural reforms to boost quality job creation, implementing responsible fiscal policies to create a better environment for jobs, businesses (especially SMEs) and investment.

Priorities and objectives of the 2016 recommendations: the Commission is called upon to continue to encourage responsible and sustainable budgetary policies that underpin growth and recovery in all Member States by putting more emphasis on investment and efficient public expenditure, and supporting sustainable and socially balanced structural reforms.

Members noted that further measures are needed to increase financing opportunities, notably for SMEs, in order to increase the ability of banks to lend to the real economy. They considered that monetary policy needs to be accompanied by appropriate fiscal policies aimed at improving growth in the EU, in line with the rules of the Stability and Growth Pact, including its flexibility clauses.

Investment policy instruments such as the [EFSI](#) and ESIF require properly calibrated blending and complementarity between them in order to enhance the value added of Union spending.

Policy responses and conclusions: Members emphasised the need to improve the EU's overall capacity to grow, create and sustain quality jobs and thus to tackle high levels of unemployment. Migration could play a role in compensating for the negative effects of the ageing population, depending on the ability of the Member States to better use migrants' skills and to adapt labour migration management systems to labour market needs.

The report insisted on the importance of:

- inclusive educational systems that foster innovation and creativity and teach skills relevant to the labour market, with particular reference to vocational education;
- giving priority to measures that reduce the obstacles to greater investment flows and trade, especially in the following fields: energy, transport, communications and the digital economy. Members noted the cumbersome legal systems, lack of transparency in the financial sector, the presence of barriers to the internal market in the banking and insurance sectors, and educational systems that remain out of sync with the requirements of the labour market;
- allowing for a more suitable mix oriented towards policies fostering sustainable growth, including a genuine focus on research and development spending.

Employment and Social Policies: Members highlighted that the European Semester process should help to provide answers to existing and emerging social challenges and that social investments in human capital must constitute core complementary action.

Unemployment, and in particular youth unemployment, remains an overriding problem for European societies. According to the Commission, unemployment has continued to gradually decrease, but remains above 2008 levels, with 21.2 million unemployed in April 2016 and huge differences among Member States.

In this regard, Members called for:

- the introduction of a social imbalances procedure in the design of the country-specific recommendations (CSRs) so as to prevent a race to the bottom in terms of social standards, building on effective use of the social and employment indicators in macroeconomic surveillance;
- further investment in and development of education and training systems, providing society with the tools and capacities to readapt to changing labour market demands.

Members welcomed the introduction of the three new headline employment indicators in the macroeconomic scoreboard. They called for these to be placed on an equal footing with existing economic indicators.

Members also called for urgent action to be taken ensure decent work with a living wage, access to an adequate minimum income and social protection.

Members regretted that more than three years after the launch of the Youth Employment Initiative, the results of the implementation of the Youth Guarantee are so uneven, and sometimes ineffective.

The Commission is called on to present a thorough analysis of its implementation of the Youth Guarantee which can serve as the basis for the continuation of the programme.

Internal market: stating that the single market is a backbone of the EU economy, Members called on the Commission to monitor the progress made by the Member States, and reiterated the importance of the formal inclusion of the single-market pillar in the European Semester.

The recommendation condemned the barriers which still exist, or have been created, that hinder a well-functioning and integrated single market. It drew attention to the partial transposition and implementation of the Services Directive by many Member States, and called on the Commission to enforce more effectively what Member States have signed up to under EU law.

European semester for economic policy coordination: implementation of 2016 priorities

The European Parliament adopted by 423 votes to 210, with 48 abstentions, a resolution on the European Semester for economic policy coordination: implementation of 2016 priorities.

Members recalled that Europe still faces a major investment deficit. Moreover, the Commissions spring 2016 forecast indicates expected growth rates of 1.6 % for the euro area and 1.8 % for the EU in 2016. Unemployment in general (and structural unemployment in particular) in the EU remains one of the main challenges that Member States are facing, as it currently stands at a very high rate (10.5 million long-term unemployed in the EU).

Europes challenge in the context of the global economic slowdown: noting with concern that the EU economy will grow less than expected on the basis of the European economic spring forecast 2016, Parliament underlined the need to improve growth, cohesion, productivity and competitiveness while considering that lack of sustainable investment and the shortcomings in completing the single market are depriving the EU of its full growth potential.

Members welcomed the Commissions focus in its 2016 country-specific recommendations (CSRs) on the three main priorities to further strengthen economic growth: (i) supporting investment for innovation, (ii) growth and job creation, (iii) pursuing socially balanced structural reforms and encouraging responsible public finances. The Commission should do more to bolster fiscal sustainability in line with the Stability and Growth Pact, while making full use of its flexibility clauses, in line with the Commission [communication](#) of 13 January 2015.

The resolution highlighted the need to facilitate investment in areas such as education, innovation and research and development, while enhancing the EU's competitiveness by pursuing sustainable structural reforms to boost quality job creation, implementing responsible fiscal policies to create a better environment for jobs, businesses (especially SMEs) and investment.

While recognising the importance of coherence between cohesion policy instruments and the wider economic governance framework, Members stressed that measures linking the effectiveness of European Structural and Investment Funds with sound economic governance should be applied judiciously and in a balanced way, but only as a last resort in order to avoid restricting regional and local investments, which are absolutely essential for the Member States economies.

In order to increase national ownership and foster the effective implementation of CSRs, these should be clearly articulated around well-defined and structured priorities at European level, involving national parliaments, regional and local authorities where appropriate. Member States should ensure a proper democratic scrutiny of their National Reform Programmes in their respective national parliaments.

Priorities and objectives of the 2016 recommendations: the Commission is called upon to continue to encourage responsible and sustainable budgetary policies that underpin growth and recovery in all Member States by putting more emphasis on investment and efficient public expenditure, and supporting sustainable and socially balanced structural reforms.

Parliament noted that further measures are needed to increase financing opportunities, notably for SMEs, in order to increase the ability of banks to lend to the real economy. It also emphasised the importance of implementing the Banking Union and developing the Capital Markets Union.

Members underline the fact that investment has so far lagged behind and failed to lead to sustainable and inclusive growth in the EU and to contribute to the improvement of the business environment. They underlined that investment policy instruments such as the [European Funds for Strategic Investment](#) (EFSI) and the ESI Funds require properly calibrated blending and complementarity between them in order to enhance the value added of Union spending by attracting additional resources from private investors.

Policy responses and conclusions: Parliament emphasised the need to improve the EUs overall capacity to grow, create and sustain quality jobs and thus to tackle high levels of unemployment. Migration could play a role in compensating for the negative effects of the ageing population, depending on the ability of the Member States to better use migrants' skills and to adapt labour migration management systems to labour market needs.

The resolution underlined on the importance of:

- inclusive educational systems that foster innovation and creativity and teach skills relevant to the labour market, with particular reference to vocational education;
- giving priority to measures that reduce the obstacles to greater investment flows and trade, especially in the following fields: energy, transport, communications and the digital economy. Members noted the cumbersome legal systems, lack of transparency in the financial sector, the presence of barriers to the internal market in the banking and insurance sectors, and educational systems that remain out of sync with the requirements of the labour market;
- allowing for a more suitable mix oriented towards policies fostering sustainable growth, including a genuine focus on research and development spending;
- avoiding an excessive tax wedge on labour.

Employment and Social Policies: Members highlighted that the European Semester process should help to provide answers to existing and emerging social challenges and that social investments in human capital must constitute core complementary action.

Unemployment, and in particular youth unemployment, remains an overriding problem for European societies and there are huge differences among Member States.

In this regard, Members called for:

- the introduction of a social imbalances procedure in the design of the country-specific recommendations (CSRs) so as to prevent a race to the bottom in terms of social standards, building on effective use of the social and employment indicators in macroeconomic surveillance;
- further investment in and development of education and training systems, providing society with the tools and capacities to readapt to changing labour market demands.

Members welcomed the introduction of the three new headline employment indicators in the macroeconomic scoreboard. They called for these to be placed on an equal footing with existing economic indicators.

Members also called for urgent action to be taken ensure decent work with a living wage, access to an adequate minimum income and social protection.

Moreover, Parliament regretted that more than three years after the launch of the Youth Employment Initiative, the results of the implementation of the Youth Guarantee are so uneven, and sometimes ineffective.

The Commission is called on to present a thorough analysis of its implementation of the Youth Guarantee which can serve as the basis for the continuation of the programme.

Internal market: stating that the single market is a backbone of the EU economy, Members called on the Commission to monitor the progress made by the Member States, and reiterated the importance of the formal inclusion of the single-market pillar in the European Semester.

The Commission is called upon to assess the feasibility of further tax coordination and, in particular, to assess the possibility of a simplified VAT approach in the digital single market.

Lastly, Parliament condemned the barriers which still exist, or have been created, that hinder a well-functioning and integrated single market. It drew attention to the partial transposition and implementation of the Services Directive by many Member States, and called on the Commission to enforce more effectively what Member States have signed up to under EU law.