


Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2005/2004(INI)	Procedure completed
Exploitation of children in developing countries, with a special focus on child labour		
Subject		
4.10.03 Child protection, children's rights		
6.30 Development cooperation		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	DEVE Development		02/12/2004
		PPE-DE MAVROMMATIS Manolis	
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	INTA International Trade		17/01/2005
		ALDE KARIM Sajjad	

Key events			
24/02/2005	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
06/06/2005	Vote in committee		Summary
15/06/2005	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0185/2005	
05/07/2005	Results of vote in Parliament		
05/07/2005	Decision by Parliament	T6-0272/2005	Summary
05/07/2005	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2005/2004(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	DEVE/6/25712

Documentation gateway					
Amendments tabled in committee		PE357.882	13/05/2005	EP	
Committee opinion	INTA	PE353.517	23/05/2005	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A6-0185/2005	15/06/2005	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T6-0272/2005 OJ C 157 06.07.2006, p. 0020-0084 E	05/07/2005	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2005)2923	14/07/2005	EC	
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2005)3776/2	03/11/2005	EC	

Exploitation of children in developing countries, with a special focus on child labour

The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Emmanouil MAVROMMATIS (EPP-ED, EL) on the exploitation of children in developing countries, with a special focus on child labour.

The report recognised the deplorable situation of 352 million working children in the world, 179 million of whom are victims of the worst forms of child labour, according to ILO findings. It looked at ways to tackle such child exploitation and identified two categories of child labour which merit special attention: work that is so harmful to the health of children that it must be stopped as a matter of urgency and work where it is possible to prevent violations of child workers' rights through improving conditions or providing alternatives.

The committee called on the Commission to implement "child-labour free" labels for goods imported into the EU so as to create consistency between the EU's trade policies and its obligation to protect and promote children's rights. It also called on the WTO to introduce such labelling, and wanted a WTO role in securing a ban on child labour in trade. MEPs further recommended that the implementation of core labour standards be part of all bilateral trade agreements and strategic partnerships, including the incorporation of a clause banning child labour, and a special reference to respect for the minimum age for employment.

The committee also wanted the Commission to monitor the impact of EU funding for basic education as part of the drive to get child workers into full-time schools while ensuring that humanitarian aid does not suffer as a result of this commitment. It was also in favour of an EU special representative for victimised or endangered children.

Finally, the report called for corporate responsibility as regards the use of child labour, and recommended the setting up of an EU mechanism to identify and prosecute EU-based importers who are in violation of ILO rules. The use of child labour, in any part of the supply chain, would be enough to constitute violation. The Commission should also offer incentives for importers to play an active role in ensuring the compliance of their products. Transnational companies would also be required to adapt their business practices accordingly, and governments of their home countries to monitor and report back on the contribution of these companies to the abolition of child labour and implementation of ILO core labour standards.

Exploitation of children in developing countries, with a special focus on child labour

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by Emmanouil MAVROMMATIS (EPP-ED, EL) on the exploitation of children in developing countries, with a special focus on child labour. (Please see the summary of 06/06/2005.) Parliament also pointed out that 5 million children are being exploited at places of work in eastern Europe and the Mediterranean region and in particular (it would appear) in EU Member States, which is particularly unacceptable. It recommended that the Commission make the implementation of core labour standards a permanent element in bilateral consultations at all levels, both with countries where violations occur and with countries which are involved with them through trade and investment. In addition, the ratification of and compliance with ILO Conventions 138 and 182 must be two of the requirements which the Commission and the Council should impose on countries applying to join the EU.

The Commission must ensure that the EU's trade policies are consistent with its commitment to protecting children's rights. Parliament urged an investigation into the introduction of an EU scheme for the labelling of goods imported into the EU to attest that they have been produced without the use of child labour at any point in the production and supply chain, and implementing "child-labour free" labels for these products, whilst ensuring that such a scheme complies with World Trade Organization (WTO) international trade rules. In the interim, products and produce from developing nations should be labelled "responsibly grown/manufactured without child labour".

Link between education, poverty and elimination of child labour: Parliament reiterates its view that there is a mutually reinforcing relationship between a lack of education and child labour, making education the basic instrument for achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. Particular attention should be paid to the primary education of girls, who encounter more barriers and obstacles than do boys (cultural factors such as early marriage, discrimination, their social and family role and so, on playing a part) preventing them from enrolling and remaining in school and from completing their studies.

Worst forms of child exploitation: the Commission was asked to support programmes combating less common forms of child labour such as domestic work and the selling of children to pay off family debts (debt bondage). Parliament proposed the appointment of an EU special representative for children who are victims of armed conflict, wars, displacement, drought, hunger, natural disasters or AIDS, or children who are caught up in the trafficking of human beings, and to ensure that due attention is given to such situations. Parliament called for the support of the WTO in the form of a ban on child labour in trade and suggested that child-labour free products be marked and labelled as such for consumer awareness of responsible practices.

Corporate responsibility: Parliament welcomed the fact that the Commission has taken the initiative to draw up a communication on corporate social responsibility. It recommended that the Commission investigate the creation of appropriate EU-level legal mechanisms which identify EU-based importers who import products which allow the violation of the core ILO conventions, including the use of child labour, in any part of the supply chain. The Commission needs to explore the possibility of creating incentives for EU importers who carry out independent monitoring of the manufacture of their products in all third countries forming part of the production chain. The Commission and the Council should promote the fair trade initiatives, in particular in new EU Member States, monitoring producers to ensure that their methods are consistent with fair trading standards. Parliament went on to recommend that the Commission identify companies which persistently use child labour in any part of the production and supply chain and called for such a list to be made available to EU importers. The Commission should make compliance with core labour standards a precondition in its purchasing and contracting policy, and develop a policy which makes it possible for small producers in developing countries likewise to comply with these standards.

Lastly, Parliament asked the Council to support the OECD's guidelines for multinational enterprises and the UN's Global Compact. Moreover, it recommended that the Commission propose the extension of the scope of the OECD Guidelines from investment to trade, enhance the implementation instruments and reach agreements with governments of developing countries on the way in which enterprises can contribute to the effective abolition of child labour.