

Comitology, follow-up to Amsterdam: procedures for the exercise of implementing powers conferred on the Commission

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This report details the working of committees during 2001. The legal nature and role of comitology committees has already been described (please refer to the document dated 20/12/01.) As before, the number of comitology committees has been calculated by sector of activity on the basis of the list of activities published in the Official Journal. The status as at 31/12/01 was 247 committees, as opposed to 254 in 2000. The figures show the focus of activities in the different policy sectors from the comitology perspective. Environment, Agriculture, and Transport/Energy have the largest number of committees (at least 20 each). With 135 out of a total of 247 committees, these policy sectors alone account for more than half of the committees. However, the Commission's efforts to limit the growth in the number of committees have been rewarded, since at the end of 2001 there were slightly less committees (247) than in the previous year (254.) The overall figures can be broken down by type of procedure. The global figures indicate that a relative majority of the committees (106 out of 247) consists of committees working exclusively under the regulatory procedure, followed by a considerably smaller number working exclusively under the management procedure (76). The horizontal breakdown by policy sector is quite even, with a number of exceptions, notably Environment and Transport and Energy (with a large number of committees working under the regulatory procedure and Agriculture (with a large number of committees working under the management procedure.) The number of committees is not the only indicator of activity at comitology level. The number of meetings held in 2001 reflects the intensity of each committee's work. Agriculture leads the field (365 meetings), since managing the different agricultural markets requires frequent meetings. It is followed by Taxation and Customs Union (with 116 meetings) where the focus is on customs matters involving trade with third countries, and Health and Consumer Protection (with 122 meetings) which is responsible among other things for food safety. A further indicator, particularly as regards the allocation of funds, is the number of days taken up by the meetings. These figures broadly correspond to those relating to the number of meetings. A key indicator of the intensity of activities is the number of consultations the Commission puts on a committee's agenda. These can range from formal opinions, preparatory exchanges of view, simple communications from the Chair etc. The total number of consultations in 2001 was 5613, compared to 4561 in 2000. The large number of consultations in certain policy sectors - Agriculture (1984), Health and consumer Protection (1138) and Taxation and Customs Union (562) - again reflect the intensity of the work which was delegated to the Commission, via the comitology procedures in these areas. The report goes on to present committee activities by sectoral policy.