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

2002/2223(INI) - 24/04/2003

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.