Basic information

1997/2214(COS) COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic)	Procedure completed
Voluntary organisations and foundations in Europe **Subject** 4.10.16 Social and community life, associations, foundations	

Key players

European Parliament	**Committee for opinion**	**Rapporteur for opinion**	**Appointed**
	ECON Economic and Monetary Affairs, Industrial Policy	WOLF Friedrich (V)	21/01/1998
	JURI Legal Affairs, Citizens' Rights	COT Jean-Pierre (PSE)	21/05/1997
Council of the European Union			

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
06/06/1997	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(1997)0241	Summary
24/10/1997	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
26/05/1998	Vote in committee		Summary
26/05/1998	Committee report tabled for plenary	A4-0203/1998	
02/07/1998	Debate in Parliament		
02/07/1998	End of procedure in Parliament		
20/07/1998	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information

Procedure reference	1997/2214(COS)
Procedure type	COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic)
Procedure subtype	Commission strategy paper
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 148 Rules of Procedure EP 050
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	EMPL/4/09298

Documentation gateway				
European Parliament				
Document type	**Committee**	**Reference**	**Date**	**Summary**
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A4-0203/1998 OJ C 210 06.07.1998, p. 0007	26/05/1998	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T4-0404/1998 OJ C 226 20.07.1998, p. 0013-0066	02/07/1998	Summary
European Commission				
Document type		**Reference**	**Date**	**Summary**
Non-legislative basic document		COM(1997)0241	06/06/1997	Summary
Other institutions and bodies				
Institution/body	**Document type**	**Reference**	**Date**	**Summary**
EESC	Economic and Social Committee: opinion, report	CES0118/1998 OJ C 095 30.03.1998, p. 0099	28/01/1998	Summary
CofR	Committee of the Regions: opinion	CDR0306/1997 OJ C 180 11.06.1998, p. 0057	12/03/1998	

Voluntary organisations and foundations in Europe

1997/2214(COS) - 02/07/1998 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

In adopting the report by Mrs GHILARDOTTI (PSE, I) on the role of voluntary organisations and foundations, the European Parliament called for an in-depth analysis of the non-profit-making sector consisting of voluntary organisations and foundations at local, national and European level. This should make it possible to reinvigorate work on Community legislative proposals concerning a statute for a European association and foundation and the multiannual programme for them. It should also help to prepare for the European Year of Voluntary Organisations and Active Citizenship proposed by the Commission. In the context of the proposal for a statute for a European association and foundation, Parliament hoped that a clear distinction would be made between the proposed Statute and the proposal for a Regulation on the European public limited company. In particular, the operating procedures typical of the European plc, a purely economic entity, should not be imposed on the voluntary sector. Parliament stressed the relevance of local action for possible synergies between private business, public-sector and "third sector" initiatives. It welcomed the proposal to make available 1% of the European Social Fund budget for non-governmental organisations, but stressed that this percentage should come in addition to the structural resources already available to the sector. It considered that the new regulations on the Structural Funds should recognise the NGOs as full partners. In the field of employment, it stressed the importance of the non-profit-making sector for job creation and, in the context of the proposal for a multiannual programme of work for this sector, called for part of the resources available to be concentrated on considering the contribution which the sector as a whole could make to carrying out employment policy measures. Measures relating to the sector should also be taken in the context of the efforts being made to implement the employment guidelines adopted at the Luxembourg European Council. It recalled that with the initiative to finance innovative SMEs with high employment levels, part of the financing could be earmarked for SMEs in the third system, especially in sectors such as public health and education. It supported the application of a reduced rate of VAT for certain labour-intensive services provided by the third system. It urged the Commission to enhance the role of the non-profit-making sector in building and consolidating democratic structures in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean. It called for a structured sectoral dialogue to be set in motion between the European institutions and the NGOs represented at European level, based on common criteria and procedures. It called on the Commission, finally, to revive the concept of a wide-ranging democratic consultation process in connection with the revision of the Treaties.

Voluntary organisations and foundations in Europe

1997/2214(COS) - 06/06/1997 - Non-legislative basic document

OBJECTIVE: overview of the legal and fiscal framework for voluntary organizations and foundations and ways of improving their economic and social impact within the Union. SUBSTANCE: this sector of the social economy contributes on a daily basis to democracy, active citizenship and the creation of employment. In analyzing the sector in the 15 Member States (there are over 5 million organizations/foundations in the Community), the Commission examines the scope of organizations and foundations highlighting their economic and social significance. With regard to voluntary organizations, the Commission observes that they are distinguished from informal or ad hoc groupings by some degree of formal or institutional existence. They are non-profit distributing, that is to say, they do not set out to secure profits for their management or members. They are independent in principle of government and other public authorities although they are free to collaborate with them. Foundations on the other hand are bodies with their own source of funds which they spend on activities of public interest. They are entirely independent of government or other public authorities and are run by independent administrators or trustees. Regarding the legal framework, the freedom to establish, join or leave a voluntary organization is nowadays a recognized right in all the Member States. From a general point of view all citizens are free to establish a voluntary organization or foundation anywhere in the Union although some Member States stipulate that there should be a minimum number of their own citizens or residents involved. In legal terms voluntary organizations and foundations are entities of private law. Unlike voluntary organizations, foundations are generally subject to prior scrutiny to ensure that their statutes are in strict conformity with legal requirements. In addition to a greater or lesser extent all Member States accord tax privileges to voluntary organizations depending on their level of public interest (exemption from tax or social charges, various concessions etc.). Other provisions are made for tax relief for donors or with regard to indirect tax (e.g. zero rate). Concerning the development of this sector, the Commission proposes a range of national and Community measures with a view to achieving further progress. At Member State level the Commission proposes: - the development of research programmes to require deeper knowledge of the sector, - review of policies carried out by the public authorities, - establishing a clear and useful legal framework, - achieving sounder financing in the sector, - encouraging training, - better access to programmes receiving European funding. At European level the Commission proposes: - improving dialogue with the Community Institutions, - developing research, - helping the sector to participate more effectively in European training programmes and secure easier access to Community funding, - introduction of a 'European Year' relevant to voluntary organizations and European citizenship, - establishment of special funds to promote transnational cooperation by voluntary organizations and foundations.

Voluntary organisations and foundations in Europe

1997/2214(COS) - 28/01/1998 - Economic and Social Committee: opinion, report

The Economic and Social Committee, which represents European citizens' organizations, welcomes the long-awaited Communication and appreciates the Commission's positive approach to voluntary organizations and foundations. The Committee feels the Communication should be followed up with concrete measures. In the run-up to the IGC, voluntary organizations had high hopes of an explicit reference to the sector's role being enshrined in the Treaty. The Committee regrets this did not happen, as it would have provided political recognition for the activities of the voluntary sector. The sector is, however, affected by the declarations adopted in Amsterdam on voluntary service activities and sport. In the run-up to EU enlargement, the Committee would call on the Commission to ensure that accession negotiations take account of the situation of voluntary organizations and foundations in the applicant countries, both in terms of legislation and other opportunities for full participation in European cooperation. Given the lack of information on the sector, the Committee believes it is essential to carry out regular surveys in order to be able to assess the development of voluntary organizations and foundations in all EU countries. The Committee would particularly emphasize the importance of voluntary organizations in bolstering democracy in Europe. They provide individuals with an outlet for their ideas, and an opportunity to work towards the goals they believe in; they can carry out meaningful tasks and find a place in society; they can make themselves heard, and influence and achieve change. In the Committee's view the subsidiarity principle should continue to be applied to legislation governing voluntary organizations and foundations. At the same time, the Committee would call on the Member States to review their regulations, to remove any obstacles to the variety and development of such bodies.