Basic information

2000/2086(COS) COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic)	Procedure completed
Consumer, health and environment protection: recourse to the precautionary principle **Subject** 3.70.01 Protection of natural resources: fauna, flora, nature, wildlife, countryside; biodiversity 4.60 Consumers' protection in general	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
ENVI Environment, Public Health, Consumer Policy	PATRIE Béatrice (PSE)	22/03/2000

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
JURI Legal Affairs and Internal Market	GEBHARDT Evelyne (PSE)	28/03/2000
ITRE Industry, External Trade, Research, Energy	LUCAS Caroline (V/ALE)	19/04/2000

Council of the European Union

Council configuration	Meetings	Date
General Affairs	2316	2000-12-04
Environment	2253	2000-03-30

European Commission

Commission DG	Commissioner
Health and Food Safety	

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
02/02/2000	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2000)0001	Summary
17/03/2000	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
30/03/2000	Debate in Council		

21/11/2000	Vote in committee		Summary
21/11/2000	Committee report tabled for plenary	A5-0352/2000	
30/11/2000	Debate in Council		
04/12/2000	Debate in Council		
13/12/2000	Debate in Parliament		
14/12/2000	Decision by Parliament	T5-0581/2000	Summary
14/12/2000	End of procedure in Parliament		
17/08/2001	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2000/2086(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	ENVI/5/12510

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A5-0352/2000 OJ C 232 17.08.2001, p. 0007	21/11/2000	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T5-0581/2000 OJ C 232 17.08.2001, p. 0207-0345	14/12/2000	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(2000)0001	02/02/2000	Summary

Other institutions and bodies

Institution/body	Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
EESC	Economic and Social Committee: opinion, report	CES0800/2000 OJ C 268 19.09.2000, p. 0006	12/07/2000	

Consumer, health and environment protection: recourse to the precautionary principle

2000/2086(COS) - 02/02/2000 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE : to present a communication on the precautionary principle. CONTENT : the issue of when and how to use the precautionary principle, both within the European Union and internationally, is giving rise to much debate, and to mixed, and sometimes contradictory views. Thus, decision-makers are constantly faced with the dilemma of balancing the freedom and the rights of individual, industry and organisations with the need to reduce the risk of adverse effects to the environment, human, animal or plant health. Therefore, finding the correct balance so that the proportionate, non-discriminatory, transparent and coherent actions can be taken, requires a structured decision-making process with detailed scientific and other objective information. This communication's fourfold aims are to: - outline the Commission's approach to using the precautionary principle; - establish Commission guidelines for applying it; - build a common understanding of how to assess, appraise, manage and communicate risks that science is not yet able to evaluate fully, and; - avoid unwarranted recourse to the precautionary principle, as a disguised form of protectionism. It also seeks to provide an input to the onging debate on this issue, both within the Community and internationally. The precautionary principle is not defined in the Treaty, which prescribes it only once - to protect the environment. But, in practice, its scope is much wider, and specifically where preliminary objective scientific evaluation indicates that there are reasonable grounds for concern that the potentially dangerous effects on the environment, human, animal or plant health may be inconsistent with the high level of protection chosen for the Community. The Commission considers that the Community, like other WTO members, has the right to establish the level of protection - particularly with respect to the environment, human, animal and plant health, - that it deems appropriate. Applying the precautionary principle is a key tenet of its policy, and the choices it makes to this end will continue to affect the views it defends internationally, on how this principle should be applied. Furthermore, the precautionary principle should be considered within a structured approach to the analysis of risk which comprises three elements: risk assessment, risk management, risk communication. The precautionary principle is particularly relevant to the management of risk. The precautionary principle, which is essentially used by decision-makers in the management of risk, should not be confused with the element of caution that scientists apply in their assessment of scientific data. Recourse to the precautionary principle presupposes that potentially dangerous effects deriving from a phenomenon, product or process have been identified, and that scientific evaluation does nt allow the risk to be determined with sufficient certainty. The implementation of an approach based on the precautionary principle should start with a scientific evaluation, ascomplete as possible, and, where possible, identifying at each stage the degree of scientific uncertainty. Decision-makers need to be aware of the degree of uncertainty attached to the results of the evaluation of the available scientific information. Judging what is an 'acceptable' level of risk for society is an eminently political responsibility. Decision-makers faced with an unacceptable risk, scientific uncertainty and public concerns have a duty to find answers. All these factors, therefore, have to be taken into consideration. the decision-making procedure should be transparent and should involve as early as possible and to the extent reasonably possible all interested parties. Where action is deemed necessary, measures based on the precautionary principle should be, inter alia: - proportional to the chosen level of protection, - non-discriminatory in their application, - consistent with similar measures already taken, - based on an examination of the poential benefits and costs of action (including, where appropriate and feasible, an economic cos/benefit analysis), - subject to review, in the light of new scientific data, - capable of assigning responsibility for producing the scientific evidence necessary for a more comprehensive risk assessment. All of these attributes are defined and discussed in greater detail in the Communication. In conclusion, the Commission wishes to stress that this Communication is not meant to be the last word; rather, that it should be seen as the point of departure for a broader study of the conditions in which risks should be assessed, appraised, managed and communicated.

Consumer, health and environment protection: recourse to the precautionary principle

2000/2086(COS) - 14/12/2000 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted the text drafted by Mrs Béatrice PATRIE (PES, F) which aims to determine the factors triggering recourse to the precautionary principle. The Parliament wants clearer guidelines on the application of the principle, believing it should be invoked whenever a provisional objective scientific evaluation of the risks shows that there are justified fears of potentially dangerous effects on the environment or human, animal or plant health that are incompatible with a sufficiently high level of protection of the Community. Parliament's resolution covers not only the definition and scope of the precautionary principle but also risk assessment, risk management, risk communication and the burden of proof.