Basic information

2002/2124(COS) COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic)	Procedure completed
A new Community strategy on health and safety at work 2002-2006 **Subject** 4.15.15 Health and safety at work, occupational medicine	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
EMPL Employment and Social Affairs	HUGHES Stephen (PSE)	13/03/2002

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
ENVI Environment, Public Health, Consumer Policy	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
FEMM Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities	EVANS Jill (V/ALE)	22/05/2002

Council of the European Union

Council configuration	Meetings	Date
Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs	2431	2002-06-03

European Commission

Commission DG	Commissioner
Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion	

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
11/03/2002	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2002)0118	Summary
03/06/2002	Resolution/conclusions adopted by Council		
10/06/2002	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
11/09/2002	Vote in committee		Summary
11/09/2002	Committee report tabled for plenary	A5-0310/2002	

22/10/2002	Debate in Parliament		
23/10/2002	Decision by Parliament	T5-0499/2002	Summary
23/10/2002	End of procedure in Parliament		
11/12/2003	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2002/2124(COS)
Procedure type	COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic)
Procedure subtype	Commission strategy paper
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 148
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	EMPL/5/16295

A new Community strategy on health and safety at work 2002-2006

2002/2124(COS) - 11/03/2002 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE : to modernise EU health and safety policy and rules to cover new types of workplace risk, such as bullying and violence at work and stress-related conditions. The strategy also seeks to consolidate a culture of risk prevention at work. CONTENT : safety and health at work now constitutes one of the European Union's most concentrated and most important social policy sectors. As early as 1951, the European Coal and Steel Community set about improving the safety of workers, a concern which the Treaty of Rome extended to all employed people. As a result, a substantial corpus of legislation aimed at raising standards of safety and health has developed since the late 1970s, and especially since the Single European Act was adopted in 1987. It is because the EU can call on such an abundant source of material that it is crucial for the social policy agenda to set out a Community strategy. This strategy, which covers the period 2002-2006, has three novel features: - it adopts a global approach to well-being at work, taking account of changes in the world of work and the emergence of new risks, especially of a psycho-social nature. As such, it is geared to enhancing the quality of work, and regards a safety and healthy working environment as one of the essential components. - it is based on consolidating a culture of risk prevention, on combining a variety of political instruments - legislation, the social dialogue, progressive measures and best practices, corporate social responsibility and economic incentives - and on building partnerships between all the players on the safety and health scene. - it points up the fact that an ambitious social policy is a factor in the competitiveness equation and that, on the other side of the coin, having a "non-policy" engenders costs which weigh heavily on economies and societies. To be more specific, the objective of the Community's policy on health and safety at work must be to bring about a continuing improvement in well-being at work, a concept which is taken to include the physical, moral and social dimensions. In addition, a number of complementary objectives must be targeted jointly by all the players. 1) a continuing reduction in occupational accidents and illnesses. Thought should be given to setting quantified objectives, at both Community and Member State level, particularly in sectors of activity with above-average incidence rates, and having special regard to arrangements for implementing the European employment strategy. 2) mainstreaming the gender dimension into risk evaluation, preventive measures and compensation arrangements, so as to take account of the specific characteristics of women in terms of health and safety at work. 3) prevention of social risks. Stress, harassment at the workplace, depression and anxiety, and risks related to dependence on alcohol, drugs and medicines, should all be the subject of specific measures but should form part of a global approach in association with health care systems. 4) enhanced prevention of occupational illnesses. Priority should go to illnesses due to asbestos, hearing loss and musculo-skeletal problems. 5) taking account of demographic change in terms of risks,accidents and illnesses. Preventive measures should take more account of the age factor, and should specifically target young people and ageing workers. 6) taking account of changes in forms of employment, work organisation arrangements and working time. Workers in non-standard or precarious working relations constitute a sensitive group. 7) taking account of the size of firms. SMEs and very small businesses, as well as self-employed workers and unpaid family helpers, should all be the subject of specific measures in terms of information, awareness and risk prevention programmes. 8) analysis of new or emerging risks, with special reference to risks associated with the interaction between chemical, physical and biological agents, and those associated with the general working environment (ergonomic, psychological and social risks).

A new Community strategy on health and safety at work 2002-2006

2002/2124(COS) - 23/10/2002 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European parliament adopted the resolution by 381 votes in favour to 62 against with 68 abstentions on the new Community Health Strategy in health and safety at work. The report drafted by Mr Stephen HUGHES (PES, UK) was adopted subject to amendments relating to the lack of Commission resources in this area, lack of an overall Commission action plan and a lack of balance between legislative and non-legislative instruments. More specifically, the Parliament calls on the Commission to allocate the resources necessary to reflect the high priority to be accorded to occupational health and safety in the context of the ongoing debates on quality in work and employability, sufficient to re-establish a dynamic and

proactive directorate for occupational health and safety. The Parliament welcomes the Commission's initiative and urgently calls for a detailed action plan with financial and timing commitments against each major proposal. As regards gender balance, the Parliament calls on the Commission to integrate a gender dimension throughout the strategy. With regard to the legislative issues, the Parliament requests the Commission to put forward a proposal for a directive laying down minimum standards for the recognition of occupational diseases. Amendments should be proposed to legislation which is defective or inadequate. Parliament believes that the Commission should take the initiative in developing common European standards for the certification of companies possessing a healthy and safe working environment and in preparing a proposal for a working environment management and audit scheme modelled on the legislation providing for an eco-management and audit scheme (EMAS). Moreover, legislative simplification must not become a cover for deregulation of health and safety provisions. In addition, Parliament calls for representatives of the Advisory Committees to be part of an ad hoc body formed to take work forward in this sector. As regards the better application of existing law, the Commission is called upon to adopt the broadest possible approach using all instruments such as tougher sanctions, minimum requirements for the quality of preventative services and work inspection, etc. It stresses the importance of systematically evaluating the implementation of legislation at European level and creating a method of examining and discussing the national reports which must constitute a basis for future policy-making. Concerning new instruments, Parliament calls on the EU and Member States to raise awareness of all the players concerned about the need to reintegrate and retain disabled people in the labour market. It believes more must be done to reinforce and harmonise labour inspection services: Member States should be required to instruct all competent authorities to carry out minimum numbers of missions, apply uniform standards and contribute to better Community-level data; for this purpose, a Community framework setting out the minimum criteria which a public service needs to satisfy should be established. Parliament states that the preventive aspect of the work of labour inspection should be spelled out more clearly; emphasises that the labour inspection service should have adequate tools available to enforce legislation, e.g. the right to impose administrative fines. It supports the use of new instruments, including benchmarkingunderpinned by quantified targets. Parliament on the other hand, deeply regrets, given how much higher health and safety incidence rates are in SMEs, that the Commission has still not launched a multi-annual SME programme based on the two years of preparatory actions undertaken by the Bilbao Agency on the initiative of the European Parliament. The Commission is called upon to draw up a Green Paper on promoting the use of economic incentives in the area of the working environment. It also believes that the health and safety at work issues should be given a clear priority within the European Social Fund (ESF), particularly in view of the challenges faced in this area by the candidate countries. More detailed proposals are needed regarding urgent technical, financial and other assistance to the candidate countries in the transposition and, critically, the implementation of the acquis in the occupational health and safety field. With regard to institutional issues, Parliament notes the proposals for the integration of the candidate countries into the Senior Labour Inspectors Committee and other Community bodies; supports the proposal to merge the two Advisory Committees and hopes this will also facilitate the candidate countries' integration into the new structure; recommends that the new Committee's role in social partner consultations under Article 138 TEC should be clarified. It is also surprised to find so little mention of the Dublin Foundation and its invaluable five yearly surveys on working conditions, which provide important safety and health data and it supports the leading role given to the Bilbao Agency as the key player in non-legislative safety and health activities at Community level; regrets that the Commission has not yet produced its report on the Bilbao Agency following its external evaluation. Lastly, Parliament would like to see better cooperation between the Commission and the ILO, particularly in the context of development and trade policies, in order to extend the reach of Community approaches and experiences regarding occupational health and safety for the benefit of third countries.