Basic information

2004/2191(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
Social policy agenda for the period 2006-2010 **Subject** 4.10 Social policy, social charter and protocol	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
EMPL Employment and Social Affairs	OOMEN-RUIJTEN Ria (PPE-DE)	19/10/2004

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
FEMM Women's Rights and Gender Equality	GURMAI Zita (PSE)	16/12/2004

Council of the European Union

Council configuration	Meetings	Date
Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs	2627	2004-12-06

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
18/11/2004	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
06/12/2004	Debate in Council		Summary
20/04/2005	Vote in committee		
11/05/2005	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0142/2005	
26/05/2005	Decision by Parliament	T6-0210/2005	Summary
26/05/2005	Results of vote in Parliament		
26/05/2005	Debate in Parliament		
26/05/2005	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2004/2191(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 55
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	EMPL/6/24330

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee opinion	FEMM	PE355.760	30/03/2005	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A6-0142/2005	11/05/2005	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T6-0210/2005 OJ C 117 18.05.2006, p. 0026-0256 E	26/05/2005	Summary

Other institutions and bodies

Institution/body	Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
CofR	Committee of the Regions: opinion	CDR0080/2005 OJ C 031 07.02.2006, p. 0032-0035	06/07/2005	

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2004/2191(INI) - 06/12/2004

The Council held a policy debate on a new Social Policy Agenda, on the basis of a note prepared by the Presidency, identifying six possible specific areas for priority action, the so-called A-C-T-I-O-N approach:

• Activation: more and better jobs would require the activation of Europe's unused labour potential. A more dynamic and inclusive labour market, with increased mobility in all dimensions, can support a net increase in labour market participation.

• Commitment: commitment to delivery from actors at all relevant levels.

• Training: investment in human capital to increase the skills of the workforce and productivity in the workplace.

• Inclusion: modernised and sustainable social protection systems that guarantee inclusion of the most vulnerable groups.

• Organisation of work: increase the adaptability of companies and workers in order better to reflect the divergent needs and preferences in society.

• Non-discrimination: equal opportunities for all to participate fully in all aspects of life and to have access to work and services.

At the end of the debate, the President of the Council concluded that:

– delegations recognised that this is time for ACTION; in this context, there is room to improve the communication of the Lisbon objectives to citizens;

– the objectives of the Lisbon strategy should remain unchanged and the new Social Policy Agenda should support the implementation of the Lisbon goals and targets;

– the balance between the economic/growth, employment and social policy dimensions is a key element of the Lisbon strategy, in view of their mutually reinforcing nature;

– the 6 areas suggested by the Presidency were broadly supported by delegations. Concerning "activation", a reference was made to the need to keep older workers in the labour market as well as to favour the integration of disadvantaged young people (in this context, the initiative for a youth pact suggested by the French, Swedish, Spanish and German delegations in a letter to the President of the Autumn European Council 2004 was particularly welcomed). Delegations also referred to the need to reconcile professional and family life (better care infrastructures for children and the elderly would improve participation in economic life).

Other issues referred to during the debate concerned:

– the need to involve all stakeholders in the process of pursuing the Lisbon objectives, with special reference to the dialogue with the social partners;

– the need better to use the tools available and in particular the open method of coordination and the Structural Funds.

The Council further endorsed a joint opinion of the Employment and Social Protection Committees concerning the report ("Kok Report") of the High Level Group advising the European Commission on its preparations for the mid-term review of the Lisbon strategy in March 2005.

It is expected that the Commission will soon present communications concerning the mid-term review of the Lisbon Strategy as well as a new Social Policy Agenda, that are due to be agreed by the 2005 Spring European Council.

Since the Maastricht informal Council, the aim of the Presidency has been to lay the ground work for these decisions by promoting a broad debate on the priorities to be addressed by the forthcoming Social Agenda in the context of the renewed impetus to be given to the Lisbon Strategy. This has been the subject of a number of conferences18, the outcome of which have been reported on by the Presidency.

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2004/2191(INI) - 26/05/2005 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted its own-initiative report drafted by Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (PPE, NL) by 243 votes in favour to 131 against with 56 abstentions, on the Social Policy Agenda.

Parliament felt that the Commission gives a good analysis of the problems and tasks facing Europe, in order to preserve the unique European social model. This European Social Agenda must contribute to balanced implementation of the four pillars of the Lisbon Strategy, namely economic coordination, employment policy, social policy and sustainable development. However, because the proposals are so general and/or because of the lack of practical measures in the Social Agenda, the attainment of the ambitious Lisbon Strategy is not being tackled as vigorously as has been claimed elsewhere.

Parliament called on the Commission and Council, on the basis of this Social Agenda, to draw up a genuine social policy agenda, building upon the Social Policy Agenda for 2000 - 2005, with specific policy proposals, a timetable and a specific procedure (scoreboard) for monitoring its implementation. The Commission should enhance the Social Agenda by means of the proposals listed subject-by-subject in this resolution:

-demographics and access to employment: Parliament considered that the current demographic evolution puts pressure on the labour market and social security. It highlighted the urgent need forpositive measures to improve the position of older workers on the labour market, more flexibility in the choice of pension and retirement schemes,and positive incentives for increasing the years of active employment.

-More and better jobs: practical measures must be adopted in order to set up programmes to promote education and vocational training and to genuinely bring about lifelong learning with the aim of improving the use of knowledge and the information society, in keeping with the needs of the labour market. With regard to the new strategy for the period 2007-2012 for health and safety at work, Parliament asked for a more effective approach to the causes and consequences of accidents at work, and for revision of certain of the relevant legislation. In addition, Member States must improve the environment for start-ups and support existing SMEs. Parliament called on the Commission to adopt a clear headline target for the EU to reduce the levels of poverty measured against GDP by 2010.

-Mobility: Parliament called for a detailed report on the economic impact of denying workers from the new Member States access to employment elsewhere in the EU and for that report to be accompanied by proposals for solving the problems encountered. It also called for the improvement of Regulation 883/2004/EC (the new coordinating regulation further to Regulation 1408/71), in such a way that the implementation measures make mobility a reality, rather than paying mere lip service to it as is the case in the text of the regulation itself.

-Promoting social inclusion and cohesion: while having employment is the most important element in people's integration into society, a sound social policy is needed to safeguard the right of all to social protection and the cohesion of the societies of the Member States. Parliament called on the Council to safeguard the implementation of all the elements laid down in the framework of the open method of coordination for measures against poverty and social exclusion.

Combating discrimination: Parliament expressed disappointment over the lack of effective proposals to promote and evaluate the progress of gender equality and the lack of policy measures aimed at facilitating the reconciliation of work and family life, and generally increasing the flexibility of working time. The Commission is asked to draw up a specific action plan for equality between men and women with a specific emphasis on eliminating the wage gap. In addition, Parliament urged the Commission to supplement the Social Agenda with a directive banning discrimination against people with disabilities.

Social dialogue and social legislation: the Commission is asked to submit a proposal for revising Council Directive 94/45/EC, in order to expand the scope of information and consultation in the event of reorganisations, and improve working facilities for employees' representatives in European Works Councils.

The Lisbon objective of more and better employment which provides a stable income above the poverty threshold will be attained when structures are sufficiently modern and dynamic and afford the people of Europe social security and legal certainty. Therefore, Parliament called on the Commission to submit proposals for:

-a directive to protect the rights of workers in the event of restructuring;

-a directive concerning individual redundancies;

-a directive concerning social protection in connection with new forms of employment;

-a directive on monitoring compliance with minimum regulations;

-a directive on a minimum standard of social security.

Finally, Parliament called on the Member States to deepen cooperation and exchange best practise through the open method of coordination, which is an efficient instrument of policy making in the field of employment, social protection social exclusion, pensions and health care.