

Commission press release on the codecision procedure (16 June 2000)

Caption: The Commission gives its opinion on the effectiveness of the codecision procedure.

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Commission pleased with excellent results of codecision procedure

The European Commission is delighted at the effectiveness of the codecision procedure, which was greatly extended with the entry into force of the Treaty of Amsterdam on 1 May 1999. When presenting the results, Loyola de Palacio, Vice-President of the Commission in charge of relations with the European Parliament declared that “the Treaty provisions on codecision have considerably increased the democratic control of European decisions, by enabling Council and Parliament to exercise their powers to the full and by combining the legitimacy of the Member States and that of the assembly directly elected by universal suffrage.” She added that “Far from leading to paralysis, it has enhanced the decision-making process and made it possible to pay closer attention to the needs of European citizens.”

In many areas, including employment, social policy, the single market, freedom of movement and the right of establishment, consumer protection, common transport policy, vocational training, the environment and even development cooperation, the entry into force of the Treaty of Amsterdam has transformed the European Parliament into a true joint legislator, working together with the Council.

This procedure allows for common positions adopted by the Council by qualified majority to be approved, rejected or amended by Parliament. Where there is failure to reach an agreement, a Conciliation Committee attempts to reconcile the two institutions' points of view and approve a joint text. If there is no agreement, the proposed act shall be deemed not to have been adopted.

After just over a year, an initial review has found that the new procedures are running smoothly. Making her report, Loyola de Palacio presented some interesting statistics on codecision.

Out of a total of 46 dossiers concluded under the codecision procedure between 1 May 1999 and 31 May 2000:

- in 8 cases agreement was reached at first reading, a new development provided for under the Treaty of Amsterdam.
- 25 other legislative proposals were adopted after two readings. Compared with the “Maastricht period” and notwithstanding a major extension of the scope of the codecision procedure, the number of referrals to the Conciliation Committee dropped by over 10%.
- in 5 of the other 13 cases, all of which were extremely sensitive from a political point of view, the Conciliation Committee managed to obtain agreement on a common text as an A item, thanks to prior interinstitutional negotiations.

At a qualitative level, the Commission is pleased that the three institutions are developing a pro-active approach with regard to the early identification of sensitive dossiers or items. This makes it far easier to reconcile points of view at a second reading or, where necessary, during the conciliation procedure.

Loyola de Palacio concluded that “the experience gained in the course of this first year of codecision and the development of mechanisms for informal collaboration between the institutions justify the hope that the legislative process will be less conflictual and more transparent than in the past.”