The ordinary legislative procedure

Caption: Since the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon on 1 December 2009, the codecision procedure, renamed the ‘ordinary legislative procedure’, has become the main legislative procedure within the decision-making system of the European Union (EU). The ordinary legislative procedure is set out in Article 294 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU. It is based on the principle of parity between the European Parliament and the Council and indicates that neither of these two institutions is able to adopt a legislative instrument without the other’s consent.


Copyright: (c) European Parliament

URL: http://www.cvce.eu/obj/the_ordinary_legislative_procedure-en-a0ae39e6-496e-4cdd-bb96-f731e15e0783.html

Last updated: 31/03/2014
Proposal adopted

Once both European Parliament and Council have approved the final text of a legislative proposal, it is jointly signed by the Presidents and Secretaries General of both institutions. After signature, the texts are published in the Official Journal and become official.

Regulations are directly binding throughout the EU as of the date set down in the Official Journal.

Directives lay down end results to be achieved in every member state, but leaves it up to national governments to decide how to adapt their laws to achieve these goals. Each directive specifies the date by which the national laws must be adapted.

Decisions apply in specific cases, involving particular authorities or individuals and are fully binding.

Proposal not adopted

If a legislative proposal is rejected at any stage of the procedure, or the Parliament and Council cannot reach a compromise, the proposal is not adopted and the procedure is ended. A new procedure can start only with a new proposal from the Commission.

The legislative proposal is not adopted

#7b 3rd reading in Parliament

Council examines Parliament’s 3rd reading position and either approves all of Parliament’s amendments, in which case the act is adopted; or does not approve all amendments, in which case it is returned to the European Parliament and Council for a 3rd reading.

The legislative proposal is not adopted

#7b 3rd reading in Council

Council examines the act and either approves it, in which case the act is adopted; or rejects it, in which case the procedure is ended. If a joint text is agreed, the act is forwarded to the European Parliament and Council for a 3rd reading.

The legislative proposal is not adopted

#6 Conciliation

The Conciliation Committee, composed of an equal number of MEPs and Council representatives, tries to reach agreement on a joint text. If unsuccessful, the legislative act will not enter into force and the procedure is ended. If a joint text is agreed, it is forwarded to the European Parliament and Council for a 3rd reading.

The legislative proposal is adopted

#5 2nd reading in Council

Council approves Parliament’s 2nd reading position, in which case the act is adopted; or it approves Parliament’s amendments, in which case the act is adopted; or it rejects the act and the procedure is ended.

The legislative proposal is adopted

#4 2nd reading in Parliament

Parliament examines Council’s position and approves it, in which case the act is adopted; or it approves Parliament’s amendments, in which case the act is adopted; or it rejects the act and the procedure is ended.

The legislative proposal is adopted

#3 1st reading in Council

During its 1st reading, the Council may decide to accept the proposal in its entirety or to accept it with amendments. If the Council accepts the proposal in its entirety, the act is adopted; if it approves the proposal with amendments, it is forwarded to Parliament for a 2nd reading.

The legislative proposal is not adopted

#2 1st reading in the Parliament

During its 1st reading, the European Parliament examines the European Commission’s proposal and may adopt it without amendments, or it may propose amendments and return the proposal to the Council for a 2nd reading.

The legislative proposal is not adopted

#1 Commission proposal

European Commission submits legislative proposal to the European Parliament.

The legislative proposal is adopted

#3 1st reading in Parliament

During its 1st reading, the European Parliament examines the Commission’s proposal and may adopt it, or return it to the Commission with amendments. If the Parliament adopts the proposal, it is forwarded to the Council for a 2nd reading.

The legislative proposal is adopted

#2 1st reading in the Parliament

During its 1st reading, the European Parliament examines the Commission’s proposal and may adopt it, or return it to the Commission with amendments. If the Parliament adopts the proposal, it is forwarded to the Council for a 2nd reading.

Proposal adopted

Once both European Parliament and Council have approved the final text of a legislative proposal, it is jointly signed by the Presidents and Secretaries General of both institutions. After signature, the texts are published in the Official Journal and become official.

Regulations are directly binding throughout the EU as of the date set down in the Official Journal.

Directives lay down end results to be achieved in every member state, but leaves it up to national governments to decide how to adapt their laws to achieve these goals. Each directive specifies the date by which the national laws must be adapted.

Decisions apply in specific cases, involving particular authorities or individuals and are fully binding.

Proposal not adopted

If a legislative proposal is rejected at any stage of the procedure, or the Parliament and Council cannot reach a compromise, the proposal is not adopted and the procedure is ended. A new procedure can start only with a new proposal from the Commission.

The legislative proposal is not adopted

#7b 3rd reading in Council

Council approves Parliament’s 3rd reading position, in which case the act is adopted; or does not approve all amendments, in which case it is returned to the European Parliament and Council for a 3rd reading.

The legislative proposal is not adopted

#7a 3rd reading in Parliament

The European Parliament examines the 3rd reading position of the Council and either approves all amendments, in which case the act is adopted; or does not approve all amendments, in which case it is returned to the European Parliament and Council for a 3rd reading.

The legislative proposal is adopted

#5 2nd reading in Council

Council approves Parliament’s 2nd reading position, in which case the act is adopted; or it approves Parliament’s amendments, in which case the act is adopted; or it rejects the act and the procedure is ended.

The legislative proposal is adopted

#4 2nd reading in Parliament

Parliament examines Council’s position and either approves it, in which case the act is adopted; or it rejects it, in which case the procedure is ended; or it proposes amendments and returns the proposal to the Council for a 2nd reading.

The vast majority of proposals are adopted at this stage.