



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 7 December 2012

17466/12

**PE 572
ECO 149
ECOFIN 1040
FIN 1026
FISC 192
JUR 630
SOC 991**

NOTE

from: General Secretariat of the Council
to: Delegations

Subject: Summary record of the meeting of the European Parliament **Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs (ECON)**, held in Brussels on 6 December 2012

The meeting was chaired by Ms Bowles (ALDE, UK).

1. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted

2. Chair's announcements

Ms Bowles (ALDE, UK) announced that there was not yet a final agreement on the "two-pack" trilogue negotiations.

***** Voting time *****

3. Public Finances in EMU - 2011 and 2012

ECON/7/07571 2011/2274(INI)
Rapporteur: Mr Alfredo Pallone (EPP)
Adoption of draft report

The draft report was adopted, with 34 votes in favour, 1 against and 4 abstentions.

***** End of vote *****

4. European statistics

ECON/7/09349 2012/0084(COD)
Rapporteur: Mr Edward Scicluna (S&D)
Consideration of amendments

In his initial address, Mr Scicluna (S&D, MT) listed the main amendments that had been tabled. These concerned enhancing democratic scrutiny and accountability, both at national and European level, the autonomy and independence of National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) and Eurostat, and reinforcing disciplinary regimes including supervision and penalties.

In the exchange of views that followed all speakers broadly supported the report (Ms in 't Veld (ALDE, NL), Mr Lamberts (Greens/EFA, BE) and Ms Bowles (ALDE, UK)).

There was general consensus on strengthening the involvement of national parliaments and the European Parliament (EP), particularly in the appointment of the heads of the NSIs and the Director-General of Eurostat.

All agreed that the professional independence of statistical bodies must be ensured. Mr Lamberts noted however that NSIs should not interfere in political choices. Ms in 't Veld felt that the current European legal provisions designed to ensure the independence of NSIs were insufficient, complex and ambiguous, and therefore proposed that the Treaties be changed to ensure clarity.

As regards penalties, Ms in 't Veld and Mr Lamberts recommended applying the Reverse Qualified Majority Voting (RQMV) principle. She and Ms Bowles also suggested that gender balance issues should be better reflected in the report.

The Commission representative welcomed the report's strong political signal and its proposals to enhance governance, professional independence, democratic accountability and disciplinary measures.

More specifically, the Commission representative welcomed the idea of a statistical dialogue with the EP and suggested that the scope of penalties should be limited to economic and financial data, due to limited resources. She also agreed with suggestions that gender balance and equal opportunities issues should be better reflected in European legislation, and that symmetry should be ensured within the EU and at international level through the creation of bodies similar to the European Statistical Governance Advisory Board (ESGAB) to promote coordination.

Mr Scicluna acknowledged that there were conflicting views regarding the degree of independence of NSIs and agreed with the comments on treaty change, adding that it was essential to move forward as much as possible with the current legislation.

Vote in ECON: 17 December 2012. Vote in plenary: March 2013.

5. An Agenda for Adequate, Safe and Sustainable Pensions

ECON/7/10678 2012/2234(INI)

Rapporteur for the opinion: Mr Thomas Mann (EPP)

Consideration of draft opinion

In his introductory remarks, Mr Mann (EPP, DE) mentioned the diversity of pension schemes across the European Union (EU) and the ongoing debate on the sphere of competence at national and European level. He said that first-pillar pension schemes ought to remain exclusively under the competence of Member States (MS), whereas second- and third-pillar systems could fall partially under the remit of the EU. He rejected regulatory harmonisation at EU level of quantitative or qualitative precautionary measures, and of requirements concerning own capital or evaluation. He also opposed calls to review the Pension Funds Directive. He welcomed the establishment of cross-border pension tracking services for the second pillar, and defended the complementary nature of third-pillar schemes. However, he opposed the reduction of provision in the first pillar and a corresponding increase in the third pillar. He questioned the current legal basis and was opposed to over-regulation which, in his opinion, could hamper the viability of pension schemes.

In the subsequent debate, Mr Lamberts (Greens/EFA, BE) said it was essential to define the first, second and third pillars to ensure comparability. Mr Kamall (ECR, UK) said that first- and second-pillar systems should fall under the exclusive remit of the Member States.

Mr Kamall also recommended examining which areas the EU should be involved in without interfering with national competencies. Mr Simons (S&D, SE) proposed that there should be greater focus on the role of the European institutions to secure the coherence and integrity of the single market, while Ms in 't Veld (ALDE, NL) favoured additional EU involvement to guarantee the sustainability of pension schemes. She referred to the lack of proper legislation on the portability of pensions to enable workers to move freely within the EU. Mr Kamall agreed with her comments. Mr Lamberts called for the definition of basic common rights across the EU and stated that Member States should guarantee a minimum basic universal pension scheme. He agreed with the rapporteur that public money should not subsidise private pension schemes. Mr Skinner noted that the Member States had encouraged citizens to take out private pension schemes and therefore should guarantee minimum standards in cases of insolvency. Mr Kamall thought citizens should take more responsibility for their pensions and that changes in career patterns should be reflected in pension schemes.

All speakers acknowledged the diversity of second-pillar systems across the EU. While Mr Lamberts supported the Commission proposal on regulatory harmonisation of quantitative and qualitative precautionary measures at EU level, Mr Simons opposed it. He questioned its feasibility and suggested waiting for the European Insurance and Occupational Pensions Authority's (EIOPA) assessment. Mr Skinner added that the multiplicity of pension schemes across the EU made comparison extremely difficult, and suggested that Institutions for Occupational Retirement Provision (IORP) be treated separately.

As regards capital requirements, Mr Simons felt it was important to focus on the protection of workers in cases of insolvency. Mr Kamall thought moral hazard remained an issue. He was concerned with quantitative Solvency II requirements which in his opinion could threaten the viability of second-pillar systems due to increasing costs. Ms in 't Veld, however, favoured the Commission proposal since sacrifices ought to be shared by present and future generations. In her opinion, pension arrangements should reflect modern work patterns and therefore be more flexible.

The rapporteur, Mr Skinner and Mr Kamall rejected the Commission proposal on the establishment of equal competition between life insurance and second-pillar systems, as the latter could not be considered a financial service provider and therefore could not be compared with life insurance providers. Mr Lamberts disagreed. Ms Bowles (ALDE, UK) favoured legal certainty but warned against over-regulation which could cripple the attractiveness of pension schemes.

The rapporteur agreed that there should be reciprocity in terms of solidarity between present and future generations to ensure the viability of pension schemes.

The Chair reminded the committee that it should table amendments concerning its own area of competence and that amendments which concerned the competences of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL) should be tabled separately.

Deadline for amendments: 11 December 2012. Consideration of amendments: 10 January 2013. Vote in the lead committee (EMPL): 21 February 2013. Vote in ECON: 21 March 2013. Vote in plenary: 15 April 2013.

6. Other issues

Mr Gauzès (PPE, FR) was extremely critical of President Schulz's proposal to create a Subcommittee on the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) which would include parliamentarians of all Member States apart from the United Kingdom. He was particularly upset that there had been no involvement of the Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee (ECON), that the EP President had been in touch with only a very restricted group of MEPs, and that the proposal went against the consistent line taken in various ECON reports which had insisted on the need to maintain an inclusive approach within the EP towards EMU.

The committee agreed to debate the issue during the next coordinators' meeting and possibly during the next ECON meeting in Strasbourg.

7. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held in Brussels on 10 December 2012.