

ORAL QUESTION WITH DEBATE O-0016/03

pursuant to Rule 42 of the Rules of Procedure

by Theodorus Bouwman, on behalf of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs
to the Council

Subject: TASK FORCE on employment

Members have noticed recent initiatives in the form of various letters signed by Heads of State and Government, namely a trilateral text by Tony Blair, Jacques Chirac and Gerhard Schröder and several bilateral texts by Tony Blair and José Manuel Durao Barroso, by Tony Blair and José María Aznar, as well as by Tony Blair and Paavo Lipponen. All letters were addressed to the President of the European Council and made public through the media but were not copied to the appropriate institutions of the European Union.

The letters deal with the agenda of the Spring European Council. In view of the rising unemployment rate the leaders propose that the European Council set up a TASK FORCE on Employment.

What is the Council's position regarding the creation of a TASK FORCE on Employment?

What is the exact mandate of the TASK FORCE on Employment? To whom will the TASK FORCE report?

Does the Council share the view that the current Employment Strategy, recently reshaped, updated and streamlined with the Broad Economic Policy Guidelines, with its balanced approach involving the EU Institutions and granting an important role of initiative to the Commission, will develop into an efficient instrument to foster employment in the European Union? What added value could a TASK FORCE add to the Employment Strategy?

Does the Council support the view that the Employment Committee (EMCO), established according to Article 130 of the Treaty and comprising representatives of the Member States and the Commission, would be best placed to assess employment issues and therefore be the proper instrument regarding the possible scope of the mandate of such a TASK FORCE?

Tabled: 19.03.2003

Forwarded: 20.03.2003

Deadline for reply: 10.04.2003