OPEN METHOD OF COORDINATION

The open method of coordination (OMC) in the European Union may be described as a form of ‘soft’ law. It is a form of intergovernmental policy-making that does not result in binding EU legislative measures and it does not require EU countries to introduce or amend their laws. The OMC, originally created in the 1990s as part of employment policy and the Luxembourg process, was defined as an instrument of the Lisbon strategy (2000). This was a time when EU economic integration was advancing quickly but EU countries were reticent to give more powers to the European institutions.

The OMC has provided a new framework for cooperation between the EU countries, whose national policies can thus be directed towards certain common objectives. Under this intergovernmental method, the EU countries are evaluated by one another (peer pressure), with the Commission’s role being limited to surveillance. The European Parliament and the Court of Justice play virtually no part in the OMC process.

The OMC takes place in areas which fall within the competence of EU countries, such as employment, social protection, education, youth and vocational training.

The OMC is principally based on:

- jointly identifying and defining objectives to be achieved (adopted by the Council);
- jointly established measuring instruments (statistics, indicators, guidelines);
- benchmarking, i.e. comparison of EU countries’ performance and the exchange of best practices (monitored by the Commission).

SEE ALSO

- Education
- Employment
- Social policy
- Vocational training
- Youth
- European cooperation: the Open Method of Coordination on the European Commission’s website