

EBLIDA informiert

Access to documents:

Antagonism over public access to European documents

MEP *Michael Cashman*, responsible for Parliament opinion on the proposal to grant citizens and residents of the Union the right of access to documents, has expressed similar concerns to those of *Jacob Söderman* (European Ombudsman), who warned that if the existing plan to establish a long list of exemptions to keep sensitive papers out of the hands of the public is not changed, „citizens would not so much enjoy rights as be dependent on the goodwill of officials“.

According to MEP Cashman, experience in member states and years of freedom of information in the United States have proved that institutions have a duty to present information about their activities and decision-making procedures „in a clear and neutral manner“. He argues that there is no need for numerous exemptions from the planned new rules, as European citizens do not have an automatic right of access to internal documents, due to the principle of confidentiality operated by two of the European institutions. Cashman also argues that general documents adopted by according to the comitology procedures (which govern relations between the Commission and the committees, based on models set out in a Council Decision) as well as those given to European institutions by member states or third parties should be made public. Moreover, he asks for the definition of 'document' to be widened to include email messages, when they contain relevant information. The Commission itself is arguing for a much stricter definition of a 'document' (excluding informal messages, discussion papers and those referring to internal department opinions).

Access to documents:

EUROPOL accepts Ombudsman's recommendation

The recommendation made by the European Ombudsman, *Jacob Söderman*, concerning the rules for public access to documents has been adopted by Europol (European Law Enforcement Organisation), who agree to adopt the same instructions as the Council of Ministers.

The Europol Management Board will re-examine its own rules in the light of discussions on new rules for the Council, Commission and European Parliament on public access to documents. The public will be briefed on this new policy via its website: <<http://www.europol.eu.int>>.

The Ombudsman's draft recommendation to Europol followed an own-initiative inquiry launched by the Ombudsman in April 1999. As well as Europol, the inquiry covered the European Central Bank, the Community Plant Variety Office and the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, which have also adopted rules on access to their documents.

***Audiovisual Policy:
Parliament report adopted***

On 13 July, the Culture Committee unanimously adopted a report by MEP *Valter Veltroni* on the Commission proposal for an audiovisual policy in the digital age. The report stresses the need for a formal revision by 2002 of the „television without frontiers“ directive (89/552/EC), to take into account new services and technological developments as a result of digitalisation. The report asks for private and public television broadcasters to allocate part of their revenue to the production and acquisition of European audiovisual programmes. It also calls for the creation of a European forum for media co-operation to improve transparency and develop strategies to counter market concentrations, which pose a threat to pluralism.

The Commission is asked to propose further initiatives to develop cybercinema and to promote the simultaneous distribution of European cinematographic works, on the basis of the experience acquired on the Media Training/Plus programmes. As regards intellectual property rights in the new digital environment, the committee believes the directive on copyright and related rights in the information society should be beefed up, particularly as the Internet is one of the main new media for the dissemination of audiovisual works. This report is scheduled for debate by the European Parliament at the Strasbourg plenary session in early September.

***Information Society:
Commission progress report on green paper to be adopted soon***

During a speech in Luxembourg on best practices in e-administration, Commissioner *Liikanen* (DG Information Society) highlighted that the European Union should stimulate benchmarking and support projects through programmes such as that on European digital content on global networks and support sector-based initiatives (e.g. libraries, geographic information). Among the Commission's priorities is *IDA (Interchange of Data between Administrations)*, a programme which aims at stimulating the exchange of information between member states at a trans-European level between administrations, enterprises and citizens. This project was adopted in the framework

of 'online government', part of the eEurope initiative. The Commission will soon adopt a progress report on the *Green Paper on the role of the public sector in the information society*. This document underlines that access to public information can, on the one hand, reduce the gap between citizens and administrations and, on the other hand, improve competition generally.

Education:

Commission proposal on European co-operation in school education

The Commission proposal on European co-operation in quality evaluation in school education (24 January 2000) called for measures aimed at boosting the ability of schools to adapt to changes in society. On 4 July, MEP *Marieke Sanders-ten-Holte* (Culture Committee) reported on this proposal. Her report endorsed most of the Commission's recommendations but argued that the concept of quality evaluation in school education should have been defined and that an existing list of quality indicators in areas such as knowledge, success, educational support and resources should have been used more. The European Parliament adopted the proposal in its first reading on 6 July, with the following amendments:

- initiative to include girls, women, and groups that have been excluded in the past;
- use of modern information and communication technologies to exchange information and good practice;
- further details of quality evaluation;
- associated countries should be allowed to participate in the development of quality evaluation methods;
- the involvement of teachers, pupils, management, parents and experts in the process of external and self-evaluation in schools to promote shared responsibility for the improvement of schools.

Fifth Framework Programme:

New website for programme management

A new Cordis FP5 web service has been launched to bring together all the documents needed to take part in the Fifth Framework Programme. The service provides information on the legal and financial aspects of the research management process. The site is divided into three sections: the vademecum (programme information), reference documents and a questions area through which the six 'milestones' of the proposal management process are de-

scribed: participation rules, call for proposals, evaluation, contract negotiations, provisions and contract follow-up.

The Fifth Framework programme management service is available from: <http://www.cordis.lu/fp5/management>

MEDIA Programme:

Training and Plus awaiting final decision

On 6 July, the European Parliament, in its first reading, adopted a resolution drafted by MEP *Ruth Hieronymi* on the Media-Training and MEDIA Plus programmes. In terms of content, they constitute a whole programme and will run from 2001 to 2005. As regards the Media-Training programme, the major amendment was the financial framework, increased from Euro 50 million to Euro 70 million.

By means of the MEDIA Plus programme, a follow-up to Media II (1996-2000), the Parliament amended the Commission's original proposal as follows:

- MEDIA Plus presents itself in the form of a Council decision, over which MEPs are not consulted. Thus, MEPs asked for Article 151 to be taken as a legal basis, so that the co-decision procedure would apply. Moreover, member states are called upon at the forthcoming IGC to incorporate the cultural and audiovisual industries in Article 151 of the Treaty;
- the indicative budget of Euro 350 million is increased to Euro 480 million;
- other sources of financing for the programme. In the autumn, the European Investment Bank will put forward proposals to support audiovisual production in the EU. Similar projects for music, e-books and educational software are still being prepared;
- linguistic and cultural diversity to be better taken into account;
- content to include multimedia and radio broadcasting.

The French Presidency declared at the Culture ministers meeting on 20 and 21 July in Lille, that it wanted the MEDIA Plus programme to be adopted definitively before the end of the year, to enable it to come into force on the planned start date of 1 January 2001. An extraordinary Council/Parliament meeting will take place on 26 September, before the Council meeting scheduled for 23 November.

Structural Funds:**Euro 400 million to promote innovation**

On 14 July, the Commission adopted new guidelines (2000-2006) aimed at promoting innovation in the EU regions. Funding in the order of Euro 400 million will be made available to support innovation actions. Projects must be in harmony with the conclusions of the Lisbon summit, which were to reduce the innovation deficit of the less competitive regions. Three factors have been chosen:

- Regional development based on knowledge and technological innovation; *eEurope* initiative;
- Regional identity and sustainable development. Innovative actions to improve the living and professional framework of their citizens, natural heritage, cultural features, specific skills, etc.

Regional authorities eligible under Objective 1 and 2 funding will be invited to submit their proposals for programmes by 31 May each year between 2001 and 2005. More information can be found at: <http://www.inforegio.cec.eu.int>.

Electronic commerce:**Communication on the creation on .EU domain name**

The creation of the .EU domain is part of the *eEurope* Action Plan. Last February, the Commission launched a public consultation on how the proposed .EU Top Level Domain should be set up.

On 5 July, the Commission adopted a communication where it sets out how this idea should be implemented in practice and paves the way for further concrete steps to be taken, notably towards ICANN and the US Government. The communication outlines the main results of the public consultation, the added value of .EU to the existing registration policies in the World Wide Web and the role of the European Union. It also sets out the actions to be undertaken at European level in order that the .EU domain name is implemented.

The Commission will now continue to consult with relevant private and public sector participants and user associations in Europe in order to facilitate the preparation of guidelines and the legal framework for the registration policy of .EU. Further information can be found at: <http://www.ec-pop.org/>.

Employment:**New strategy to promote access to the knowledge society**

Building on the success of the European jobs strategy, the Commission adopted the European employment strategy on 25 July, opening the way for

funding for member states to co-operate on the analysis, research and monitoring of labour market policy. The proposal aims to provide financial incentives and develop the employment policies of member states and the EU, the knowledge economy, identify best practices and promote the spread of innovation and information. Member states will co-ordinate their employment policies along annually agreed guidelines (the Luxembourg process).

In exploiting the opportunities of the knowledge-based economy and promoting access for all to the knowledge society and to new information and communications technologies, this proposal invites social partners to:

- focus on lifelong learning and new forms of work related to information technology;
- integrate the goals for the knowledge-based society into action programmes and initiatives;
- investigate ways in which the knowledge-based economy, provided access is ensured, can assist in combating social exclusion and offer better opportunities to people with disabilities;
- foster employment in the e-economy.

Information Society:

Okinawa Charter rejects digital segregation

The discussions at the G8 summit held on 24 July in Japan reflected concerns expressed by the Commission over recent months on food safety, world trade, the inclusive information society, and refusal of the digital divide.

Concerning information and communication technologies, the summit pointed out the great opportunities created by new technologies and wished to ensure that these are spread across those with limited access to digital opportunities. In this regard, they would welcome contributions from the private sector, such as those of the Global Digital Divide Initiative and Global Business Dialogue on Electronic Commerce (GBDe). They also committed themselves to pursuing the aims and ambitions set out in the *Okinawa Charter on the Global Information Society*. A Digital Opportunities Task Force (dot force) will be set up asked to report its findings and recommendations on global action to bridge the international information and knowledge divide. In favour of education, the G8 call upon the International Financial Institutions (IFIs), in partnership with developing countries, to focus on education in their poverty reduction strategies and provide greater assistance for countries with sound education strategies. These strategies should maximise the potential benefits of

IT in this area through effective means and distance learning wherever possible.

Internet:

New European portal joint venture

On 20 July, the Commission approved the creation of the Internet portal joint venture, 'Vivazzi', between Vodafone, Vivendi and Canal+. Regulatory clearance was made possible after the companies submitted commitments to ensure rival internet portals would have equal access to the parent companies' set top boxes and mobile handsets. The parties committed to make it possible for customers to change portals if they want so.

Vizzavi will develop, market, maintain and provide a branded multi-access Internet portal throughout Europe, providing customers with a seamless environment for web-based interactive services, across a variety of platforms, such as fixed and mobile telephony networks, PCs and palm-tops, as well as television sets.

Structural Funds:

New programming period 2000-2006 launched

The European Commission has approved seven-year education, training and employment packages for several countries.

Austria will benefit from the Single Programming Document (SPD), relating to Objective 3 of regional policy (employment and training) with priorities on preventing adult/youth unemployment, flexibility in the jobs market, and lifelong learning;

France has its priorities on preventive measures on active employment policies, lifelong learning, information society and equality;

Italy will focus on education, training and guidance services as part of lifelong learning to adapt and modernise education, vocational training and employment systems and policies;

Portugal has signed training (employment, vocational training and social development) and education (educational opportunities, lifelong learning, training and IT/language schools) programmes funded by the ESF (European Social Fund). Also signed are programmes within the information society, science, innovation and culture fields.

With reference to the *United Kingdom*, although Scottish, Welsh and English authorities will have to submit a complementary programme setting out in more detail what ESF resources will be used for, calls for bids for projects on

lifelong learning, employment, sustainable development and economic and social cohesion will be launched.

WIPO:

declaration on intellectual property to be adopted soon

The World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) Policy Advisory Commission is concerned about the need to promote the value of intellectual property as a tool for promoting wealth creation as well as economic, social and cultural development. At a meeting on 15 June, a draft Declaration, which recognises the universal value of intellectual property in knowledge-based societies, was presented as the basis of the discussions. This draft declaration re-asserts the historical, cultural, social and economic value of intellectual property since former times. It further highlights the importance of intellectual property rights which provide incentives to creators; urges that users have equal access to the benefits of creativity; and underlines their contribution to the creation of wealth for all. It also recommends a series of activities to promote public awareness and the dissemination of value-added intellectual property information and better international registration services. There should be activities to promote effective use of intellectual property and the protection of cultural diversity.

The draft declaration will be adopted by the Policy Advisory Commission, who agreed to present it, after adoption, to the Assemblies of WIPO at their annual meeting in September. More information from: [<http://www.wipo.org/>](http://www.wipo.org/).

Quelle: EBLIDA - Hot News, July 2000

EBLIDA - European Bureau of Library, Information and Documentation Associations, Head Office, P.O.Box 43300, 2504 AH The Hague (The Netherlands).

Tel.: +31 70 3090608, Fax: +31 70 3090708. E-Mail: eblida@nblc.nl

URL: <http://www.eblida.org>

