



EBLIDA

# Hot News May 2000

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Copyright Directive: further discussion before Council adopts common position

On 25 May, the Internal Market Council had an in-depth debate on the proposal for a Directive on copyright. Some progress was made on a number of major issues, however it was generally agreed that further work is necessary before the Council could adopt a common position.

The main discussions concerned the need to strike the right balance between the interests of rightholders (holders of copyrights) on the one hand, and the interests of other parties on the other hand (internet service providers, consumers, equipment manufacturers, libraries, publishers), taking into account the possibilities offered by new technologies.

Exemptions for which no special authorisation is needed, such as 'technical' copies, needed for forwarding works on the internet network, or 'private' copies are still subject of debate. Member states are still in opposition over the list of special exemptions from the general copyright rules they should be allowed to grant. While France, Spain and Italy call for more guarantees, the United Kingdom pushes for greater flexibility and the ability to retain exemptions already existing in national law.

The Permanent Representatives Committee (COREPER) has been invited to pursue work on this proposal to enable the Council to reach agreement before the end of the Portuguese Presidency. The Presidency hopes to resolve the dossier before the end of June, and is preparing to call a special session of the Internal Market Council on 15 June, if necessary. Once member states have reached agreement on the draft rules, they will have to be re-examined by MEPs, delaying a final decision still further.

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#### Counterfeiting and Piracy: report on Green Paper adopted

On 4 May, with the adoption of the report drafted by MEP Fourtjou, the European Parliament endorses the resolution on the Commission Green Paper on '*Combating Counterfeiting and Piracy in the Single Market*'. The European Parliament calls on the Commission to adopt a global and co-ordinated approach comprising a preventive aspect and a law enforcement aspect characterised by "*firmness and uniformity*".

Two amendments were adopted, including one which stresses that possession of counterfeit goods should be subject to harmonised sanctions only in cases where they are acquired with criminal intent and involve articles of considerable value. The Parliament also calls for the imposition of heavier sanctions to fight counterfeiting and piracy, including the temporary or permanent closure of establishments in which these acts have been committed. In addition, it calls for common minimum sanctions to be imposed, in order to suppress the production, distribution, import, export and possession of counterfeit and pirated products. An overwhelming majority rejected an amendment by MEP Thomas-Mauro on Member States internal borders, as the European Commission does not wish for internal border controls to be introduced.

A Commission action programme should be adopted soon, especially for audiovisual material.

In addition, the Parliament calls on the Commission to introduce a system for collecting, analysing and comparing data on counterfeiting and piracy and to draw up a biennial report for Parliament and the Council on the trend in this phenomenon in the single market and the candidate accession countries. Lastly, the European Parliament calls on the Commission to propose an allocation of duties that takes account of disputes relating to intellectual and industrial property.

The resolution stresses the importance of raising the awareness of the public and the law enforcement authorities about the issues and the risks it poses such as job losses, low wages and dangers to health and safety.

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E-commerce Directive: Council common position approved

On 4 May, for the second reading, the European Parliament approved the Council's common position on the e-commerce directive by 469 votes to 0 with 38 abstentions. As regards the liability of intermediate service providers (e.g. Internet services providers) and consumer protection (e.g. codes of conduct), Plenary adopted two amendments tabled by MEPs Palacio Vallelersundi and Grossetete, asking the Commission to encourage the establishment of efficient notice and takedown procedures by interested parties, and to draw up codes of conduct, ensuring the participation of consumers and Internet users.

Balanced solutions were found for a certain number of issues: consumer protection; the application of the agreement to financial services provided via internet; international law; cybercrime; protection of minors and book prices (as it stands, the Directive does not affect the application of set price schemes that exist in certain member states).

This Directive will ensure that Information Society services benefit from the Internal Market principles of "free movement of services" and "freedom of establishment" and that they can be provided throughout the European Union, if they comply with the law in their home member state - online business will only be governed by the national law of the web trader's home state.

Member states have 18 months to implement the new law (usually they have between two and three years to either change existing laws or draft new ones to comply with directives). When it is adopted, each member state must ensure that the information supplied by a service provider established on its territory complies with the national provisions applicable in the member states in question. Full details of the Common Position are available on the **Official Journal No 2000/C 128 of 8 May 2000, p.32**

Further information on electronic commerce can be found at:

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/internal\\_market/en/media/eleccomm/index.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/internal_market/en/media/eleccomm/index.htm)

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Telecommunications: Council outcomes on electronic communications

On 2 May, the Telecommunications Council held a policy debate on the future electronic communications regulatory package. The debate was based on the Commission's presentation of the outcomes of a public consultation launched by the Commission.

Member states were asked to focus upon the following questions:

- regulation of access to infrastructures in order to promote competition;
- recommendations, co-regulation and self-regulation in the future system;
- better co-ordination between the various regulatory authorities at a national and European level;
- the scope of universal services obligations.

MEP Paasilinna reported on the Commission Communication on the implementation of the "1998 telecommunications regulatory package", which was adopted on 18 May. He pointed out that insufficient progress has been made in implementing the package in certain member states. He also believes that the benefits of liberalisation have not spread widely among users due to failings in the local telephone 'loop'.

The debate revealed a broad support for maintaining an asymmetrical regulatory package, that is, one which comprises the stricter provisions of these operators. The importance of improving co-operation and dialogue between national, Community and European institutional bodies and

the goal of avoiding the exclusion of certain sectors of the population from the benefits of the information society were also supported. Comments on the Commission's communication on local loop unbundling plus a recommendation were also discussed. Emphasis was placed on the universal service including high-speed Internet.

The outcome of this debate will serve as a basis for drawing up proposals for the legislative acts, which are to be adopted in June.

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#### Culture 2000 - full participation for EFTA and EEA states

On 16 May, at the Agriculture Council meeting and on behalf of the EU, the Council approved a draft Decision of the EEA Joint Committee amending Protocol 31 to the European Economic Area Agreement. This has the aim of extending co-operation in the field of culture by creating a framework for co-operation and will determine arrangements for the full participation of EEA/EFTA States in the Community's [Culture 2000](#) programme.

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#### Culture 2000: priorities and themes for the years 2001-2004

The objectives set up by the member states in the cultural sector are to encourage artistic and cultural co-operation between the member states and, if necessary, support and complement their action in the following areas:

- knowledge and dissemination of culture and history of the European peoples;
- conservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage of European significance;
- non-commercial cultural exchanges;
- artistic and literary creation.

The first call for applications was published on 8 April. A call each year will allow cultural operators to submit applications for Community financial support. For the years 2001-2004, the calls for applications will be published in July of the preceding year.

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#### Education: year 2000 Jean Monnet projects selected

The European Commission has selected 117 university projects to receive subsidies under the Jean Monnet Action. This provides support for the teaching of European Affairs by co-financing universities for the establishment of Jean Monnet Chairs, permanent courses, and modules in European law, European economy, political studies of European construction and the history of European integration.

The selected projects will take effect from the start of the next academic year with the creation of 47 new Jean Monnet Professorships, 47 Jean Monnet Modules and 23 Jean Monnet Centres of excellence in European universities.

The university projects submitted for 2000 (280 in all) were of excellent quality. The overall financial participation in these projects totals around Euro 900,000 for three years. The list of successful Jean Monnet projects 2000 is available at:

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg10/university/ajm/ajm2000.pdf>

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eContent: European digital content on Internet

On 24 May, the European Commission adopted a proposal for an EU multi-annual programme that aims at stimulating the development and use of European digital content on the Internet and promoting the linguistic diversity of European websites in the Information Society. The initiative covers the period 2001-2005. eContent follows on from the INFO2000 and MLIS (Multilingual Information Society) programmes which concluded at the end of 1999. The current call for preparatory actions was published on 20 April and closes on 7 July 2000. There is a budget of Euro 9 million available for this call. The three action lines are:

- Action line 1: Access to capital for start-ups;
- Action line2: Exploitation of public sector information;
- Action line 3: Linguistic and cultural customisation.

For further information please email: [econtent@cec.eu.int](mailto:econtent@cec.eu.int); fax: +352-4301-34999 or visit: <http://www.cordis.lu/econtent>

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eEurope: draft action plan now available

At its meeting on 16 March last, the Council had an exchange of views on the basis of Commission and Presidency progress reports, which addressed progress since the eEurope initiative was launched.

The eEurope Action Plan is to be finalised for the Feira European Council on 19 and 20 June. On 25 May, the Commission's draft Action Plan on eEurope was presented to the Internal Market Council. This document contains objectives for concrete action to enhance Europe's competitiveness, as agreed at the Lisbon European Council. The draft sets out three objectives each divided into several sections: a cheaper, faster and secure Internet; investing in people and skills and stimulating the use of the Internet. For each objective a series of specific actions is proposed together with deadlines for implementation. The draft Action Plan for eEurope 2002 can be downloaded from:

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/information\\_society/eeurope/actionplan/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/information_society/eeurope/actionplan/index_en.htm)

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EQUAL: co-operation against discrimination and inequality

[EQUAL](#) has built upon the work which was previously carried out with the two human resource Community Initiatives, ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT. Both started in 1995, and some of the projects under these programmes will continue until the end of this year. EQUAL will run up to 2006. Like its predecessors it will test, develop and disseminate innovative ways of delivering employment policies, but it will have a specific mission - to promote new means of combating all forms of discrimination and inequality connected with the labour market.

The promotion of equality of opportunity between men and women will be integrated in all four pillars of the European Employment Strategy, but also targeted through specific actions in favour of women in the fourth pillar. Moreover, following the conclusions of the Berlin Summit, EQUAL will also take account of the social and vocational integration of asylum seekers. The EQUAL initiative was published in the Official Journal of the European Union on 5 May (OJ no 2000/C 127/02). Member states are invited to present proposals concerning this programme within four months from the date of publication. It is expected that the first call for proposals will be launched in early 2001.

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Leonardo da Vinci: Euro 59 million for mobility (Commission contribution)

Over 30,000 Europeans will benefit from a period of training abroad in 2000. This figure concerns the 15 EU member states, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein, while the pre-accession countries will join the programme in the coming weeks. This will raise the number of participant countries to 30 and the budget to Euro 69.5 million.

Trans-national placements and exchanges can be funded through the programme which will run until 2006. For further information please email: [leonardo@cec.eu.int](mailto:leonardo@cec.eu.int) or visit [http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/leonardo/leonardo2\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/leonardo/leonardo2_en.html)

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IST Programme: 24 projects are now available on the web

An overview of 24 projects supported by the 1996-97 Call for Proposals launched by the Information Society Promotion Office (ISPO) are now available at <http://www.ispo.cec.be/showcase/>.

The projects cover several aspects of the Information Society, including eCommunities, equal opportunities, education, business and consumer issues, and sustainable development. A particular objective has been to promote social inclusion.

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Research: report on Commission communication adopted

On 9 May, the European Parliament's Committee on Industry adopted the report by MEP Van Gorsel on the Commission's communication entitled "*Towards a European Research Area*". This report insists upon the need to attract more researchers to Europe; to improve mobility for researchers and facilitate higher salaries; to improve university training and to create an environment more supportive of research in Europe. However it carries with it certain suggestions and qualifications. It asks the Commission to examine how the grouping of "centres of excellence" into a network and the creation of virtual centres could contribute to the development of knowledge, economic growth and improved employment.

With the adoption of an amendment by MEP Rolf Linkhor, the Industry Committee invites member states to set a target of at least 3% of their GDP for research, but urged them to regard national research programmes not only as programmes intended primarily to strengthen their own economies, but also as programmes for promoting economic growth, competitiveness, employment and cohesion throughout the EU.

The report urges the Commission to make the future Sixth Framework Programme a more effective instrument to achieve a new approach to the Community's research efforts, one which focuses on objectives and the best way in which these objectives can be achieved in a global context.

The Communication was adopted by the European Parliament on 18 May, in Strasbourg. Moreover, the Industry Committee will be drawing up an own-initiative report on "*The second Internet generation: the need for an EU research initiative*". The Culture Committee will give its opinion on this subject.

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URBAN II and INTERREG III: Initiatives for the period 2000-2006 now launched

On 11 May, Commissioner Michel Barnier presented the definitive versions of the guidelines for Interreg III (trans-national and cross-border co-operation) and Urban II (urban regeneration) to regional representatives in Brussels. With a budget of Euro 700 million, [URBAN II](#) will contribute to resolving social, economic and environmental problems in 50 cities located in regions eligible for funding under Objective 1 and 2. Member States must select eligible urban areas which should have at least 20,000 inhabitants.

[INTERREG III](#) has a budget of Euro 4,875 billion. The Commission has just adopted guidelines and indicative distribution of the credits between member states. Member states now have six months to submit their projects.

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Charter of Fundamental Rights - Convention's common statement

On 29 February, the Citizens' Freedom and Rights Committee adopted the report on the EU



Charter of Fundamental Rights. It calls for, among others, the right to adequate social protection and proper education to be incorporated into the new EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Other demands made by the Committee are for: the promotion of literacy among both children and adults as a means of combating social exclusion; the protection of the diversity of the languages and cultures of Europe, especially regional and minority languages and cultures; legal protection to the peoples of the European Union in respect of new threats to fundamental rights, for example from developments in information technology, which can cause new conflicts with fundamental freedoms.

A Hearing of the Convention drawing up the Charter was held on 27 April in Brussels. The Convention drew up a 'Common Statement' entitled "*The Quality Test*" which states that the Charter must be:

- A Charter for all, which requires the recognition of the principle of non-discrimination and the protection of the rights of minorities to use their language and transmit their cultures and values;
- A Charter on individual and collective rights to protect collective rights and the right of consultation for NGOs at European level;
- A Charter that ensures access to public services and transparency;
- A Charter on civil, political, social and cultural rights to guarantee basic rights in social, cultural and educational fields.

The Convention has decided to adopt definitively the draft version of the Charter in time to be considered by the Biarritz European Council in October 2000. A preliminary draft version is expected to be ready for the European Summit in Feira on 19 and 20 June. This will enable the European Council to decide whether the Charter should be included in the topics for consideration by the intergovernmental conference on the revision of the treaties.

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Culture: Culture Ministers debate culture policies

The Culture Council, at its meeting on 16 May 2000, discussed the following topics:

- **MEDIA Plus**, the new aid programme for the audiovisual industry for the period 2001-2005. Broad consensus was reached on the principles applicable to audiovisual policy with the development of digital technologies. It was concluded that infrastructures and content were two aspects which should be dealt with separately and that regulation on content must be applied whatever the means of diffusion. The European Parliament is expected to give its opinion on 7 July;
- The draft conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, concerning the Commission communication on "*Principles and guidelines for the Community's audiovisual policy in the digital age*";
- The draft Council Resolution on the **conservation and enhancement of European cinema heritage**;
- Presentation of a report by the Presidency on "*Cultural diversity in the new international environment*". UNESCO and the Council of Europe are rekindling debate on this theme in order to clarify the issue and its political consequences;
- The European Forum for **intellectuals, politicians and artists** (Momentum Europa);
- The implications for the Culture Council on the **European Year of Languages 2001**.

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### Convention on Cyberspace: draft version now available

On 27 April, the Council of Europe released a draft version of a Convention on crime in cyberspace for public discussion in order to enhance the consultation process with interested parties, whether public or private. Provisionally entitled "*Draft Convention on Cyber-Crime*", this Council of Europe text will be the first international treaty to address criminal law and procedural aspects of various types of offending behaviour directed against computer systems, networks or data as well as other similar abuses.

The draft provides, among other issues, for the co-ordinated criminalisation of computer hacking and hacking devices, illegal interception of data and interference with computer systems and the reproduction and distribution of copyright protected material.

The text should be finalised by a group of experts by December 2000 and the Committee of Ministers could adopt the text and open it for signature as early as autumn 2001. The text of the draft Convention can be found on the following website:

<http://conventions.coe.int/treaty/EN/cadreprojets.htm>

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### dot.EU: outcomes of the public consultation discussed

On 2 May, the Telecommunications Council took note of the outcome of the public consultation on **'[.eu](#)'** given by Commissioner Liikanen, who announced that the Commission expected to adopt a communication on the subject late in May.

The Commission adopted a working document on the creation of a ccTLD (top level Internet domain) for the European Union. According to the Commission, this would strengthen the image and infrastructure of the Internet in Europe, which would benefit European institutions, private users and commercial applications, including electronic commerce.

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### Education: French Council Presidency reports

With a view to the next Education Council, Commissioner Reding met with Jack Lang, French Minister for Education, to review the co-ordination of the Commission's education activities and the French Council Presidency. The three priorities of the French Presidency correspond to those of the Commission:

- Follow-up of the Lisbon Summit: development of the **role of education and co-ordination of education policies in Europe**, entailing the entry of schools into the digital age (eEurope Initiative) and the participation of Education Ministers in the Luxembourg Process (employment);
- Promotion of the **mobility of young people**. Mobility of students under the Socrates II

programme and the EP/Council proposal for a recommendation on removing obstacles to mobility, which is still under debate, were discussed. In addition, the development of virtual campuses, the increase in European universities and easier access to financing for students are major issues to the French Presidency;

- The development of **language learning**.

The next Education Council will be held on 8 June in Luxembourg.

As regards research, the French Research Minister, Roger Schwartzberg, pointed out several concrete measures, such as the rapid setting up of a European patent and of European houses of science and technology; the creation of a European fund to support new research procedures and of a European Science and Technology academy; installation of European technological research networks in key sectors and the launching of a European agency for scientific and technical diffusion.

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Enlargement: Communication strategy now adopted

On 11 May, at the initiative of Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen and Education and Culture Commissioner Viviane Reding, the Commission presented a communication strategy on enlargement (2000-2006), which seeks to provide information on the member states and the 13 applicant countries as well as to involve society in the enlargement process.

With a total of Euro 146.75 million for the period 2000-2006, financed by the [PRINCE](#) programme (information programme for the European citizen) within the EU, by the [PHARE](#) and [MEDA](#) programmes as well as the pre-accession strategy instruments for Malta and Cyprus, in the candidate countries, the strategy pursues the following objectives:

- To inform the public in EU member states of the reasons for enlargement, to promote dialogue and to disseminate information;
- To ensure that the public in the 13 applicant countries is more familiar with the EU, explaining the links between the pace of the accession process and the progress of negotiations, as well as the implications of accession.

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EU-Bangladesh: signing of a co-operation agreement

A Co-operation Agreement between the European Community and the People's Republic of Bangladesh on partnership and development was signed on 22 May. This agreement opens a new chapter in relations between the European Community and Bangladesh, which up until now have been based upon the Co-operation Agreement of 1976.

This agreement enlarges the field of co-operation and will enhance and develop various aspects of this co-operation in order to support the sustainable, economic and social development of Bangladesh, as well as the development of bilateral trade. It will also further deepen the economic, technical and cultural links.

The agreement covers, among others, the following areas:

- trade and commerce;
- economic co-operation;
- regional co-operation;
- **science and technology**;
- the development of human resources;
- **information, culture and communication.**

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EU-Israel: Association agreement enters into force

Last April, the Council adopted a Decision which concludes the Euro-Mediterranean association agreement between the EU and Israel, which will enter into force on 1 June. The agreement was signed on 20 November 1995 and the European Parliament issued its assent in February 1996, but ratification procedures by the national parliaments were very slow, especially in France and Belgium. Once ratification procedures have been completed, the agreement will be adopted comprising the following elements:

- Provisions on freedom of establishment;
- Liberalisation of services;
- Free movement of capital and competition rules;
- Strengthening of economic co-operation;
- Co-operation in areas such as economy, **culture**, broadcasting and **information technology**, the social sector, industry and the environment.

The Agreement will be administered by an Association Committee and will meet once a year at ministerial level.

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EU-Mediterranean: Euro-Mediterranean network has been launched

On 12 May, the federation of industrialists of the fifteen countries of the European Union and the Mediterranean partners announced the official launch of the UNIMED-Business network.

The Commission will be providing its support to this network with Euro 2.5 million. It aims at enabling companies from both sides of the Mediterranean to exchange information, experiences and analyses and to contribute to the Euro-Mediterranean process.

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## Information Society: eLearning to extend eEurope into education and training

The eLearning Initiative, announced last March by Commissioner Reding (*see Hot News March 2000*) and adopted on 24 May, aims at implementing and extending the eEurope action plan into education and training, including, in particular, the guidelines for employment.

This communication is designed to mobilise the educational and cultural communities and economic and social players in Europe. The Commission will mobilise the Community programmes for the realisation of shared objectives. The objectives are: infrastructure, training for people at all levels, networking of schools and educational content. Mobilisation aims at: Encouraging member states to use their allocations under the **Structural Funds**; Contributing to Community programmes in **education, culture, learning, research and international co-operation**; Collaborating with the European Investment Bank to strengthen the **European multimedia content industry for education and training**.

This initiative will be discussed at the Education Council meeting on 8 June. A Commission work paper will be presented in October 2000, setting out the actions to be taken at Community level. It will also be included in the European social agenda to be adopted in December. An eLearning Internet site is planned to stimulate exchange of experience and to provide easy access to all methods linked with the new learning contexts.

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## Internal Market: Commission revises strategy

The Commission carried out the "*2000 Internal Market Strategy Review*" in order to promote implementation of the objectives set by the European Council of Lisbon. It takes the earlier strategy, published in November 1999, a step further by targeting specific policies such as new technology and innovation.

Some delays have already occurred in the implementation. The document shows a rise in the percentage of directives not being implemented by one or another member state. France, Greece, Luxembourg and Portugal account more than 40% of these delays. A list of 53 measures should be successfully completed by 30 June this year, but only 26 will have been completed. Among others, the priority actions include: the Community patent; liberalisation of electronic communications markets; postal services and transport; integration of the financial markets and reduction of state aid. Further information on the internal market strategy document can be found at: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/internal\\_market/en/update/strategy/index.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/internal_market/en/update/strategy/index.htm)

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## Internet: Commission communication debated

The Commission Communication on the organisation and management of the Internet was adopted on 12 April (*see Hot News April 2000*). The Telecommunications Council, at its meeting on 2 May, took note of the Commission's information on the latest developments, in particular progress in ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers). The Council invited the Permanent Representatives Committee (COREPER) to continue work on the communication.

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Media: first European Union MEDIA Prize awarded

On 19 May, Viviane Reding, Commissioner for Culture and the Audiovisual presented the first European Union MEDIA Prize to the young Irish director, Damien O'Donnell, at the Cannes Film Festival. The MEDIA Prize is awarded once a year to the director of a first film which has received support under the European Union MEDIA programme.

*"East is East"*, supported by the MEDIA programme in the development and distribution phases, was distributed in ten European countries outside the United Kingdom. This comedy film recounts the life and generation conflict between members of a Pakistani family in a small town in northern England in the early 1970s.

The creation of the MEDIA prize is a sign of the Commission's determination to underscore the importance it attaches to the development, promotion and distribution of films, crucial phases of [MEDIA II](#) (1996-2000) and [MEDIA Plus](#) (2001-2005). *"Dancer in the Dark"*, the film awarded the Golden Palm was also given distribution support by the MEDIA programme.

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Research: Euro 80 million to upgrade internet infrastructure

On 23 May, the European Commission granted the National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) with Euro 80 million in order to upgrade the current European Internet infrastructure for education and research facilities. This infrastructure will interconnect the national research and education networks within the European Union and other European countries (Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Iceland, Israel, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Switzerland).

This initiative is a follow-up to the Commission's eEurope initiative, falling under the action point "Faster Internet for researchers and students". According to the Commission, this network will be fully operational early in 2001. For further information please contact: **Per Haugaard**, Tel: +32 2 296 01 40 or **Ingeborg Gaspard**, Tel: + 32 2 295 22 10

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Structural Funds: support for education, training and employment in the UK

On 4 May, upon a proposal from Social Affairs Commissioner Anna Diamantopoulou, the Commission adopted a decision approving the Community support framework for the United Kingdom for the next seven years, under Objective 3 of Structural Policy (adaptation and modernisation of policies and systems of education, training and employment). Community financing amounts to Euro 4,743 million. The Community support framework sets out five priorities:

- Active labour market policies to combat unemployment;
- Equal opportunities for all to promote social inclusion;
- Lifelong learning. Employers, employees and the community to share responsibilities and support key policy development;
- Adaptability and entrepreneurship;
- Improving women's labour market participation.

Horizontal issues such as local initiatives for employment and the information society were taken into consideration in the finalisation of the strategy for choosing priorities. The final decision will be adopted by the Commission after the committee provided for in the Structural Funds regulations has been consulted.

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#### Telecommunications: Public Hearing on legislative framework

A public hearing on *"The future regulatory framework for electronic communications networks and services"* was held in Brussels on 10 and 11 May, in advance of the Commission's five proposals for directives to the European Parliament and the Council, in June. The aim was to gather the opinion of the parties concerned over different aspects of the general regulatory framework due to be covered by the forthcoming legislative proposals: the authorisation of services, access and interconnectivity, universal service, the user rights and protection of privacy in the electronic communications sector.

The results of the public consultation were summarised in a Commission Communication adopted on 26 April. Further information on the Commission's five working documents is available from: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/information\\_society/policy/telecom/framewk\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/information_society/policy/telecom/framewk_en.htm)

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#### WIPO: Conference on Patent Law Treaty

The World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) opened a diplomatic conference in Geneva 11 May-2 June. The main objective is the adoption of the treaty on **patent law**, an international agreement to harmonise, on a world-wide basis, formal patent procedures relating to national and regional patent applications and maintenance of patents. While the EU member states will take part, the European Community as such has only an observer status, exercised by the Commission.

The draft treaty established the possibility for subsequent EU accession as a contracting party, via a favourable vote by the future Treaty Assembly. The European Commission believes that once the EU has a Community patent legislation, accession should be automatic.

The text of the draft treaty on patent law raises certain problems for the European Union. It establishes, for instance, that the parties must have an address in the territory of the state, which could run counter to the principle of the European internal market.

The European patent has not yet been created, but the Lisbon summit called for its creation within the coming year.

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*Created: 7 June 2000*  
*Updated: 7 June 2000*