



EBLIDA

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Access to documents: Council formal adoption expected in June

On 2 May, Parliament endorsed the compromise agreement on public access to EU documents. As there is already an agreement between Council and Commission, no further readings will be necessary. The regulation will enter into force within 6 months, although the institutions will have another 6 months, as required by the regulation, to set up their document registers.

Parliament rapporteur, MEP Cashman, welcomed in particular, the requirement on the institutions concerned to provide a register of documents and to publish annual reports on the application of the new regulation. On the other hand, Green MEPs, civil liberty groups and media organisations objected to the agreement, saying that there was no clarity with regard to certain

sensitive documents and, in some areas, will not represent complete freedom of information.

Commissioner Barnier recognised that, although it would not satisfy everyone, the Commission could accept all amendments. The Council welcomed in particular, the fact that any application for a document would have to be dealt with within a period of 15 working days instead of the one-month period under the present legislation. However, there are still limits to EU openness, as has been proved by the fact that the Council of ministers has denied access to Danish MEP Bonde, who asked for minutes of meetings between EU institutions which leading the final text and copies of the draft legislation.

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Civil and commercial matters: awaiting Council final decision

On 24 April, the Commission adopted its amended proposal in response to amendments voted by Parliament on the Kessler report (*see Hot News April 2001, p. 1*). The amendments adopted concern: the introduction of clarifications on the objectives of the network; the introduction of a new recital specifying that the network is to contribute to the application of Council Regulations **44/2001/EC** (civil and commercial matters) and **1347/2000/EC** (matrimonial and parental responsibility for joint children matters); study proposals for the establishment of a central EU database combining the general register of cases brought in the courts; electronic data exchange system to be developed in the IDA programme; shorter deadlines (three years) for presenting reports on implementation.

The amendments not accepted by the Commission include those relating to: co-operation between the proposed European Judicial Network and the existing European Judicial Network in criminal matters; limiting the number of representatives of each member state at network meetings to three.

The decision is awaiting Council final decision.

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Education: awaiting Council political agreement on mobility

On 15 May, Parliament adopted, in second reading, the MEP Evans report on mobility. Parliament amended the Council common position by incorporating references to the mobility action plan. It also clarified the type of follow-up to be carried out by the Commission and member states, as required by the Nice summit. Moreover, Parliament rejected the part of the common position which stated that a temporary visit to another country should last for no more than 'one year in principle'.

The first part of the Recommendation suggests measures to member states in order to give greater effect to free movement of persons, e.g. removal of legal and administrative obstacles, linguistic preparation, financial support, promotion of qualifications and access to information. In its second part, it invites member states to take specific measures for each category of persons (students, persons undergoing training, young volunteers, teachers and trainers). Although it is primarily aimed at Community nationals, the Recommendation includes nationals of third countries as long as they are participating in a Community education, training or youth programme.

The Education Council reached on 28 May, political agreement on the text as amended by Parliament. Formal approval should be given shortly at a forthcoming Council meeting. The Recommendation thus, should be signed by Parliament and Council Presidents before the end of June.

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eEurope: European initiative on digitisation launched

The critical role of digitisation in generating digital content was recognised in the eEurope 2002 action plan in June 2000. On 4 April 2001, representatives and experts from member states gathered in Lund (Sweden) to identify ways in which a coordination mechanism for digitisation programmes could be put in place, in order to stimulate European content in global networks.

The Lund meeting agreed on: the establishment of an on-going forum for coordination; the development of a European view on policies and programmes and of mechanisms to promote good practice and consistency of skills and practice; the Commission will help eEurope objectives by supporting coordination activities, the creation of centres of competence and further promoting benchmarking standards for digitisation practices.

Complete information on the digitisation initiative and the Lund Principles will soon be available at: <http://www.cordis.lu/ist/ka3/digicult/en/eeurope.html>.

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eLearning: Parliament report adopted in plenary

On 15 May, Parliament adopted the report by MEP Mauro on the eLearning initiative. The report calls on member states to make efforts at filling the gap between those with access to new technologies and those without, and to define priority actions for specific groups as well as women.

It considers that the eLearning initiative should prove to be particularly effective in four main areas: boosting the availability of infrastructure in order to facilitate greater familiarity with computing; developing software, products and multimedia services that can act as a vehicle for European culture as well as meeting the needs of teachers and trainers in Europe; training qualified personnel on the use of new technologies; reducing the cost of telecommunications.

As regards libraries, the report calls on the Council and member states "*to promote the creation of a high-speed, highly flexible and highly multicultural Trans-European network which will link up research institutes, universities, scientific libraries [...] for the exchange of scientific and other information in the various languages, and which can spearhead teachers' efforts at benchmarking and at exchanging best practice*".

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eLearning: Innovation 2000 initiative community action

In the framework of the eLearning action plan, the [European Investment Bank](#) provides funding for innovative projects, within the context of its **Innovation 2000 initiative**, amounting to approximately Euro 15 billion over three years. For example, the EIB can finance infrastructure and equipment allowing the use of information technology in schools and universities, as well as for teacher training, creating educational multimedia and virtual libraries, or even the networking of research centres. Such financing can take the form of conventional loans (with different arrangements depending on project size), individual or global loans (credit lines administered by commercial banks).

In the context of the activities of the EIB group, the [European Investment Fund](#) also supports the development of risk capital for innovative business start-ups - including in the education field - by investing in venture capital funds.

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Internet: new website for the safer use of the Internet action plan

The action plan on promoting safer use of the Internet is the EU's response to tackling the controversial issue of illegal and harmful content on the Internet. A new website has been established by the European Commission to promote safer use of the Internet. It draws attention to co-operation with industry and implementation of self-regulation.

The [site](#) has the latest news on issues concerning safer use of the Internet, e.g. latest legislation, new reports, funding and awareness activities. Other features offered are discussions, statistics, an e-mail alert facility and a breakdown of projects relating to the Internet by country.