



May 2003

EBLIDA Hot News

The EBLIDA newsletter on EU library & information society issues

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PO Box 43300
NL- 2504 The Hague
Tel: +31 70 309 06 08
Fax: +31 70 309 07 08
www.eblida.org

Culture

Council Declaration on the destruction of Iraqi cultural heritage

On 6 May, Culture ministers agreed unanimously on a Declaration on the tragic destruction of cultural goods, archaeological sites, monuments and libraries in Iraq, on the basis of a proposal made by the Presidency and following a statement made by the Swedish delegation asking member states to formally express their concern about the situation, as well as their support for the work being currently

undertaken by the UNESCO in response to these events.

The Declaration must be formally adopted at a forthcoming Council meeting before publication in the Official Journal. See Declaration at <http://ue.eu.int/newsroom/newmain.asp?lang=1> (2503rd Council meeting – Education, Youth and Culture, Brussels, 5-6 May 2003, Press 114 nr 8430/03).

Cultural and audiovisual affairs under debate

Education ministers informally met on 5 May to discuss the broader role of education and its cultural aspects as regards the building of the knowledge-based society in connection with the Spring 2003 European Council Conclusions.

Culture ministers in turn, informally discussed on 6 May the role of culture and audiovisual affairs in the future

European Treaty, particularly in relation to the work currently under way in the European Convention.

Moreover, the Council drew up conclusions on the future of youth activities in the context of the new programmes and approved without debate a Resolution on Archives on the Member States (see 2003/C 113/02, p. 2 of 8 May 2003).

Education

eLearning programme 2004-2006

On 6 May, Education ministers reached a political agreement on a common position concerning the proposal for a Decision on a multi-annual programme (2004-2006) for the ICT in education and training systems in Europe.

Once formally adopted at a forthcoming Council session, the common position

will be forwarded to Parliament for a second reading.

The Council set a budget of € 33 million for the common position, subject to the Commission's acceptance of this figure. The German delegation however was unable to join this agreement.

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Lobbying for archives and libraries

Twinning Library Association throughout Europe

The twinning of library associations is part of an official initiative from the European Commission funded PULMAN-XT project. EBLIDA has taken up this mediating task to help professional library associations in finding a twinning partner to define digital knowledge exchange

programmes, with the ultimate goal of achieving strong national library associations across the European continent.

The eventual success of the twinning initiative is to a great extent dependent on the participants' proactive approach.

Twinning concept

Twinning in this case is the joining of two library associations wishing to establish more formal bonds of co-operation and mutual assistance, which will endure after the PULMAN XT project has finished (August 2003). These bonds will be supported by a long term action plan in which the specific areas of twinning and action between the partners are outlined.

means of creating a virtual market through which information and contacts will be facilitated to the participants. The ultimate goal of these activities is to create strong library associations Europe wide, especially in the candidate countries, which will very soon be part of the European family.

The idea of twinning, originally between two towns, stems from the post war period in Europe, and was meant to promote good understanding and peace between European people. Therefore, among towns and municipalities twinning is quite common. In that context the twinning relationship is based on exchanges between town officials and groups of citizens, and includes a wide range of activities from youth exchanges to environmental project and economic cooperation.

The advantage of this virtual market place is that it allows library associations themselves to check out the list of potential partners and their knowledge on offer. Direct contact is possible or one can choose to use EBLIDA as a mediating partner.

The way in which EBLIDA will mediate and mentor the twinning process is by

EBLIDA will be launching this activity soon and will contact all the possible participants. The twinning web section will also be placed at the EBLIDA website (www.eblida.org). For more information please contact the Director, María Pía González Pereira, at the EBLIDA Secretariat or on the following e-mail addresses eblida@nblc.nl or gonzalez.pereira@nblc.nl.

Town twinning in Europe

http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/education_culture/towntwin/index_en.html

- How to participate, User Guide 2003
- Support to promote town-twinning actions 2003
- "Golden stars" for outstanding town twinning projects

Edition 20 of "The Magazine" focuses on the role of civil society in networking at local level (twinning).

See it online at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/education_culture/mag/20/en.pdf.

Audiovisual

Extension of the Media programmes to 2006

On 5 May, Audiovisual ministers took note of the Commission's presentation of the proposal for the extension of Media-Training and Media-Plus.

The proposal aims at extending the two programmes by one year (2006) in order to synchronise them with the current financial

perspectives for the Union. The current programmes end in December 2005. Moreover, the proposal increases their budget by € 7,4 million (MEDIA-Training) and by € 85,6 million (MEDIA-Plus). Both Commission proposals (COM(2003)0191 and COM(2003)0188) are available at <http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/>.

European Day at Cannes Film Festival 2003

For the first time this year a European Day brought together Culture ministers and cinema professionals from the fifteen and from the new member states to discuss ways and means of promoting European cinema and intensifying relations with other world cinemas. With effect from last year, Poland, Latvia, Estonia, Bulgaria and the Czech Republic have been involved in the MEDIA programme. Four new countries, Lithuania, Slovakia, Cyprus and Slovenia, joined them in 2003.

The 56th Cannes Festival marked a good year for the MEDIA programme, providing support to fifteen films. Furthermore, more than € 70 million were spent in 2002 by the MEDIA programme on promoting European cinema.

In addition, the "i2i Audiovisual" initiative, launched by the European Commission and the European Investment Bank in 2001, has for the past two years made almost € 600 million available to the European audiovisual industry in the form of loans and stake holdings in risk capital funds. See IP/03/667 of 13 May 2003 at <http://europa.eu.int/rapid/>.

The fourth edition of the EU MEDIA Prize was awarded to Peter Mullan for "The Magdalene Sisters". With the support of the MEDIA programme, Peter Mullan's second feature-length film has been distributed in 12 European countries in addition to its country of production, and has been seen by several million cinemagoers across Europe.

European Audiovisual Observatory launches KORDA in Cannes

The European Audiovisual Observatory has published its results of a survey into trends in the European cinema market in 2002. Visit www.obs.coe.int/about/oea/pr/mif2003.html.

In addition, the European Audiovisual Observatory launched on 16 May KORDA, the

online database of public funding for the film and audiovisual sector in Europe. Accessible free of charge, KORDA contains details of 141 funding bodies and 502 funding programmes in 30 countries. European, national and regional programmes are presented. Visit <http://www.obs.coe.int>.

Audiovisual rights protection at global level

Audiovisual performers have for many years requested to be granted the protection of their Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) at international level. In view of the WIPO informal meeting to be held from 18 to 20 June, which, amongst others, aims at including audiovisual players in its Treaty, Parliament adopted on 15 May a resolution on the protection of audiovisual performers. MEPs want the Commission to inform Parliament on the current state of the WIPO negotiations on audiovisual performances.

MEPs also want action from the Commission to reach the adoption of an effective WIPO Performers and Phonograms Treaty (WPPT) in favour of audiovisual performers' rights.

Lastly, Parliament wants further support for the protection of performers' rights, particularly in the audiovisual field where the lack of protection in many countries has a highly detrimental effect on the dissemination of European works at international level.

Work programme on the Television without Frontiers Directive for 2003

Audiovisual ministers held on 6 May, a debate on the Commission's Television without frontiers work programme for 2003, which mainly focused on the three themes covered by the public consultation recently conducted by the Commission (2-4 April 2003) as part of its evaluation exercise on the implementation of the directive.

Several delegations expressed their support for the maintenance of current provisions guaranteeing the access to broadcasts of events of major importance to society, with reference to the principle of access to information to all as well as to the inclusion

of provisions on access to short extracts of major events as a useful improvement in a possible successor to the present directive. However, different views were expressed on if, and how, this should be regulated.

A public hearing is expected to take place on 23-25 June, where the promotion of cultural diversity and of competitiveness of the European programme industry; protection of minors and public order; the right to reply; application e.g. determination of the competent authority, role of the National Regulatory Authorities will be discussed.

Consumer Protection

Commission report on the transposition of the Data Protection Directive

The Commission published on 16 May, a report on the implementation of the Data Protection Directive whereby it proposes a work plan to reduce differences, followed by a review in 2005 of whether amendments to the directive are necessary. The report is based on wide consultation, including an international conference and an online survey to which over 10,000 responses were received.

Only four member states passed national laws implementing the directive within the October 1998 deadline. The Commission took France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg and the Netherlands to the European Court of Justice in December 1999. Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium implemented the directive in 2001 and Luxembourg in 2002. France has

not yet passed the legislation necessary to bring its old data protection law (1978) fully into line with the directive. Ireland has passed legislation recently, which has not yet been notified to the Commission. Italy and Greece had no data protection laws at all.

The proposed work plan is set for completion by the end of 2004. The full text of the report (COM(2003)265), a technical analysis of implementation in member states, full details of the international conference and the results of the online survey can be found at http://europa.eu.int/comm/internal_market/privacy/lawreport_en.htm. Data Protection in the EU, <http://europa.eu.int/comm/privacy>.

Co-operation with third countries

New scientific and technological agreements under way

On 13 May, the Council of ministers concluded a scientific and technological agreement between the European Community and Israel. Once it is signed, Israel will take part in the sixth framework programme (FP6). In addition, the European Union is negotiating a bilateral agreement with Korea for its participation in research programmes.

Parliament in turn, approved on 13 May, the renewal of the agreement on cooperation in science and technology between the European Community and the Russian Federation.

See the report (A5-0155/2003) at http://www.europarl.eu.int/plenary/default_en.htm, under latest reports.

Culture

Council Resolution on horizontal aspects of culture

Culture ministers adopted on 6 May a resolution on horizontal aspects of culture in which it invites the Commission to submit by the end of 2003 a communication on the cultural dimension of EU Structural Funds for the period 1994-1999, while awaiting the third Commission report on economic and social cohesion as well as the mid term evaluation of the Structural Funds.

The Commission is to consider during 2004 how contribution of culture to economic/social cohesion could be reinforced. The Council is to give comments on the follow up of this resolution end 2004. See <http://ue.eu.int/newsroom/NewMain.asp?LANG=1>, under Education, Youth and Culture - 2503rd Council meeting, 5-6 May 2003 nr 8430/03 (Press 114).

Council Resolution on access for people with disabilities to cultural activities

Culture ministers also approved a resolution inviting member states and the Commission to examine ways to integrate people with disabilities into the arts and cultural sectors.

In its resolution, the Council asked the Commission and member states to encourage the culture sector; to promote a positive image of people with disabilities; to eliminate existing

barriers and examine further appropriate ways and means to facilitate and improve the access of people with disabilities to culture. The Council should review the follow up of this resolution by the end of 2005. Visit <http://ue.eu.int/newsroom/NewMain.asp?LANG=1>, under Education, Youth and Culture - 2503rd Council meeting, 5-6 May 2003 nr 8430/03 (Press 114).

Extension of the Culture 2000 programme

Culture ministers heard a presentation by the Commission on the proposal for the extension of the Culture 2000 programme for the years 2005-2006.

The proposal aims to extend the programme until the end of the current financial

perspectives for the Union, with an additional budget of € 69,5 million.

No changes are proposed to the programme's objectives and procedures, the aim of the proposal being to make sure that its activities will continue beyond December 2004, currently its end date.

European Capital of Culture 2006

The Council noted the nomination of two members for the selection panel of the European Capital of Culture Community action. The two applications were submitted by the Greek and the Italian delegations. The Italian delegation nominated Mr Claudio Strinati, current Director of museums for the city of Rome.

The Council is expected to designate the two leading figures who are to form part of the selection panel during the second semester of 2003. In addition, the Council designated the city of Patras (Greece) as the European Capital of Culture 2006.

Prizes for cultural heritage awarded

Commissioner for Education and Culture, Viviane Reding, and Otto von der Glabentz, Executive President of the Europa Nostra Cultural Foundation presented on 9 May, the European Prizes for cultural heritage. Six first prizes, each worth € 10 000, were awarded to outstanding projects in the fields of architectural heritage, landscapes and collections of works.

They also rewarded cultural studies and exceptional services to heritage by an individual or group. The Europa Nostra Foundation was supported by the Culture 2000 programme in organising these EU prizes.

Further information can be found at <http://www.europanostra.org>.

Future Constitution should respect cultural and educational diversity

<http://www.ere-regions-europe.org/>

The Assembly of the Regions (AER) is opposed to all efforts to grant the European Union exclusive competency in negotiating and concluding agreements in education and culture in the context of common trade policy.

Ms Prokop, AER President, showed her disappointment on the draft Article 24-part II that is presently under discussion. This article is intended to replace current Article

133.6 of the Nice Treaty and practically it submits all cultural and educational sectors to the same treatment as ordinary trade-related services.

Regional culture and education ministers are opposed to the liberalisation of these sectors in the GATS negotiations and have called for the current provisions to be maintained, which demand unanimity in these areas.

Golden Stars of Town Twinning awarded

The *Golden Stars of Town Twinning* were awarded this year in the framework of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions General Assembly, in Poland on 15 May and focus on ten outstanding twinning initiatives which were selected by an inter-institutional jury. This year, the Commission is funding some 1,400 town twinning partnerships worth € 12,000,000,

in which two or more towns or cities from different countries share ideas, explore solutions to common problems and discover each other's cultural heritage. So far, more than 11,000 towns have benefited from EU grants. More information:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/education_culture/towntwin/index_en.html

<http://www.cemr.poznan.pl/>.

Education

Council common position on the Erasmus Mundus programme adopted

On 5 May, education ministers agreed on a common position concerning the proposed Erasmus Mundus programme (2004-2008), which aims at enhancing quality in higher education and at promoting intercultural understanding through co-operation with third countries. Once formally adopted, it will be forwarded to Parliament for a second reading, scheduled for October this year.

The proposed budget is € 180 million. A review clause should be included in view of the Union's next financial perspectives starting in 2007. The Council also agreed to

include the adoption of selection results of 'Erasmus Mundus Masters' Courses' in the management procedure applicable to the measures necessary for the programme's implementation.

The proposal would allow for post-graduate students from third countries to receive grants at a level of around € 21 000 per year, an amount considered comparable to that of other international programmes, such as the US Fulbright Scholarships. It also provides for the mobility of European students and teachers to third countries.

Education and training in developing countries

Parliament adopted on 15 May, a resolution drafted by MEP van den Berg (A5-0126/2003) on a new strategy on education/training in the context of poverty reduction in developing countries.

Parliament called on the Commission to set a budgetary target for education. There should be time indicators within the current

framework between now and 2015.

Furthermore, universal full-time education required an effective ban on child labour. According to the resolution, all education programmes financed by the Community must have far-reaching strategies which include social mobilisation and bridging courses for older children.

*Co decision procedure
(first reading)*

Education

Europeans and Lifelong Learning, Eurobarometer survey results

Europeans consider lifelong learning to be an important tool for their personal/professional development. However, more than one third of European citizens do not currently take part in any form of education/training and one in ten has no desire to do so. Time and money are often given as obstacles to pursuing lifelong learning.

These are some of the main findings of the Eurobarometer survey on lifelong learning, which was commissioned by the DG EAC and CEDEFOP. It was carried out between

15 January and 28 February 2003 in the 15 member states, Norway and Iceland, and entailed more than 18,000 face-to-face interviews.

Member States have been requested to submit national reports on the implementation of lifelong learning by the end of May 2003. On this basis, the Commission is to present a Communication due in November 2003. Visit http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/education_culture/index_fr.htm and/or <http://www.cedefop.eu.int/>.

Council conclusions on European benchmarks in education and training

Education ministers set on 5 May, five concrete benchmarks for the improvement of education and training systems in Europe by 2010. They will feed into the joint report that the Commission and the Education Council is preparing for the 2004 Spring Summit.

With regard to basic skills, the percentage of low-achieving 15 years-old in reading literacy in the EU should have decreased by at least 20% compared to the year 2000 (Reading literacy proficiency level 1 and

lower, Source PISA (OECD 2000). As regards lifelong learning, the EU average level of participation in lifelong learning should be at least 12.5% of the adult working age population (25-64 age group - participating in education and training in four weeks prior to the survey 'Source Eurostat; Labour Force Survey).

A Eurostat taskforce is currently undertaking work on a new Adult Education Survey that would yield a better measure of participation.

...More news on education and training

Education ministers also adopted on 5 May, a resolution on *Equal opportunities for pupils and students with disabilities* in education and training and held a debate on *The role of universities in the "Europe of knowledge"* on the basis of a questionnaire prepared by the Presidency.

Further information can be found at <http://ue.eu.int/newsroom/NewMain.asp?LANG=1>, under 2503rd Council meeting - Education, Youth and Culture, Brussels, 5-6 May 2003 (8430/03 (Press 114)).

EU Research and Development

Scientific and technological research between the EC and Russia renewed

On 13 May, the European Parliament adopted a resolution drafted by MEP Westendorp y Cabeza (A5-0155/2003) to conclude an agreement which aims at renewing cooperation in science and technology between the EC and Russia for five more years (2003-2007).

The original Agreement entered into force on 10 May 2001 and was concluded for an initial period ending on 31 December 2002. The resolution is awaiting publication in the Official Journal. The report is available at http://www.europarl.eu.int/plenary/default_en.htm, under latest reports.

EP opinion
First reading

Information Society

*Co decision procedure
Second reading*

Modinis programme, 2003-2005

The Council's common position, unanimously adopted on 26 May, includes a number of proposed changes to the Commission's original proposal. However, the text has been reworded in the course of discussion within the Council. Moreover, some articles were restructured to enhance clarity and user-friendliness e.g. Article 2 (specific actions) to align it with Article 1 (objectives) and the four actions included in the proposed programme. On the basis of the experience from the preceding PROMISE programme and given unfortunate delay in the adoption of the programme, the financial reference amount now proposed in the

common position is € 20 million (as opposed to € 25 million proposed by the Commission). The Commission assessment, presented on 28 May, accepts all of the Council's proposed amendments to the recitals as regards the budget, but it maintains its original proposal of € 25 million. Furthermore, the Commission will set up a working group to conduct preparatory actions before the establishment of the network and information security agency. The group will start work on 1 July at the latest and end before end December, which is the target date for the creation of the agency.

Directive on the re-use & commercial exploitation of public sector documents

The Council adopted on 26 May, by unanimity, its common position that mainly reflects those orientations of the Commission proposal. It has also taken up the following amendments by Parliament, mainly concerning:

- what types of information are collected by the public sector;
- change of documents 'held by' public service broadcasters which are excluded from the scope of the directive into documents 'within the power of disposal' of public broadcasters;
- the obligation for public sector bodies to provide information on the identity of the third party right holder. It limits this obligation to cases where the public sector body is able to provide such information.

The main points of the common position which differ from the Commission proposal are:

- modifying the title by deleting the reference to 'commercial exploitation'. The Council considered that the term "re-use" covers both commercial and

- non-commercial exploitation;
- specifying the scope of the Directive in that it neither changes the rules for access to documents held by public sector bodies in member states, nor affects the protection of individuals with regard to personal data;
- eliminating the definition of 'generally accessible document' since this would cause unnecessary confusion in the Directive, which handles re-use of and not access to documents.

The Commission presented on 28 May, its assessment of the common position noting that the common position clarifies the provisions of the Commission proposal. A further improvement of the text could however be achieved by incorporating in particular the amendment of Parliament relating to the charging article and the lists of main content assets held by public sector bodies. For further information, visit www.cordis.lu/econtent/psi/pubsec.htm; <http://europa.eu.int/prelex/apcnet.cfm>.

Information Society

65 best practices in public administration to be presented at eGovernment conference

65 applications representing the best practices of European public administrations have been selected for exhibition at the EU's Ministerial Conference eGovernment 2003, taking place in Italy on 7 and 8 July. Visit http://europa.eu.int/information_society/europe/egovconf/index_en.htm.

Municipal, regional and national administrations from 14 member states, 12 accession countries, Switzerland and Norway responded to the call for exhibits. The conference, which aims at increasing the productivity and accountability of public

administrations, will culminate with a Ministerial declaration and the presentation of eEurope Awards.

In addition, the Commission foresees a total of four eEurope awards competitions taking place between 2003 and 2005, organised together with the European Institute of Public Administration in Maastricht (Netherlands). Further information on the eEurope Awards and a full list of selected exhibits can be found at <http://www.e-europeawards.org/>.

Comitology, exercise of Commission implementing powers

The European Parliament considered on 13 May, a number of amendments to the Commission's proposal which aims at enhancing the effectiveness of the decision-making process by clarifying the responsibilities and procedures and amend Decision 1999/468/EC. Parliament decided to refer the proposal back to committee for further discussions. At issue, is the

Commission's commitment to modify any changes to implementing measures to take account of Parliament's views, with the Commission at this stage only prepared to "possibly" agree to this. The report (A5-0128/2003) drafted by MEP Corbett is available at http://www.europarl.eu.int/plenary/default_en.htm, under latest reports.

Internal Market

Commission report on possible abuses of trade mark rights within the EU

On 21 May, the Commission presented its report (SEC(2003)575) examining the background behind the current discussion on exhaustion of trade marks. The Commission not only made a study of past and present competition cases involving alleged abuses of trade marks, but also sent questionnaires to over sixty interested parties e.g. rights holders, consumers and parallel traders asking for their experiences of such abuses.

The possible abuses identified have been broadly divided into three categories:

- problems that appear to relate to selective distribution systems;
- problems of abusive refusal to license trade marks;
- problems of trade mark infringements themselves.

The report concludes that the Commission has not found any deficiencies in current legal provision relating to possible abuses of trade marks within the EU.

The current regime of Community exhaustion inside the EU means that, in law, trade mark rights cannot be invoked to restrain the free movement of goods within the EU, but they can be used to restrain the entry of such goods into the EU. An alternative to this, international or global exhaustion would mean that the flow of goods into the EU could not be restrained by such rights.

See the report at http://europa.eu.int/comm/internal_market/en/indprop/tm/index.htm.

Commission releases Green Paper on services of general interest

The European Commission adopted on 21 May, a Green Paper (COM(2003)0270) on services of general interest. The Green Paper consists of five main parts, an introduction and an operational conclusion. An annex is attached to set out public service obligations in more detail, as derived from existing sector-specific legislation and the policy instruments available to ensure compliance with these obligations.

The debate that this Green Paper intends to launch raises questions with regard to:

- the scope of possible Community action that implements the Treaty in full respect of the principle of subsidiarity;
- the principles that could be included in a possible framework directive or another general instrument concerning services of general interest and the added value of such an instrument;

- the definition of good governance in the area of organisation, regulation, financing and evaluation of services of general interest in order to ensure greater competitiveness of the economy and efficient and equitable access of all persons to high-quality services that are satisfying their needs;
- any measures that could contribute to increasing legal certainty and to ensuring a coherent and harmonious link between the objective of maintaining high-quality services of general interest and rigorous application of competition and internal market rules.

Comments should be sent to the Commission by **15 September 2003** at the latest. The Green Paper can be consulted at http://europa.eu.int/comm/off/green/index_en.htm.

Internet

EURID designated to run .eu Top Level Domain

The European Commission has designated EURID - the European Registry for Internet Domains as the Registry for the dot .eu Top Level Domain (TLD). The .eu is to become the distinctive pan-European identification of websites and email addresses. The three founder members of EURID are currently managing the country codes e.g. .be, .it and .se. Two associated members are from acceding countries. EURID will consult stakeholders from the European Internet Community and contact with regional and international organisations involved in the Internet. Once the Registry is fully operational businesses, organisations and citizens in the EU will be able to register their domain names within the .eu TLD.

The designation of EURID follows a call for expressions of interest published last September and an evaluation by independent experts of the seven applications received. The Commission is to conclude a contract with EURID and then

appropriate steps will be taken with ICANN, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers for the inclusion of .eu in the global Internet Domain Name System.

At the same time, the Commission together with member states and the Registry, will establish public policy rules to deal with issues like speculative and abusive registrations of domain names, intellectual property and other rights, issues of language and geographical concepts and the extra-judicial settlement of conflicts. Depending on the rate of progress, .eu is expected to be operational towards the end of the year. The Registry will have to accredit Registrars, companies that undertake the registration of domain names for the benefit of end users under competitive market rules. Further information can be found at http://europa.eu.int/information_society/topics/telecoms/internet/eu_domain/index_en.htm.

Internet

Council and Parliament say yes to extension of Safer Internet Action Plan

Council and Parliament have agreed to accept the Commission's proposal for a two-year extension to the Safer Internet Action Plan as a response to tackle the controversial issue of illegal and harmful content on the Internet. The action plan supports a network of European hotlines where illegal content can be reported. It encourages self-regulation; benchmarks; content filtering and rating systems and supports a European network of safer internet awareness centres.

The extended action plan includes measures to encourage exchange of information and co-ordination with the relevant actors at national level, and has

special provisions for accession countries. It covers many different types of illegal content or conduct including racist material, and takes account of new online technologies e.g. mobile and broadband content, online games, peer-to-peer file transfer and all forms of real-time communications such as chat rooms and instant messages. Moreover, the Safer Internet Forum will bring together actors in the field of self-regulation.

The first call for proposals under the action plan (€ 13.3 million.) will be launched in July. Visit <http://europa.eu.int/iap> and/or <http://www.saferinternet.org>.

Social Policy

Parliament Resolution on Corporate Social Responsibility

The European Parliament adopted on 13 May, a resolution drafted by MEP Bushill-Matthews based on its own-initiative report on corporate social responsibility (CSR). The Commission proposal (COM(2002)347) aims at putting forward a new Commission strategy to promote business contribution to sustainable development.

According to Parliament, the purpose of CSR should be to add value to an enterprise and to its sustainability. CSR should be promoted at international level also, by integrating its principles in external relations, development and trade policies.

Parliament welcomed the four important initiatives to promoting,

comparing and developing CSR under the forthcoming Italian Presidency, in line with the priorities set by the Commission. CSR can best fulfil its objective if there is improved communication between companies and consumers on the basis of comparable information.

The Commission is asked for proposals aimed at giving the public access to environmental, health and safety-related and human rights-based information held by companies with a view to facilitating external scrutiny of society.

The report (A5-0133/2003) can be found at http://www.europarl.eu.int/plenary/default_en.htm, under latest reports.

*Parliament opinion
First reading*

Statute for a European cooperative society

The European Parliament adopted on 14 May, by 440 votes for, 12 votes against and 25 abstentions, the report by MEP Gebhardt (A5-0146/2003) on a European Cooperative Society (ECS).

MEPs adopted a key amendment to the proposal to ensure that its legal basis makes it subject to the co decision and not the consultation procedure (Article 95). MEPs also adopted amendments seeking to ensure proper information and consultation procedures and full transparency regarding any changes in the structure of the ECS, in particular with regard to employee's participation. It also states that employees' rights with regard to information, consultation and

participation shall under no circumstances be less favourable than those applicable before the merger or the conversion of a ECS.

The Commission proposal (COM(1991)0273, 5 March 1992) on the Statute for a European Cooperative Society will make possible the establishment of an SCE by merger of two existing cooperatives, or by conversion of a national cooperative. It would facilitate cooperatives wishing to engage in cross-border business. The proposal defines the constitutional rules, the workings, the responsibility and the winding up of the European cooperative societies.

Telecommunications

European Regulators Group and Commission launch public consultation

The European Regulators Group (ERG) held its fourth meeting on 20 May 2003 in Athens, agreeing to launch a public consultation in June to formulate a common approach to market failure. The Group is established by the new electronic communications framework that is due to be implemented by end of July this year.

The ERG also agreed to include a series of consultations on issues such as bit stream access, accounting separation

and cost accounting methods in its work programme for 2003.

In addition, the ERG will investigate whether a harmonised approach on interoperability is needed, taking into account relevant national transposing legislation.

For further information visit <http://erg.eu.int/>.

eTEN call for proposals open until September 2003

A new call for proposals under the eTEN Programme for projects of common interest in the field of trans-European telecommunications networks is now open.

The call focuses on projects in the domains of eGovernment, eHealth, eInclusion, eLearning and Trust and Security services.

This will be the only eTEN call for proposals launched in 2003. The deadline for submission of proposals is 10 September 2003. See Official Journal of the European Union no 2003/C 118/19 of 20 May 2003, p. 29.

For further information on eTEN, visit http://europa.eu.int/information_society/programmes/eten/index_en.htm.

Trade Policy

Discussions on VAT issues postponed until June

ECOFIN ministers held on 13 May, a debate on VAT (right to deduct and cross-border refund) on the basis of a report prepared by the Presidency, and decided to suspend the discussions on the Commission proposal as regards new rules for VAT deductibility until the Commission has published its communication on the new VAT strategy.

The Commission's communication, which is expected to be submitted before the summer, will take stock of progress with the new VAT strategy launched in June 2000 and will present the new initiatives which the Commission intends to take in the future.

In addition, the Council adopted a Decision authorising Germany to apply a measure derogating from Article 17 of

the Sixth Directive 77/388/EEC on the harmonisation of the laws of member states relating to turnover taxes.

The derogating measure is intended to exclude expenditure on goods and services completely from the right to deduct VAT when the goods and services are used more than 90% for the private purposes of the taxable person, or of his employees, or for non-business purposes in general. This measure is a derogation from Article 17, as amended by Article 28f of the directive and is justified by the need to simplify the procedure for charging VAT; it affects the amount of tax due at the final consumption stage only to a negligible extent.

The duration of the new authorisation is limited to 30 June 2004.

Commission seeks input on simplifying VAT compliance across borders

This consultation aims at providing a report on the current status of the review of the place of supply of services rules as well as outlining the framework in which the work has progressed. It is of interest to suppliers of services to taxable persons e.g. B2B supplies and their customers as it considers the idea of a shift in the underlying principle of the existing legislation; that is, a change from the origin principle to the destination principle with respect to the place of taxation of services supplied to taxable persons.

Such a change could result in increased use of a system whereby the customer becomes liable to pay the tax (self-assessment or reverse charge), decreased cross-border registration and additional

administrative demands (e.g., the possible corresponding extension of the VAT Information Exchange System (VIES) to services).

Based on the document entitled "VAT - The Place of Supply of Services", the European Commission is seeking reactions and input on the proposed framework and related issues.

Comments are invited until **30 June 2003**. Submissions may be made by email to taxud-c3@cec.eu.int.

See document, http://europa.eu.int/comm/taxation_customs/taxation/consultations/supply_consultation_supply_en.pdf.

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For further information
contact:
Carmen Morlon
EU Information Officer,
morlon@nblcl.nl

PO Box 43300
NL-2504 The Hague
The Netherlands
Tel.:
+31(0) 70 309 06 08
Fax:
+31(0) 70 309 07 08

Information sources used include

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Europa, <http://europa.eu.int/>
European Parliament Press Service
http://www.europarl.eu.int/press/index_en.htm
RAPID - Press and Communication Service of the European Commission,
<http://europa.eu.int/rapid/start/welcome.htm>
Various mailing lists

Calls for Tenders are published in the **S** series of the OJ as well as in the Tenders Electronic Daily database TED, <http://ted.europa.eu.int/CD/application/pif/resources/shtml/common/home/home.html>.
EBLIDA Hot News electronic provides links to calls and programmes!

Calls are in general published in the **C** series of the Official Journal (OJ) of the European Communities, which comprises information and notices issued by the institutions of the Union, such as preparatory legislative documents and questions put by Members of Parliament to the Commission and Council.

The **C** series is available on-line via EUR-Lex, <http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/>. Please note that the **CE** edition of the Official Journal, which is only available online, now publishes the explanatory statement for all Commission proposals. Henceforth the two-column presentation of the amended proposal will be replaced by two columns of continuous text. The text that has been deleted in the amended proposal will be struck through with a line, and new or replacement text will be underlined.

EBLIDA encourages dissemination of our information. However, we would ask that the source be acknowledged. Documents are available at the EBLIDA Secretariat.

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