



Hot News August/September 2000

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Access to documents: public hearing to discuss proposal

A public hearing on access to documents of the EU institutions was held on 18 September in Brussels. The aim was to provide an overview of the general principles which should apply to the

right of access to documents as well as the scope of **Article 255** (which sets out a right of access to documents of the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission), and the regulation proposed by the Commission to implement that article. Although opinions differed somewhat as to how far the proposed regulation should be amended, all speakers agreed that the overriding principle should be to safeguard the right of public access to EU documents rather than to restrict access as the Commission seemed to be proposing (an unofficial version of amendments, presented at the seminar, is available at:

<http://www.europarl.eu.int/dg2/hearings/20000918/libe/compromi.pdf>

There was also concern at the way in which the Council's Committee of Permanent Representatives had approved the proposed regulation and at the controversy over the military and defence documents classified as secret. The Parliament's plenary should vote on 13 November. The regulation is to be adopted by 1 May 2001, as foreseen by the Treaty.

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Charter of Fundamental Rights: draft text finally adopted

The Convention responsible for the draft EU Charter of Fundamental Rights reached final agreement on the content on 26 September. The charter contains a preamble and seven chapters on: dignity, freedom (e.g. right to secrecy of one's communications, data protection), equality, solidarity which covers economic and social rights (e.g. right to information and consultation, health, social security and education); citizenship (e.g. article on the right to access to documents of EU institutions), justice and general provisions.

The new text presents significant improvements: **Article 10** (freedom of thought); obligatory education in **Article 14** (right to education); **amended Article 15** (professional freedom), and **new Article 22** which stipulates that the Union respects cultural, 'religious' and linguistic diversity as well as children's rights. However, it should still be modified on several points (e.g. European citizenship, democracy, collective rights, the right to culture).

The Charter links member states for the implementation of Community legislation, without creating new competence for the EU, unless it expressly foresees rights that do not appear (e.g. those linked to new technologies and/or attached to European citizenship). It will be presented to the Biarritz Council in October. Once the text is approved (Parliament/Council codecision), it will enter into force as an integral part of the Treaties. The final charter text can be found at <http://ue.eu.int> or <http://www.europarl.eu.int>

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Copyright: common position finally adopted

On 28 September, the Council adopted its common position with a view to final adoption of the Directive on copyright and related rights in the information society. The Council had already reached a political agreement during its session on 8 June. This common position, adopted unanimously with abstention by Luxembourg will be forwarded to the European Parliament for its second reading. For more information please refer to: http://europa.eu.int/comm/internal_market/en/intprop/intprop/docs/index.htm

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Data Protection: safe harbour principles to adequate European standards in force

On 27 July, the Commission adopted the decision that recognises the US harbour principles as to provide adequate protection for the transfer of personal data from the European Union. The agreement is to take effect next November.

According to this arrangement, American companies may voluntarily adhere to a set of data protection principles. They will neither be obliged to adhere nor to prove that they respect the principles before signing up. In practical terms, the American Trade Department will hold a list of organisations that agree to respect the safe harbour, which will be available online and updated regularly. The transfer of data to American organisations not participating remains possible but will be subject of an authorised exception or require other guarantees (e.g. contractual clauses).

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Data Protection: Council and Parliament call for the protection of privacy

On 21 September, the report drafted by MEP Hernandez-Mollar was approved together with amendments. The proposal seeks to establish a secretariat for the joint supervisory data protection bodies that have been set up by under various Conventions (Europol, the Use of Information Technology for Customs Purposes and the Convention implementing the Schengen Agreement).

At present there are three joint supervisory bodies in the EU in this area, each with their own secretariats, but serious doubts have emerged as to whether there be effective protection of the rights to privacy. The rapporteur considers that the Council proposal would neither resolve the basic problem of ensuring proper protection of the privacy of individuals nor guarantee the vital independence of the supervisory authority. He believes that a Single Legal Framework in the EU should be created to provide citizens with sufficient guarantees.

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Electronic commerce: judgements in civil and commercial matters into a regulation

On 21 September, Parliament adopted the report by MEP Wallis amending the Commission proposal to convert the **1968 Brussels Convention** (recognition and enforcement of judgements in civil and commercial matters, excluding revenue, customs or administrative matters) into a regulation. The basic principle is that jurisdiction is exercised by the member state in which the defendant is domiciled, this being determined in accordance with the domestic law of the member state where the court has been seised.

While most innovations are fairly uncontroversial, the proposal to extend the existing derogation whereby consumers can sue in their own courts to cover online trading has given rise to a fierce debate. The European Consumers Association' (BEUC) has welcomed the adoption of an amendment by MEP Wallis in favour of the powers of the courts of a consumer's country of residence for litigation between them and a company selling its products through electronic commerce. On the contrary, industry (e.g. the Federation of European Direct Marketing - FEDMA) considers that the Council should follow the Parliament's opinion whereby a company wanting to sell its products over the internet would take the risk of being sued in any member state, which discourage companies from trading online.

Websites must, however, warn consumers about this. Parliament did adopt an amendment that would restrict the right of consumers to sue foreign suppliers of goods or providers of services in their jurisdiction to 'active' Internet sites, i.e. sites which target the consumer's member state.

Parliament wants all Commission legislative and non-legislative initiatives in the field of

alternative systems for dispute settlement and online disputes to be adopted before adopting this regulation.

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Electronic commerce: Commission's operational proposals to adapt tax systems

A proposal for a directive on taxing online services was presented in June by the Commission. The aim is to extend the principle of taxation in the place of consumption to digital goods tele-loaded on the Internet (video, software, music, creation and hosting of Internet sites, etc.) according to the decisions that the OECD took in Ottawa in 1998. This means that foreign companies should have to pay VAT when selling their services in the European Union, which is not the current case. Conversely, European companies would be exempt of VAT on their sales abroad. Third country operators would be able to choose a single place of registration, among the states in which they have clients and to pay VAT at the rate in force in the place. This provision could place European countries in competition due to different rates of VAT they apply.

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Telecommunications: Parliament examines draft on unbundling of local loops

On 13 September, the Industry Parliamentary Committee discussed the report on the regulation on the unbundling of the local loop by MEP Nick Clegg. 'Local loop' as means of the last few meters of the copper network between the client and the operator remains under control of the incumbent monopolistic telecommunication operator. MEP Clegg underlines that 'liberalising the network to enable access for new companies would create greater competition, which would lead to greater choice for the consumer and in the future, lower prices'.

The Industry Parliamentary Committee will be voting on the amended text (34 amendments) drafted by MEP Clegg on 12 October. The amended text incorporates the changes in the Council and supersedes the 5 original amendments from the draft report. The regulation should be adopted (Parliament/Council codecision procedure) as to encourage the rapid development of information technologies and e-commerce in Europe.

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Audiovisual Policy: medium and content regulation

On 6 September, Parliament adopted the resolution on the 'Principles and guidelines for the Community's audiovisual policy in the digital age' but calling for:

- a formal revision of the Broadcasting Directive for 2002;
- universal services to be recognised as a means of preventing social exclusion;
- competition policy to take into account the cultural and linguistic nature, pluralism and diversity of this industry;
- the testing of filtering/control devices for programmes suitable for minors to be strengthened;

- regulatory arrangements for the new digital services and principles to be safeguarded (separate legislation for transmission and content);
- general rules to be drawn up on all types of audiovisual services, whatever the broadcasting or transmission techniques used.

Furthermore, on the international scene, Parliament calls on the Commission to ensure that the Community differentiates between regulating **the medium** and regulating **content** as to avoid the risk of audiovisual services being included among those which follow the rules of the networks and/or electronic commerce. The Community must also find legal and/or political instruments for safeguarding its audiovisual output in the context of WTO negotiations, since digitalisation might provide encouragement for the strongest markets to expand more swiftly via electronic networks.

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eEurope: prices of leased lines causes negative effect on the initiative

On 22 September, Commissioner Monti opened a public debate devoted to the findings of the Commission investigation on leased lines. These lines provide the underlying transmission capacity for data services, the Internet and voice telephony which are all now offered in liberalised markets at most member states.

Findings reveal that prices applied for leased lines by incumbent operators may be excessive for low bandwidths in some member states (e.g. Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Portugal, and Spain), while for high bandwidth, these prices appear to be above the average in Italy and Portugal.

The Commission investigation relates to the provision and pricing of leased lines, mobile roaming services and the provision of access to and use of the residential local loop. It is available at: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/competition/antitrust/others>

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Education: eLearning initiative work schedule presented

Viviane Reding, Education Commissioner, has announced the timetable for the work aimed at implementing the eLearning initiative, which aims at adapting educational and training systems to digital knowledge and culture. An "eLearning conference" has been organised, in collaboration with the French Presidency, to be held in Paris on 22 November. Before the end of this year, a high-level group of experts will be created and will establish a general framework to discuss progress achieved as regards innovation. Another conference on the same subject will follow up in May 2001, Stockholm. The Commission is also looking at the possibility of organising a first European eLearning summit, in partnership with the information technologies industry, in the first half of the coming year.

A paper covering all planned actions at European level will be presented at the next Education Council in November, as to focus and mobilise all Community programmes and instruments. More information: elarning@cec.eu.int

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Education: mobility action plan goes ahead

A paper drawn up by the French Presidency relating to transnational mobility was discussed in July. The paper, based on draft recommendations made by Parliament and Council, is the draft of an action plan relating to mobility. As the aim of the action plan is to provide something extra (e.g. linguistic preparation and the training of operators, the setting of loans and the establishment of a mechanism for the exchange of good practices), work has been redirected as to have two additional documents on mobility.

On 13 September, Parliament adopted its report drafted by MEP Evans but an amendment designed to see research workers included in the regulation has been tabled and will be voted during the October plenary session. Other amendments underline the need to overcome existing barriers and to recognise qualifications.

The action plan, which comes in addition to the Socrates, Leonardo and Youth programmes and to the proposal adopted by Parliament, is to be approved by the Council on 30 September. If proposals are approved then, the Council of Education ministers, meeting on 9 November, could give its agreement to the plan, which would then be included in the conclusions of the Nice summit. Ministers requested obstacles to mobility of students and teachers (it only concerns teaching staff, students and trainees and not other workers) to be removed during the Lisbon summit last March.

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Education: Commission presents amended proposal on school education

On 3 August, after Parliament's opinion drafted by MEP Sanders-ten-Holte last July (*see Hot News July 2000, p.3*), the Commission presented an amended proposal for a recommendation containing, in substance or in part, all the 42 amendments tabled at first reading. The Parliament's amendments seek to strengthen the follow-up measures recommended; introduce explicit references to roles played by indicators and benchmarks; extend and clarify the political scope of the recommendation; and introduce new recitals which stress the objectives to evaluate the quality of school education.

Under the proposal, the Commission would be responsible for encouraging co-operation between national education authorities and would draw up a report every three years, assessing progress and making recommendations to improve standards. The French Presidency believes that the initiative could be adopted in October.

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Education: Parliament approves agreement with Malta

On 6 September, the agreement adopting the terms and conditions for the participation of Malta in Community programmes in the fields of training, education and youth was approved, under consultation procedure.

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INFO2000: projects for the archive community launched

The European Union Archive Network (EUAN) and the European Visual Archive (EVA) projects

were presented at the ICA congress held in Seville on 21 September.

The first aims at analysing how access can be given to Europeans to find aid information in the national archives of other European countries. Its objectives are to devise common descriptive rules and means of linking descriptive information from different computer systems. For more information, visit <http://www.euan.org>. The latter (<http://www.eva-eu.org>) concentrates on photographs as archival sources. It looks at user requirements, copyright issues and the archival context. It is also producing guidelines on digitisation and metadata.

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Information Society: grants allocated in 1999 published on website

A total of 11 activities which received funds under the DG information Society in 1999 are now listed at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/information_society/publications/grants/index_en.htm. Subsidies were given to conferences and workshops including the 'Understanding the European Content Industries' conference, the CBMI'99 (European Workshop on content-based multimedia indexing) and a joint EU-US workshop on 'large scale scientific databases'. This list has been published as an addendum to the publication "Grants and loans from the European Union" available from: http://europa.eu.int/comm/secretariat_general/sgc/aides/en/index.htm.

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Information society: Commission communication on innovation published

On 20 September, the Commission adopted a communication on innovation in a knowledge-based economy, which aims at setting out an innovation 'trend chart' (scoreboard based on indicators e.g. human resources, innovation and knowledge) to measure performances in the Union. The text not only summarises the progress made by member states in this field but also the disparities in performances between states - Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Germany take the lead while France and Great Britain reveal a contrasted image.

The ten recommendations are grouped under five major objectives that should structure its action for the next four years. Among the recommendations are regional initiatives, educational and training programmes, investment in research and employment and best practices.

This communication is a preliminary stage to the benchmarking study to be elaborated in 2001, which will allow for best practices to be met.

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IST programme: Fifth call for proposals to be launched in October

The fifth call for proposals under the IST programme is to be published in the Official Journal on 13 October. Draft information on the draft call, work programme, guidelines and fixed deadlines can be found at: <http://www.cordis.lu/ist/calls/200005.htm>

Furthermore, there will be a call in January 2001 which may feature opportunities in the heritage area. This will be confirmed once the work programme for 2001 is finalised.

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Leonardo da Vinci: Euroguidance to promote mobility

Euroguidance is the working title for the network of Leonardo National Resource Centres for Vocational Guidance (NRCVG). Established by the European Commission in 1992, the NRCVG are a network of resource and information centres, promoting mobility throughout Europe. Present in all EU and EEA member states and many Central and Eastern European countries, NRCVG act as a link between the guidance services of each country, exchanging information about work, study and training opportunities throughout Europe. For more information please visit:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/leonardo/leonardo2/euroguid_en.html

<http://www.euroguidance.org.uk/>

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MEDIA programme: awaiting Council common position

The Culture Council of ministers discussed the Media programme during their meeting on 26 September. Although they reached a political agreement, budget is still an obstacle for approval. In addition, the Commission presented, on 21 September, an amended proposal implementing Parliament's amendments to the Media **Training** programme. They are aimed at:

- the **content** of the programme, particularly the inclusion of **training in relation to copyright and intellectual property**, and techniques for developing new types of **audiovisual programmes**;
- **programme management** (e.g. creation of a mixed committee, project selection criteria, transparency);
- the links to be provided to other national and Community support mechanisms;
- information on **training in new technologies**;
- information on **participation** in the programme **by third countries**;
- a reference to the conclusions of the Lisbon Council.

As regards the **Media** Plus programme, the Council final act is expected on 23 November 2000.

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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;
- the eEurope initiative;
- regional identity and sustainable development. Innovative actions to improve the living

and professional framework of 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/>

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Youth Programme: EEA countries to participate

On 27 July, the Council adopted a draft Decision of the EEA Joint Committee amending Article 4 of **Protocol 31** to the EEA Agreement, in order to extend co-operation to the Youth programme established by Decision (1031/2000/EC) of 13 April 2000.

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Access to documents: Parliament seeks compromise with Council

In July and August, the Council adopted, despite the objections raised by the Netherlands, Finland and Sweden, two decisions on public access to documents. One of them (see *Official Journal no 2000/C 239/01 of 23 August 2000*) introduces a new system of classification, with a 'top secret' category of documents linked to European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). With its adoption, Parliament believes that the Council has infringed Parliament's legislative powers by unilaterally deciding that certain documents should be kept secret, while this proposal is under discussion (under the codecision procedure).

Consequently, the Parliament Legal Affairs Committee has decided (13 votes to 10) to recommend to the President of Parliament that, if no agreement is reached on the Council's decision, the Council be taken to the EU Court of Justice. The Parliamentary Committee on Justice must also give its opinion on this matter. Parliament has until 28 October 2000 to start legal proceedings but will seek a solution with the Council during the next talks on 3 October.

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Copyright: USA legislation on copyright to comply with WTO rules

After the World Trade Organisation had called for the American tax exemption system for foreign sale companies to be reformed before 1 October, the United States are asking for fifteen months to have their legislation on music copyright comply with the (WTO) rules. However, the Union wanted the ruling to be implemented much sooner.

Their report, presented on 1 August (<http://europa.eu.int/comm/trade/pdf/usrbt2000.pdf>), invalidated the main provisions of this legislation, except for a 'home exception' conceded to small retailer listening to music at work. The tax exemption of which the business world benefited has been regarded as illegal under Article 9 (1) of the multilateral agreement on intellectual property (ADPIC). US legislation allows most frequented public places, including bars, restaurants, hotel lobbies and commercial centres to undertake the radio and television broadcasting of music without payment of fees to performers. For further information: DG for External Relations, European Commission, fax: +32 2 299 0208

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Culture: Cultural industries in digital environment

On 11 and 12 September, in the context of the French Presidency, a colloquium on the European cultural industries in a digital environment was held in Lyon. The debate was based on concentration, production and distribution and its consequences; electronic commerce and the dematerialisation of cultural content and the funding of content. More information: <http://www.culture.fr>

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Cybercrime: Commission communication to be published

At an informal meeting held in Marseille, the Council on Justice reviewed the new forms of crime now possible due to the development of new information and communication technologies and internet (e.g. hacking, distribution of viruses, denial-of-service attacks, fraud involving electronic data). The Fifteen agreed on the need to assess the current situation on Cybercrime, improve the Council of Europe's Convention, which is currently being drawn up, and to complement it, at EU level, with a Protocol. Particular emphasis was shown on the fraudulent use of bank cards on the Internet (litigation in electronic commerce may relate to this matter). The minister of Justice said that the Fifteen had agreed to ensure a satisfactory conservation of data and to envisage the creation of specialised bodies.

The Council, on the basis of a Commission proposal, is responsible for taking action on common definitions regarding prevention and fight against Cybercrime, including common incrimination and sanctions. The Commission is currently working on a communication on Cybercrime which aims at setting orientations for the future and the creation of a forum between all players engaged, including consumers.

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Education: Eastern countries to participate in Leonardo and Socrates programmes

On 20 July, the Council adopted the Decisions on the Community position for the participation of Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia in Community programmes in the fields of training and education.

All these countries took part in the first phase of the Leonardo and Socrates programmes which expired on 31 December 1999. Those countries also want to take part in the second phase of both programmes, covering the period 2000-2006. Such participation to continue and to regulate the procedure for its occurrence is allowed with the approval of the Decisions.

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Education: action programmes for lifelong learning requested

On 8 September, Parliament adopted a Resolution, drafted by MEP Gutierrez-Cortines on the Commission report on the implementation, results and overall assessment of the 'European Year

of Lifelong Learning' (1996) by 107 votes to 3 with 4 abstentions (unamended).

Backed with a budget of 8.4m Euro for the fifteen and Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein, the year partly financed some 454 projects, having a positive impact on businesses and social forces in terms of awareness-raising. However, the report reflects the lack of financial means and the slow pace recorded. Parliament urges the Commission to implement action programmes and specific measures in the framework of a lifelong education and apprenticeship strategy, in co-ordination with the Socrates II and Leonardo II programmes as well as to look into possible ways of building on the initiative.

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Education: European and Social Committee adopts a report on education

Last July, the European and Social Committee adopted the information report on "The European dimension of education: its nature, content and prospects" by Mr Koryfidis. The report is a response to the requirements created by a new European environment (internal market, policies and guidelines on employment) and to globalisation.

It stresses that EU spending on education is too low, greater educational mobility has to be encouraged and the diversity of regional cultures and practices should be respected. The information report is the outcome of a debate between the representatives of civil society organisations at European level. The report says that European education, regardless of its national level peculiarities, it can "...only be a European education system, one that reflects Europe's linguistic, cultural, political, social and economic balance and diversity, part of a European learning society that allows continuing development of its economic, social, scientific and technological heritage".

The ESC will participate in framing proposals for education. The problem is subject of an opinion and will be at the heart of a public hearing on 23 October. For more information contact: Stefania Barbستا, Tel. 32 2 546 9510, email: stefania.barbesta@esc.eu.int

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Education: possible European funding for university in Macedonia

MEP Olivier Dupuis welcomed the answer provided by Council President Pierre Moscovici to his question on the possibility of the European Union financing a private university in Tetovo on which the Macedonian authorities and Max van der Stoep (OSCE High Representatives for minorities) are working. As soon as the development plans have been drawn up, the university project would "raise the interest of international donors, the EU and its member states".

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Electronic signatures: EEA countries to participate

On 27 July, the Council adopted a draft Decision on the EEA Joint committee amending Annex XI (Telecommunication Services) to the EEA Agreement which aims at incorporating into the EEA Agreement Directive 1999/93/EC of 13 December 1999 on a community framework for electronic signatures.

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Employment: Commission recommendations to member states adopted

In the context of the new employment package adopted by the Commission, the country-by-country recommendations pay particular attention to issues such as preventing and combating youth and long-term unemployment; tax reforms; **qualifications; education, lifelong learning and training**; promoting the **services sector** and work organisation.

For instance, recommendations have been addressed to Belgium, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Italy and UK to implement policies in combating youth and long-term unemployment; Belgium, Greece, Spain, Finland and Sweden to reform their tax and social benefit systems (Denmark, UK and Netherlands have already undertaken reforms on their tax systems); Greece and Portugal to improve the promotion of their service sector.

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Erasmus Programme: member states and Commission to better promote Erasmus grants

On 8 September, Parliament adopted the resolution on the Commission 'Survey into the socio-economic background of Erasmus students' drafted by MEP Heaton-Harris. However, Parliament calls on the Commission to report on the reasons why many students do not take part in the Erasmus programme. The programme, set up in 1987, provides about 120 Euro a month per student and arranges the mutual recognition of studies/diplomas between foreign universities. Although the aim of the project was to get 10% of all Union students to take part of their degree in another member state, the figure was only around 1% in 1997.

The Commission is also asked to diversify, within the budget already available, other forms of indirect support (e.g. tariff reductions, accommodation allowances, loan systems to cover mobility costs). Member states are asked to provide of adequate financial support by better co-ordinating national aid to students and grants so as to ensure the widest possible take-up of the programme as well as promoting social equality (Erasmus has been unable to bring specific aid to the poorer socio-economic categories).

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EU/Japan: co-operation agreement to promote education and culture

The European Union and Japan Education ministers have examined the ways and means of promoting exchanges of students, researchers and creative professions. Areas included are, inter alia, science and technology, employment and education, cultural exchange and co-operation (e.g. youth and student exchange, cultural events), intellectual dialogue and exchange between citizens, in order to secure cultural diversity and to enhance mutual understanding of life and culture.

The EU's Executive Training Programme, based in Japan, has an important role in strengthening the cultural and business relations between the EU and Japan. They will promote co-operation on information technology and develop telecommunication regulatory co-operation as well as create an appropriate electronic commerce environment. European and Japanese IT companies will bring specific events in the Euro-Japanese IT month in October.

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EU/Russia: ways to consolidate scientific and technological co-operation

From 8 to 11 September, Commissioner Busquin met Mr Klebanov, Mr Koptev and Mr Dondukov in Moscow to discuss on concrete ways to consolidate scientific and technological co-operation between the EU and Russia, mainly in the space field. Discussions mainly covered the role of the International Centre for Science and Technology on possible co-operation within the framework of the TACIS programme on aspects relating to the safety of nuclear installations.

In November 1999, Parliament postponed the vote on the report concerning the conclusion of the co-operation agreement in the field of science and technology between the European Community and the Russian Federation, following the rapporteur's request in view of the events in Chechnya.

However, the Council final act is expected on 16 November.

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EU/USA: Commission presents Report 2000 on barriers to trade

In August, the Commission presented a report which denounces a considerable number of barriers, in particular to legislation in emerging sectors (e.g. information technology) between the European Union and the United States. The report identifies important restrictions on the access to the American market for satellite communication and mobile telephone services. Furthermore, a series of American legislation and policies concerning the internet and electronic commerce have been identified as to have a negative impact on commercial activities of European companies, notably with regard to site names and the 'squatting' of cybernetic spaces, encryption, software patents and trade methods.

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Information Society: programmes and policies evaluated published on website

In line with the Commission's evaluation policy, programmes and policies managed by the DG Information Society are regularly and systematically evaluated by independent contractors or expert panels. The findings of evaluations are used to improve the design and management of programmes, enhance accountability, and support decision making. Evaluation reports and associated documents as regards audiovisual policy, INFO2000, action plan on safer use of the Internet, IST, MLIS, PROMISE and TEN-Telecom programmes are being published via the IST website as they become available.

http://europa.eu.int/comm/information_society/evaluation/index_en.htm.

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Internet: Commission approves 'memIQ' and 'Isyndicate Europe'

The Commission has authorised the creation of a joint venture 'memIQ' by German bank HypoVereinsbank, Ixos Software and Mannesmann which will propose an **electronic documentary archive on the Internet**.

In addition, German Bertelsmann (media and publishing) has created with American Isyndicate a

joint venture 'Isyndicate Europe", which specialises in the sale of **Internet content**.

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Structural Funds: further Community support programmes for member states

The Commission has adopted the Community support framework for Objective 1 in **Greece** and **Northern Ireland**. Priorities set in Greece are for actions in **education and training** fields, innovation, development of rural areas, **culture and information technologies**. The Community framework for Northern Ireland gathers together the Peace II programme and the operational programmes for Objective 1. Projects to benefit are related to such areas as tourism, **training** and rural development.

Furthermore, a Single Programming Document (Objective 3) has also been approved for three member states to cover **education, training and employment** and financed by the European Social Fund (ESF) over a period of seven years (*please refer to Hot News July p. 7 for other countries*). The **Netherlands** will aim at preventing youth unemployment and promoting lifelong education and training in secondary education; **Luxembourg** for preventing unemployment and promoting social integration, lifelong training and entrepreneurship and **Finland** which will aim at promoting employability, equal opportunities, education and training. On 29 September, the Single Programming Document to support **education, training and employment in Sweden** over the next seven years was approved. With the exception of the regions covered by the Objective 1, Sweden is eligible for EU support under Objective 3.

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WTO: NGOs call for WTO to reduce its powers and authority

On the occasion of the United Nations Millennium summit in September, non-governmental organisations published a statement entitled 'WTO: shrink or sink!' calling for a more sustainable international trading system. NGOs call on their respective governments to:

- extend the WTO 'prerogatives' to fields such as investment, competition policy, further tariff cuts and electronic commerce;
- to extract intellectual property from the WTO;
- to democratise the decision-making process;
- to say no to the single tribunal, that is the Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) of the Geneva institution that "operates in secret, according to anti-democratic procedures ...".

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