



# Hot News November 2000

## In this issue:

- Access to documents: Parliament vote on access postponed
- Charter of Fundamental Rights: Parliament debates its legal status
- Counterfeiting and Piracy: follow up on green paper adopted
- Data protection: Council reaches political assent
- eCommerce: consumer confidence to be promoted
- eCommerce: Council reaches political agreement on commercial matters
- CARDS programme: Council agreement on financial assistance reached
- Culture 2000: MEPs question programme priorities
- Education: Council adopts common position on mobility
- Education: Council approves common position on school education
- eEurope: latest developments presented to Council and Parliament
- EU/Russia: research co-operation agreement with Russia signed
- EU/USA: Commission approves 13 projects for 2000
- Media: Council reaches political agreement
- IST programme: draft IST work programme now published
- IST programme: interactive electronic publishing now on Cordis
- INTERREG: priorities and rules for implementation defined
- Access to documents: member states back the Netherlands on Council decisions appeal
- Audiovisual: European Community to participate in the European Observatory
- Book prices: Council adopts resolution
- eCommerce: code of conduct released
- Education: Eurydice celebrates twentieth anniversary
- eEurope: European ICT industry launches project to support eEurope
- Enlargement: new chapters closed with six candidate countries
- EU/Mediterranean: cultural, social and human chapters discussed
- Information Society: IST event in line with the eEurope objectives
- Intellectual Property: WTO to announce deadline for USA legislation on copyright
- Internal Market: free movement of goods questioned
- Research: Descartes Prize has three winners
- Research: Council debates Commission working paper on standardisation
- Structural Funds: Community funds for education, training and employment in Denmark
- Trade dispute: Europe requests WTO on tax discrimination

### Access to documents: Parliament vote on access postponed

On 16 November, after voting 401 to 3 with 44 abstentions, Parliament decided to postpone its vote on the heavily amended Commission proposal to improve public access to EU documents. It decided instead to refer the issue back to the Citizens' Committee to enable further discussion to take place with the Commission and the Council, in order to secure a compromise on the amendments.

Parliament wants to limit the grounds for possible exceptions to just a small number of cases: respect for privacy, public security, monetary stability, defence and military matters, international relations and commercial secrecy. Only informal papers e.g. personal opinions, brainstorming session papers, would be kept out of the public domain. In the amended proposal, access must be given to documents:

- published in the official journal e.g. **legislative proposals**, common positions, final decisions, regardless of which pillar these documents fall under. This should be based on an obligation rather than on the goodwill of the institutions;
- without special request **via a register in the institution** (e.g. Parliament reports, Commission white and green papers); **preparatory documents of internal bodies in the institutions as they are approved by the relevant body** are also to be made available on the Internet;

- which are not directly accessible because they are totally or partially covered by an exception, but which can be disclosed by specific request.

Rapporteur Cashman stressed that the proposed regulation will not reduce the right of member states to grant access to documents in accordance with their national legislation. In addition, he specified that existing internal rules on access to documents e.g. Solana decision on top secret classification of ESDP documents, will be repealed once the regulation enters into force. A Word version of the report, plus further information, can be found at: <http://www.euopen.com/>

[Back to top/Back to homepage](#)

---

Charter of Fundamental Rights: Parliament debates its legal status

On 14 November, Parliament adopted by 410 votes to 93 with 27 abstentions, the recommendation by MEPs Duff and Voggenhuber approving the Charter of Fundamental Rights as drawn up by the Convention. Parliament also asked its President to jointly proclaim the Charter at the Nice Summit together with the Presidents of the Commission and Council.

Parliament takes the view that the Convention has fulfilled its mandate. The question of its legal status was taken up by MEPs at the second November plenary session. The text of the draft Charter is included as an annex to Parliament's recommendation.

Although most member states are in favour of the charter's inclusion in Article 6 of the Treaty, the UK, Ireland, Denmark, The Netherlands, Finland and Sweden would rather give the charter a subsequent legally binding nature. The Presidency, due to lack of consensus, has notified that this question could be put on the agenda after the Nice summit.

[Back to top/Back to homepage](#)

---

Counterfeiting and Piracy: follow up on green paper adopted

With the objective of enhancing the efficiency of Community product and capital markets, as well as encouraging creativity and innovation by adequately protecting industrial and intellectual property rights, the new strategy for Europe's Internal Market (2000-2004) plans amongst other target actions, a Commission Communication as a follow-up to the Green Paper on counterfeiting and piracy. Although the deadline was set as of June 2000, the Commission presented its communication to the Internal Market ministers on 30 November.

The action plan covers a series of operational measures to be presented in two stages. At first, it will propose directives to harmonise national legislation as regards **intellectual property rights**, develop training of controlling authorities and informing citizens. Secondly, it will study administrative co-operation mechanisms, the harmonisation of minimum thresholds of penal sanctions and Europol.

[Back to top/Back to homepage](#)

---

Data protection: Council reaches political assent

On 14 November Parliament adopted the draft regulation by MEP Paciotti on the protection of personal data processed by the EU institutions without debate. This regulation is designed to achieve the twin objectives of ensuring that Community legal acts on the protection of individuals with regard to personal data **apply to Community institutions and bodies** and the establishment of an **independent supervisory body** to monitor the application of the relevant rules and principles relating to data protection.

On 30 November, the Internal Council endorsed Parliament amendments in its opinion and so formally adopted the Regulation.

[Back to top/Back to homepage](#)

---

eCommerce: consumer confidence to be promoted

On 27 November, the Ecofin Council did not manage to reach a political agreement on a VAT directive applicable to electronic commerce (see *Hot News October 2000, p.2*). National tax experts will have to prepare an amended draft directive for approval by 30 June 2001 at the latest, which would maintain the single place of registration, but would allow effective attribution of VAT receipts to the countries where the services in question are consumed.

The Council held to key principles, such as the nature of targeted operations (intangible goods and services supplied by electronic means, but not those ordered via Internet) and the application of the normal rate of VAT (except for radio/TV services).

Moreover, the Commission has presented to the Internal Market Council a strategy which aims at encouraging the development of an online single market by reducing to a minimum the regulatory burden for companies. In addition, the Commission is expected to present a communication on electronic commerce and financial services in spring 2001.

[Back to top/Back to homepage](#)

---

eCommerce: Council reaches political agreement on commercial matters

On 26 October, Parliament adopted its report from last September on a proposal for a Council regulation on 'jurisdiction and the recognition and enforcements of judgements in civil and commercial matters' (see *Hot News August/September, p. 2-3*). This amended proposal is adopted in response to amendments voted on by Parliament. The Commission can accept a number of these amendments. A regulation has the advantage over a convention, in that this will enter into effect in all the bound member states on a common date.

Due to the importance of the Internet, justice ministers were seeking to apply Article 15 of the Brussels convention to electronic commerce. A political agreement was reached on 30 November which included a Declaration that consumers are permitted to start a procedure before the courts of their own country **only** after a contract has been concluded.

This regulation, which introduces a number of innovations by comparison with the Brussels Convention, is regarded as forming part of a package of legislative and non-legislative measures concerning electronic commerce. Therefore, its entry into force stands deferred until remaining regulations become ready for adoption.

[Back to top/Back to homepage](#)

---

CARDS programme: Council agreement on financial assistance reached

In May, two proposals for Regulation on a) Community assistance for the Balkan countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Republic of Macedonia and Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) - CARDS proposal (amend. regul. 3906/89/EEC, 1360/90/EEC) and b) a European Agency for Reconstruction (repeal. regul. 1628/96/EC), were submitted to the Council.

On 21 November, Council reached agreement on the content of the regulation (CARDS programme), which will establish a unified legal framework for assistance to the Balkans countries to replace the Community assistance used until now. At present, Community assistance to some of the Balkans countries is provided under the Obnova regulation, others receive assistance under the Phare regulation and some under both.

In addition, the Council also reached agreement on the Regulation on the European Reconstruction Agency, which will incorporate existing provisions into the conditions of the CARDS Regulation.

[Back to top/Back to homepage](#)

---

Culture 2000: MEPs question programme priorities

Quart Monde, a Parliament Intergroup Committee chaired by MEP Roure, has questioned the way in which the Culture 2000 programme has carried out its priorities regarding the underprivileged.

At their request, MEP Gargani, chair of the Culture Parliamentary Committee, has written a question to Commissioner Reding asking for the inclusion of this priority in the planned actions for the calls for proposals in 2001. Moreover, the Intergroup calls on the Employment Parliamentary Committee to draw up an own-initiative report on the goals aimed at fighting against poverty and social exclusion, which were approved by the Council in October and which will be submitted to the Nice summit.

[Back to top/Back to homepage](#)

---

Education: Council adopts common position on mobility

On 9 November, education ministers approved two important documents for the achievement of mobility of young people within the European Union. The first, a common position on the proposal for a 'Recommendation on mobility for students, persons undergoing training, young volunteers, teachers and instructors' within the Community, contains a first section calling on member states to take measures concerning all categories of people covered by it and other four sections in regard to specific measures for each of these categories. Mainly aimed at Community nationals, the proposed recommendation also includes third countries, provided that they are participating in an education, training or youth Community programme.

The draft recommendation, which incorporates in full or in part a large number of amendments tabled by Parliament at second reading, will be forwarded to Parliament as a Council common position following linguistic finalisation of the text.

The second document is a Resolution, which incorporates an action plan for mobility intended to compile an inventory of the practical measures available to member states and the Commission for encouraging mobility (42 indicative measures are cited). The resolution will be submitted to the Nice European Council in December.

[Back to top/Back to homepage](#)

---

Education: Council approves common position on school education

On 9 November, the Council of Education ministers approved without debate its common position on the proposal of a recommendation concerning co-operation in quality evaluation of school education. The common position will be forwarded to Parliament for second reading.

[Back to top/Back to homepage](#)

---

eEurope: latest developments presented to Council and Parliament

On 30 November, the Commission adopted a communication on the eEurope 2002 update, which has been prepared for the European Council in Nice. The report covers those areas for which the Commission and other European-level actors (e.g. the Council, the European Parliament, and the EIB) are responsible. It provides a brief overview of progress made and highlights the remaining challenges. New projects have been launched to connect more schools to the global network and to research networks and legislative changes are being

implemented on unbundling the local loops and cutting red tape on export controls for encryption products. Furthermore, the Commission proposal on employment guidelines 2001 strengthens the emphasis on ICT-related activities and highlights the importance of lifelong learning in the information society.

However, there are still major challenges, such as greater security systems against cybercrime and the international dimension of eEurope through greater collaboration with candidate countries. The report can be downloaded from: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/information\\_society/eeurope/documentation/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/information_society/eeurope/documentation/index_en.htm)

[Back to top/Back to homepage](#)

---

EU/Russia: research co-operation agreement with Russia signed

On 16 November, French Research Minister Roger-Gerard Schwartzberg, Research Commissioner Philippe Busquin and Russian Minister of Science, Industry and Technology Alexander Dondukov, signed a scientific and technological co-operation agreement between the European Community and Russia.

The agreement aims at strengthening bilateral co-operation in this field by establishing a framework for exchanges of scientists and joint research activities. It covers a wide range of technological development, demonstration and research activities, as well as basic research in areas such as environment, health, agriculture, industrial technologies, information society and mobility. Additional areas of co-operation can be decided jointly by an EU-Russia committee set up by this agreement.

The agreement, which had been delayed pending Parliament opinion, is initially valid until 31 December 2002, but can be renewed by common agreement.

[Back to top/Back to homepage](#)

---

EU/USA: Commission approves 13 projects for 2000

On 3 November, the Commission approved 13 proposals to be funded following the fifth call for proposals under the EU/USA co-operation programme. The 13 consortia involve 46 universities and training centres from 12 different member states, mainly France, Germany and Italy, and an equivalent number of USA partner institutions.

Over 800 students will take part in these programmes over the next three years. Architecture, textile engineering, nursing, information and communication technology, multicultural education and electronic commerce are some of the themes covered by the projects.

This selection of proposals for the year 2000 is the last of the current programme, which comes to an end on 31 December 2000. For further information: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/ec-usa/usa.html>; <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/FIPSE/>

[Back to top/Back to homepage](#)

---

Media: Council reaches political agreement

On 23 November, Culture ministers reached an agreement on the budget for the aid programme to the European audiovisual industry. Germany, The Netherlands and the UK were willing to accept the Commission proposal (400 million over five years) with conditions. Development, distribution and promotion of European works will receive Euro 350 million and media training will receive Euro 50 million.

Parliament will therefore only have to give its opinion on the 'training' chapter to allow implementation of Media Plus on 1 January 2001, at second reading in December. The final adoption of the 'development' chapter should take place without debate during the next Council to enable entry into force on January 2001.

[Back to top/Back to homepage](#)

---

IST programme: draft IST work programme now published

The draft version of the workprogramme 2001 is now available in English (Word and PDF formats) at <http://www.cordis.lu/ist/workprogramme.htm>, following its publication on the opening day of the IST2000 conference in Nice. The text will retain its 'draft' label until the European Commission approves the final text, either in December 2000 or early January 2001.

Assuming all goes to plan, the Commission will issue calls for proposals using the new workprogramme in mid January 2001 (6th IST Call, which is likely to include an area of considerable interest to libraries, museums and archives on 'Heritage for All') and in June (7th IST Call) with indicative budgets of Euro 400 million and Euro 450 million respectively. Please note that this version of the workprogramme is **not** valid for current calls for proposals.

[Back to top/Back to homepage](#)

---

IST programme: interactive electronic publishing now on Cordis

Interactive Electronic Publishing (IEP) has now been added to the IST website on Cordis. IEP is one of the five main areas for research and technological development under key action III (Multimedia Content and Tools) of the IST programme. It will mainly focus on improving authoring systems capable of handling creative forms of multimedia content and personalisation methods which allow content to be matched more closely to the needs of users' sectors or communities.

For complete information on Interactive Electronic Publishing please visit:  
<http://www.cordis.lu/ist/ka3/iep/home.html>

[Back to top/Back to homepage](#)

---

INTERREG: priorities and rules for implementation defined

On 6 November, the Commission presented its draft Communication on the implementation of Strand C of the Interreg III Community initiative, derived from the guidelines adopted on 28 April 2000. The European Union will contribute Euro 295 million to INTERREG IIIC for 2000-2006.

INTERREG IIIC aims at promoting the development of networks between actors in different local and regional authorities throughout the Union in order to exchange ideas, experience and best practice on all matters relating to regional development. All European regions may participate. Co-operation involving regions in third countries, especially in candidate countries for membership of the Union is included.

Four topics have been proposed:

- Interregional co-operation in regions eligible under Objective 1 (regions lagging behind in development) and 2 (regions undergoing conversion) to promote regional development and social and economic restructuring;
- Cross-border and transnational co-operation for those involved in other INTERREG programmes (Interreg III A and III B);
- Urban development (within and outside of the scope of the Urban II initiative);
- New actions under the three themes of the regional innovative actions for 2000-2006: knowledge and technological innovation, information society and regional development, sustainable development.

The draft communication will finally be adopted once the Parliament, Committee of the Regions, Economic and Social Committee and member states have given their opinion. Further information can be found at:

[http://www.inforegio.cec.eu.int/wbpro/prord/prordc/prordc17\\_en.htm](http://www.inforegio.cec.eu.int/wbpro/prord/prordc/prordc17_en.htm)

[Back to top/Back to homepage](#)

---

Access to documents: member states back The Netherlands on Council decisions appeal

On 3 November, Finland provided its backing to the appeal lodged before the European Court of Justice by The Netherlands, which disputes the validity of the two summer decisions taken on the initiative of Council Secretary General, Javier Solana.

Finland does not dispute the need to classify documents relating to military questions but considers that this classification should depend on the origin and content and not be of a general nature that would prohibit all access to documents of a certain category. Efforts of the Finnish Green MEP Heidi Hautala to establish this basic principle in her case against the Council, which she won in the Court of First Instance but against which the Council has appealed, are also being supported by the United Kingdom and Sweden, which already announced its intention of making a similar appeal.

[Back to top/Back to homepage](#)

---

Audiovisual: European Community to participate in the European Observatory

The European Audiovisual Observatory, established in 1992 by the Council of Europe, aims at improving the transfer of information within the audiovisual industry. All member states participate individually in the Observatory along with nineteen other European countries. The European Commission has participated since its foundation, however the Council decided in November 1999 to formalise Community participation for a period ending on 31 December 2004 and that the Commission would represent the Community in the relations with the Observatory.

The Council of Europe adopted a resolution on September 2000, which provides for a new statute and financial regulation of the Observatory in order to allow the participation of the Community and to accommodate specific financial requirements of the Commission.

On 15 November, Commissioner Reding received authorisation to implement the mentioned Council Decision of November 1999. For information: Mr Giovanni Rodondi, +32 2 299 05 97

[Back to top/Back to homepage](#)

---

Book prices: Council adopts resolution

On 23 November, Culture Council ministers adopted a resolution calling on the Commission to take into account cultural diversity and the cultural value of books in the application of its competition rules and the free movement of goods. Furthermore, the resolution calls on the Commission to pay attention to the risks surrounding national fixed prices systems, the development of electronic commerce, and imports between countries who exercise a fixed book price system.

Harmonisation lacked a legal basis as it did a fixed price system, which is seen by several member states as not desirable. The Commission, in turn, asked ministers to think about interventions at other levels such as education, digital books and support for authors and publishers instead of reducing book policy to a debate on fixed prices.

[Back to top/Back to homepage](#)

---

eCommerce: code of conduct released

On 24 October, the Better Business Bureau system and BBBOOnline released a code of online business practice, which aims at guiding business-to-customer conduct as well as promoting customer trust and confidence on the Internet. This is to be achieved through the BBBOOnline Reliability and BBBOOnline Privacy programmes.

The code, available at: <http://bbbonline.org/code/CodeEnglish.pdf>, is based upon five principles: truthful and accurate communications, disclosure, information practices and security, customer satisfaction and protecting children.

[Back to top/Back to homepage](#)

---

Education: Eurydice celebrates twentieth anniversary

Eurydice ([www.eurydice.org/](http://www.eurydice.org/)), established in 1980, has been an integral part of Socrates programme since 1995. The education information network in Europe which produces comparable information on national education systems and policies, celebrated its twentieth anniversary in Brussels on 10 November.

A seminar on the future of its contribution towards European co-operation in education was organised. In addition, a brochure on the development of the network over the last twenty years of its existence was presented by Commissioner Reding to education ministers on 9 November.

[Back to top/Back to homepage](#)

---

eEurope: European ICT industry launches project to support eEurope

The Career-Space Consortium has launched a pilot project to support the eEurope initiative, in partnership with educational institutions and professional bodies. With the support of the European Commission, major ICT companies in Europe (IBM, Europe, Nokia, Philips, Thomson, Siemens, Microsoft Europe and BT) have put in place a framework for students, education and training institutions and governments to describe the skills and competencies required by the information and communications technology (ICT) industry in Europe. Further information is available from the Career-Space website (<http://www.career-space.com/>)

[Back to top/Back to homepage](#)

---

Enlargement: new chapters closed with six candidate countries

During November, Estonia, Poland, Slovenia (from the Luxembourg group), Romania, Latvia and Slovakia (from the Helsinki group) have closed new chapters on the EU enlargement negotiations. **Estonia** concluded the chapter on **culture and audiovisual policy**. **Poland** and **Slovenia** closed a chapter on the **free movement of services**. As regards Poland, a joint declaration which focuses on the need for a widespread reform of Poland's educational and training systems was adopted at the EU-Poland Joint Consultative Committee meeting held on 14 November. Changes also need to be made to current information programmes linked to Poland's accession negotiations.

Although **Romania** had two chapters on the agenda (competition and telecommunications), neither of them was closed, thus the number of closed chapters remains at six. **Latvia** concluded its chapters on **consumer protection** and **external relations** and **Slovakia** concluded negotiations on the **culture and audiovisual policy** and **consumer protection**.

[Back to top/Back to homepage](#)



---

EU/Mediterranean: cultural, social and human chapters discussed

On 15 and 16 November, regional programmes under way in the fields of culture, audiovisual and youth were discussed at the Fourth Euro-Mediterranean conference of foreign ministers held in Marseille. However, ministers regretted that all possibilities of this chapter had not been fully exploited, especially as regards social aspects, civil society and the human dimension of the Partnership.

Ministers reached agreement on the need to take greater account of the social effects of economic transition in national programmes (e.g. training, employment, professional qualifications, education systems). They also endorsed building up existing programmes through the establishment of the second phase of Euromed-Heritage, the start of preparations for Euromed-Audiovisual II, early in 2001, on the basis of two conference proceedings (Thessaloniki, 1997 and Rabat, 2000) and the launch of Euromed-Human Sciences. In addition, ministers considered the establishment of a regional programme of scientific exchanges. Presidency conclusions can be downloaded

from:  
[europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/med\\_mideast/euro\\_med\\_partnership/conf/marseilles/conclusions\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/med_mideast/euro_med_partnership/conf/marseilles/conclusions_en.pdf)

[Back to top/Back to homepage](#)

---

Information society: IST event in line with the eEurope objectives

About 70 projects selected by the European Commission were on display at the IST event in Nice, from 6 to 8 November.

The three prizes of the European IST event were awarded to the best innovative products: **TeleInVivo**, a transportable 3D ultrasound telemedical workstation ([www.igd.fhg.de/teleinvivo](http://www.igd.fhg.de/teleinvivo)), **MINEit** ([www.mineit.com](http://www.mineit.com)), which allows eBusinesses to find out crucial marketing data about the use of their websites and **XiTact** ([www.xitact.com](http://www.xitact.com)), a Swiss-based company which has produced the 'virtual patient', a surgery simulator with tools to provide feedback to surgeons as well as helping them plan their surgery.

[Back to top/Back to homepage](#)

---

Intellectual Property: WTO to announce deadline for USA legislation on copyright

Despite the obligation contained in **Article 6bis of the Berne Convention** to which the USA acceded in 1989 to make "moral rights" available for authors, such rights have never been introduced. US authors, however, fully benefit from moral rights in the EU. An imbalance of benefits from Berne Convention membership is thus evident, to the detriment of the European side. Section 110(5) of the 1976 US Copyright Act (homestyle exemption) violates US obligations under Article 11bis(1) of the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works and consequently those under Article 9(1) of the Agreement on Trade related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) Agreement.

After the WTO decided last September (see *Hot News August/September 2000, p.7*) to allow the US to delay adapting its copyright legislation to developments in international law, a WTO panel decision has yet to be announced. Meanwhile, the USA still argues that the reforms demanded by Geneva will not be simple to implement since they require a total review of their entire copyright legislation even though the EU maintains that the required changes are straightforward.

[Back to top/Back to homepage](#)

---

Internal Market: free movement of goods questioned

After MEP Corbett was unable to obtain the original English anthology of the Beatles in France, he asked the Commission in a written question entitled "*Is 'The Beatles, the Anthology' to become a work of contraband in France?*" This work, not allowed to leave British boundaries, benefits from specific conditions of publication and copyright. Mr Corbett wonders, however, if this restriction on its distribution cannot be regarded as an impediment to the free movement of goods in the European Union.

Mr Corbett noted that the only way to circumvent this blockage is to order not the British, but the American English version from a US distributor in USA, at double the price of the French version.

[Back to top/Back to homepage](#)

---

Research: Descartes Prize has three winners

On 9 November, Commissioner Busquin awarded the third Descartes European science prize, which aims at rewarding scientific excellence and the prize winners' international teamwork. This year, the three trans-European prizes were awarded to:

- research in developing new methods of studying chemical reaction kinetics at very low temperatures (France and United Kingdom);
- synthesis and application of polymeric self-oriented transistors for electronic circuits (Denmark, Netherlands and United Kingdom);
- the discovery of the link between the processes that repair genetic material and the means by which genetic material is turned into proteins (France, Italy, Netherlands and United Kingdom).

Details of next year's Descartes prize will be available from 4 December. Entries must be received by 6 April 2001. Further information: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/research>

[Back to top/Back to homepage](#)

---

Research: Council debates Commission working paper on standardisation

On 16 November, the Commission presented its working document on the standardisation of national research policies, which aims at determining the best national practices favouring the development of research activities.

A first comparative analysis of the situation in member states will be based on 20 indicators. Member states will have to provide data regularly updated and the 'benchmarking' results will be presented to the Council and Parliament every year. Indicators are divided into human resources, public and private investments, scientific and technological productivity and the impact of research and technological development in competitiveness and employment.

[Back to top/Back to homepage](#)

---

Structural Funds: Community funds for education, training and employment in Denmark

On 16 November, the Commission approved the Single Programming Document (SPD) to promote education, training and employment in Denmark over the next seven years. Priorities are labour market, equal opportunities, training, skills development, entrepreneurship and innovation.

The decision is one of several currently being adopted by the Commission for all member states to launch the new Structural Funds programming period.

[Back to top/Back to homepage](#)

---

Trade dispute: Europe requests WTO on tax discrimination

The American Foreign Sales Corporation (FSC) scheme was introduced in 1984 as a replacement of its old export promoting tax scheme (DISC), which was condemned by a GATT panel in 1981. The EC first requested the establishment of a WTO panel in 1998, which affirmed in a report of 24 February 2000 that the FSC is incompatible with the WTO Subsidies Agreement and the Agreement on Agriculture.

The FSC replacement legislation was signed into law by President Clinton on 16 November. On 28 November, USA called for an arbitration by the WTO on the level of sanctions that Europe called to have imposed on them in the FSC case. However, the European Union has requested a WTO compliance panel on the new legislation as it believes that such law still provides a significant illegal export subsidy to more than half of total US exports (to the direct detriment of European companies) as well as maintaining the FSC regime at least until 2002.

This case is of major importance for European companies as the sectors and services that most benefit from FSC (e.g. communication and professional services, electrical equipment, books) are those for which both American and European companies fiercely compete.

[Back to top/Back to homepage](#)

---

*Created: 18 January 2001*