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Copyright Directive: first draft texts presented in European Parliament's Committees

On 3 June 1998, MEP Bryan Cassidy, rapporteur for the Economic and Monetary Affairs and Industrial Policy Committee (EMAC), presented his draft opinion to his committee. He took on board many of the concerns that were raised by the European Fair Practice in Copyright Campaign (EFPICC) which EBLIDA set up together with other European associations representing user interest. Mr Cassidy has taken up the suggestions for fair practices exceptions. The paper was not really debated in the Committee as it was only available in the morning before the meeting. Deadline for amendments is fixed for 30 June 1998, the Committee will vote on adoption of the opinion on 3 September. The paper was sent to EBLIDA members with the May Hot News.

On 23 June, MEP Maren Günther planned to present her draft opinion in the Cultural Committee but due to some changes in the agenda it was decided to postpone the presentation to the next meeting on 20-21 July. Deadline for amendments is 28 July, vote on adoption of opinion will take place beginning of September. Together with other representatives of EFPICC, EBLIDA had a meeting with MEP Günther on 22 June to raise its major concerns. The draft opinion by Ms Günther was sent to EBLIDA members with the June Hot News.

A Hearing on the draft Directive is organised on 30 June by the Legal Committee. EBLIDA is one of the few associations that are invited to present their views. On 12-14 July 1998, a European Commission, DG XV conference is being organised in Vienna, among others debating the issue of "digital private copying". EBLIDA will be represented by its director. MEP Roberto Barzanti, rapporteur for the Legal Affairs Committee is expected to draft his report after the Vienna conference with a first exchange of views to be held in his committee on 20-21 July.
MEP Philip Whitehead is expected to present his text at the next Consumer Committee meeting on 20-21 July. Before that, he is organising a Consumer Intergroup meeting on 16 July, to which EBLIDA is invited to present its criticism on the Directive.

The European Fair Practice in Copyright Campaign (EFPICC) sent out a first presentation letter to important political groups at the end of May. A press campaign will be launch before the Legal Affairs Committee Hearing. The press release will be accompanied by a blank CD to demonstrate the effect of the Directive if it remains unchanged.

Information Society: Cultural Committee adopted report on role of libraries

On 23 June 1998, the European Parliament’s Cultural Committee voted on the amendments that were suggested by different MEPs to Ms Ryynänen's report on "The role of libraries in modern society" (nr. A4-0248/98).

It did not come as a surprise that especially paragraph 4 of the report, that calls for sufficiently broad exceptions for libraries in the draft Copyright Directive came under attack by some MEPs. Five different amendments were received to that paragraph, ranging from the request to delete it completely to the inclusion of "safeguarding the interest of rightholders" to a more neutral statement reflecting the three-step test. Ms Ryynänen decided that it would be best to suggest a compromise amendment to safeguard this important paragraph, and asked EBLIDA to assist her in drafting this compromise amendment out of the five suggestions.

EBLIDA lobbied MEPs to vote against the harmful amendments and to safeguard the original text and to support helpful amendments. At the vote, the compromise amendment was accepted by the Cultural committee. It still includes in the first part the original text, which calls on the Commission to take account of libraries and their role as an information source for members of the public when resolving copyright issues and to harmonise the rights of users. The second part states that a balance between the various parties should be kept and exceptions should be exercised in accordance with international obligations and may not be applied in a way that prejudices the legitimate interest of rightholders or conflict with normal exploitation of work.

Another really harmful amendment that asked for reducing the funding under the Fifth Framework Programme to only research libraries (thus excluding public libraries) was NOT accepted. Therefore the really important issues could be safeguarded.

The report will be adopted at the European Parliament's plenary session in October. As soon as the amended text, which was adopted yesterday by the Cultural Committee, is available, EBLIDA members will receive the text.

Information Society: Forum discussed "International charter for electronic marketplace"

The European Commission proposal of 4 February to create an international charter in 1999 in order to strengthen international co-ordination in the field of online economy (see also Hot News February 1998), was welcomed by the Information Society Forum. This Forum consists of users, social groups, service providers and equipment manufacturers, and was set up to contribute to an open debate and to reflect on the challenges of the Information Society, hereby
addressing social, societal, cultural and linguistic aspects. In a resolution handed to the European Commissioner for Industry, Martin Bangemann, the Information Society Forum identifies issues that the international charter should cover, e.g. interoperable technical solutions, labour law for transnational work, digital signatures and authentication means, liability, intellectual property rights, data protection, taxation, Internet domain names and consumer protection. The Forum is of the opinion that a charter should not lead to the creation of a new international supervisory authority.

Fifth Framework programme: European Parliament insisted on budget proposal

On 17 May the European Parliament voted at second reading on the common position adopted by the Council of Ministers on 23 March concerning the Fifth Framework programme for research and technological development, including the general structure and the budget. The Parliament adopted the common position with several amendments, including one concerning the budget. The Council of Ministers decided to allocate ECU 14 billion to the programme, whereas the European Parliament insisted on a total budget of ECU 16.3 billion. Besides, the rapporteur on the programme for the European Parliament, MEP Godelieve Quisthoudt-Rowohl, criticised the Council's decision to divide the research budget into two parts, one being the definitive figure covering 1998 and 1999, and the other an indicative and renegotiable amount for the period 2000 to 2002. This decision was the result of a compromise with Spain, which refused to fix the budget for the Fifth Framework programme until the new financial framework of the European Union as a whole from the year 2000 had been decided. The European Parliament and the Council of Ministers will now try to come to an agreement on the budget in the conciliation committee.

Fifth Framework programme: Council of Ministers discussed management and specific programmes

On 22 June the Council of Research Ministers discussed several other issues in preparation of the Fifth Framework programme on research and technological development. Work focused primarily on the rules for participation, specific programmes and implementation and management of the programme.

The Research Council adopted a common position on the rules for participation of undertakings, research centres and universities in the Fifth Framework programme, and rules for the dissemination of research results. These rules are essential for the implementation of the programme, because they ensure transparent decisions taken on participation and dissemination of results. The text of the Council common position on rules will be sent to the European Parliament for its second reading on this part of the Fifth Framework programme.

The Council also reached a consensus on the content of three specific programmes of the Fifth Framework programme, i.e. the user-friendly Information Society, the nuclear energy research programme and the programme on promoting innovation and participation of small and medium sized enterprises. The European Parliament's opinion on the specific programmes is expected in November 1998. The Council invited the Permanent Representatives Committee to continue work on the Commission's proposals, in the light of the opinion of the European Parliament on the specific programmes and the final decision on the content and overall budget of the Fifth Framework programme, with a view to enabling the Council of Ministers to adopt all the specific programmes by the end of the year. The Fifth Framework programme could then become operational in 1999. Furthermore, the Council welcomed the European Commission's
intentions to improve the implementation and management of the programme, by developing a more flexible and transparent approach.

Fifth Framework programme: creation of research advisory groups started

The European Commission has launched the process for appointing the members of 17 external advisory groups for the Fifth Framework programme in the field of research and technological development. These advisory groups will provide independent advice on the content and directions of the research to be carried out through the different key actions of the Fifth Framework programme. This will include advice on the work programmes, objectives, calls for proposals, choice of criteria for evaluating project proposals and advising of any reorientation necessary during the lifetime of the programme. Members will be industrialists, academic researchers, users of research, members of public regulatory bodies and financial bodies. They will be appointed on a personal account, i.e. they will not represent their organisation or country. For the Information Society programme only one advisory group will be set up, comprising the key actions 'systems and services for the citizen', 'new methods of work and electronic commerce', 'multimedia content and tools', and 'essential technologies and infrastructures'. Another advisory group will be dealing with the key action 'the city of tomorrow and cultural heritage'. The work of the advisory groups will start in the second half of July.

Culture: Council of Ministers initial debate on the First Framework programme for culture

On 28 May Marcelino Oreja, European Commissioner responsible for information, communication, culture and audiovisual policy, presented the proposal for a First Framework programme in support of culture for the period 2000-2004 ("Culture 2000") to the Council of Culture Ministers. This was followed by an initial orientation debate in the Council. The programme will replace the three current cultural programmes Kaleidoscope (for artistic creation), Ariane (for books and reading) and Raphael (for cultural heritage). The total budget proposed by the European Commission is ECU 167 million. The programme has to be adopted by the Council unanimously. The European Parliament will be fully involved in the decision-making process with two readings. Past experiences have shown that decisions in the cultural field are therefore difficult to get.

Culture: Council of Ministers agreed on future of European Cities of Culture

On 28 May the Council of Culture Ministers reached, after long and difficult negotiations, unanimous agreement on the designation of European Cities of Culture for the years 2001 to 2004. Selected cities will organise a programme of cultural activities during the year of appointment, with the participation of other countries. The Culture Ministers appointed Rotterdam and Oporto for the year 2001, Bruges and Salamanca for 2002, Graz for 2003, and Genoa and Lille for 2004. The Council invited the cities of Riga and Basle to organise a European Cultural Month in 2001 and St. Petersburg to hold such an event in 2003. The common position of the Council will go to the European Parliament for second reading.
The Cultural Committee already expressed its disapproval of the chosen procedure. It claimed that the Parliament assigned at first reading the whole venture to the Community sphere of responsibility. The Cultural Committee states that the Council has nevertheless agreed on an exclusively intergovernmental selection procedure. It is not changed, the European Parliament should remove any financial support and insist that the European institutions as such refrain from taking part in an event that would be a purely intergovernmental matter.

For the years 2005 to 2018 the Culture Council adopted a common position on the follow-up Community action entitled "The European Capital of Culture". Each Member State may nominate a city as European Capital of Culture in the following order: Ireland, Greece, Luxembourg, United Kingdom, Austria, Germany, Finland, Portugal, France, Sweden, Belgium, Spain, Denmark, Netherlands and Italy. European third countries may also nominate cities as a European Capital of Culture for each year, which could lead to a maximum of two culture capitals per year. A linkage between the programmes of the designated cities of the same year should be made.

Culture: Council of Ministers discussed fixed book prices

On 28 May the Council of Culture Ministers addressed the issue of the fixed book price systems within homogeneous linguistic areas. The Austrian delegation, supported by several other Member States, presented a document entitled "The Vienna Memorandum on cross border fixed book prices in European linguistic areas", which sets out the position of those Member States which are in favour of fixed book prices. The Council reminded the European Commission to conduct a study on the subject and to submit the conclusions to the Council. Mr Marcelino Oreja, European Commissioner responsible for information, communication, culture and audiovisual policy, announced that the study would be available in the autumn of this year and that he would report on it at the next meeting of the Culture Council in November, before the Commission will complete the complaints procedure launched earlier this year.

Education: European Commission proposed guidelines for education, training and youth programmes for 2000-2004

On 27 May the European Commission presented its guidelines for the new generation of EU programmes in education, training and youth for the period 2000 to 2004. The Commission proposes re-shaping of the current programmes on education (Socrates), vocational training (Leonardo da Vinci) and youth (Youth for Europe). The guidelines are in line with the principles of a Commission Communication of November 1997, entitled "Towards a Europe of Knowledge". The Commission proposes a policy based on the promotion of lifelong learning. Objectives of the proposed programmes include:

- strengthening the European dimension in education;
- promoting co-operation in all sectors and at all levels;
- encouraging innovation;
- promoting individual, group and virtual mobility;
- joint actions with other areas of European initiatives.

The European Commission proposes a total budget of ECU 3.000 million, which is an increase of about 60 % as compared with the present generation of education and training programmes. The budget is divided as follows: ECU 1.400 million for the follow-up to the Socrates...
programme, ECU 1.000 million for the follow-up to the Leonardo programme and ECU 600 million for a new youth programme. The text of the Commission proposal is available at: http://europa.eu.int/en/comm/dg22/newprogr/nphome.html

CEEC: Commission proposal for participation of some CEEC's in EU cultural programmes

The European Commission has recently proposed the participation of Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and the Slovak Republic in the European cultural programmes, from 1998 until the programmes expire. The three main cultural programmes of the European Union are Ariane (for books and reading), Raphael (for cultural heritage) and Kaleidoscope (for artistic creation). Ariane and Raphael expire at the end of 1998 and already had their final calls for proposals, but the European Commission had already opened the calls to the CEEC's wishing to participate in the programmes. The Commission has to wait with selecting the proposals until a final decision on the participation of the CEEC's is made. Participation in these programmes would form part of the pre-accession strategy for these countries and would encourage cultural co-operation. Six of the countries intend to participate in all three, Lithuania wishes to participate in Kaleidoscope and Raphael only, whereas Latvia and the Czech Republic wish to participate only in Raphael. The Central and Eastern European countries would pay their own participation costs, partly from their national budgets, and partly from the Phare funding allocated to them. To ensure the Community dimension of the programmes, the CEEC's will be required to include a minimum number of partners from the EU Member States in the projects. The final decisions have to be taken by the Association Councils of the respective country and the EU.

Enlargement: first results of screening applicant countries satisfactory

The six applicant countries for the first group of negotiations on enlargement ('5+1'), Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Estonia and Cyprus, have finished the analytical examination of the EU legislation ('screening') for the first eight chapters: science and research, telecommunications, education and training, culture and audiovisual policy, industrial policy, small and medium-sized enterprises, common foreign and security policy and company law. So far, no major problems have been identified, but after first having screened the 'easier' chapters, the applicant countries now have to turn to the more difficult and delicate issues. The screening is constructed around two fundamental questions, i.e. whether the applicant countries accept the existing EU legislation and whether they have the necessary legislation and institutions to implement the EU legislation. It is expected that the screening will last until at least July 1999, but that the European Union will already start negotiations in the autumn of this year.

Structural Funds: Council of Ministers' first debate on reform of structural policy

On 8 and 9 June the ministers responsible for regional policy discussed for the first time the reform of the European Union's structural policy for the period 2000 to 2006. In its proposal published in March, the European Commission suggested reforming the EU's structural policy in
order to allow for the future accession of Central and Eastern European countries without increasing the overall level of spending. The total budget proposed for the Structural Funds is ECU 218.4 billion for the period 2000-2006. The Commission furthermore proposed greater concentration of resources to gain more effectiveness, decentralisation and simplification of management and procedures. The text of the Commission proposal is available for downloading at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg16/document/doc1g_en.htm

The proposal of the Commission to reduce the seven current objectives of the Structural Funds to three was welcomed by the ministers, although appropriate ways need to be found to define eligibility of the regions to receive aid and to ensure an equal geographical coverage. Support for regions which will no longer be eligible after reform of the structural policy needs to be gradually phased out. The ministers reaffirmed the principle of additionality, which means that European aid must be in addition to national aid and should not replace it. Although the Council gave a positive welcome to the Commission proposal, there were also divergences within the Council between net contributor countries and net receiver countries. The contributor countries called for strict budgetary discipline, whereas the receiver countries called for greater financial support for themselves and an increase in the total budget for the Structural Funds after EU enlargement.

On the whole, it was recognised that rapid progress was needed and that an agreement must be reached within the Council in spring 1999, because the current Structural Funds expire at the end of 1999. The discussions on the reform of the Structural Funds run parallel with and are interconnected with the discussions on the Agenda 2000, the future financial framework of the EU for the period 2000 to 2006 and enlargement, which all have to be completed by end 1999 the latest.

Mediterranean: Euro-Mediterranean Partnership reviewed and reaffirmed

On 3 and 4 June an informal ad-hoc Euro-Mediterranean ministerial meeting took place to review the progress achieved in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership since its launch in Barcelona nearly three years ago, to give it renewed momentum and to help prepare the ground for the next Ministerial Conference in Stuttgart in April 1999. The countries of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership are the fifteen Member States of the European Union and twelve partner countries of the Mediterranean region (Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey and the Palestinian Authority). The ministers discussed all three chapters of the Partnership, namely the political and security aspect, the economic aspect and social and cultural affairs. With regard to the third chapter, they recognised that this chapter provides the opportunity to make the Euro-Med process accessible to the citizens. They welcomed the decision by the European Commission in April 1998 to relaunch the decentralised co-operation programmes in the Mediterranean (MED Media, MED Campus and MED Urbs). The ministers also recognised the need to consolidate cultural co-operation in larger framework programmes such as Euro-Med heritage and Euro-med audiovisual. They reaffirmed their determination to work for a successful Euro-Med Culture Ministerial Session in Greece in September 1998.

Mediterranean: activities under Royaumont Process for stability and good neighbourly relations

The Royaumont Process is the action plan for stability and good neighbourly relations in South Eastern Europe. This process is chaired by the European Union and is aimed at guiding the
implementation of the Paris peace agreement for that region, by incorporating it into a wider perspective. To this end it encourages projects which relate to civil society. Until now, proposals for about 50 cooperation projects have been submitted. Most of the projects are initiated by civil society, including non-governmental organisations (NGO's) and education and research institutions. Financing for these projects has to be sought in the Member States of the European Union. On 10-11 July a meeting will be held in Thessaloniki, with over 100 NGO’s participating, on regional cooperation in the fields of research, institutions, education and culture.

Scientific co-operation between EU and South Africa to continue

The European Union and South Africa have agreed to continue their scientific co-operation under the European Union’s future Fifth Framework programme for research and technological development. The scientific co-operation agreement between the two parties entered into force in November 1997. The Joint Committee that is in charge with the co-operation agreement will set up an information strategy to inform researchers on opportunities for co-operation. This could include contact points in all relevant programmes, publication of a database of South African researchers interested in EU co-operation and the use of electronic newsletters and the Internet.