Copyright: latest developments in EU institutions

The new European Parliament rapporteur for the Copyright Directive was chosen in the political co-ordinators meeting and the information was made official in the Legal Affairs Committee meeting on 23 September. The new rapporteur is Mr Enrico Boselli from the Socialisti Democratici Italiani (a Social Democratic party). He is a company director and a former local and regional councillor. He is a new member of the EP.

The new Commissioner for the Internal Market, Mr Frits Bolkenstein was questioned on 6 September by the European Parliament. In his written answers to the questionnaire from the Legal Affairs Committee he does not mention the Copyright Directive specifically, but states that the harmonisation of intellectual property is of key importance and intends therefore to give considerable attention to such issues.

The most recent Council Working Group was held on 13 September. The discussion was mainly focused on article 6 and it seems that libraries and other user groups' concerns were taken on board by almost all national experts, so that a favourable new wording of article 6 can be expected. The Finnish Presidency will postpone the discussion on article 5 (exemptions) until all other articles have been agreed upon. The Council Working Group is now meeting almost every week. The Finnish Presidency is pushing to reach a common position at the Internal Market Council on 7 December 1999.


The new European Parliament rapporteur for the E-commerce Directive was also chosen in the political co-ordinators meeting and was officially announced in the Legal Affairs Committee meeting on 23 September.
The rapporteur for the E-commerce Directive is Mrs Ana Palacio Vallelersundi, Spanish Member of the European People's Party (Christian Democratic Group) and chairperson of the Legal Affairs Committee. She was already a member of the former European Parliament.

The European Commission published on 1 September the amended proposal for the E-Commerce Directive. This proposal reflects the opinion from the European Parliament's first reading on the Commission's original proposal. It introduces a number of clarifications concerning, among others,

- the definition of "information society services" and "consumer"
- ties between this proposal and existing directives on consumer protection and the protection of personal data
- the handling of unsolicited commercial communications by e-mail
- the criteria determining the time of conclusion of contracts offered on-line.

The Commission maintained rules limiting the responsibility of on-line service providers acting as intermediaries, so as to preserve a balance of interests. For this aspect it did not endorse the European Parliament's amendments. The proposal will be forwarded to Parliament and the Council under the codecision procedure. It is available on the Internet at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg15/en/media/eleccomm/eleccomm.htm

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IST programme: Call for Proposals for Digital preservation of cultural heritage

The second Call for Proposals under the IST programme which was announced for 15 September, is now intended for publication on 1 October. Draft texts of the intended call and the guide for proposers are available at: http://www.cordis.lu/ist/calls/199902.htm

With regard to the Digital Heritage area, the call will address Action Line III.2.4: Digital preservation of cultural heritage of the 1999 work programme. This fixed deadline call is intended for all RTD projects. A continuos submission scheme intended mainly for support measures also exists.

Organisations and individuals interested in presenting proposals for the IST programme are strongly advised to read the Guide to Proposers and to follow its instructions carefully. The Commission has also made available some tools to provide assistance in partner finding and related activities. For further information please visit: http://www.echo.lu/digicult/en/fp5/septcall.html

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New European Commission appointed

Following the vote of approval by the European Parliament on 15 September, the EU Member States have appointed the new President and the new Members of the European Commission for the period from 16 September 1999 to 22 January 2000, and for the period from 23 January 2000 to 22 January 2005.
Three Commissioners will be of special importance to EBLIDA: Mrs. Viviane Reding, Commissioner for education and culture (combination of the former Directorate General for Education and part of the Directorate General for Culture), Mr. Erkki Liikanen for enterprise and information society (he will be responsible for the Directorate General that is dealing among others with libraries, archives and museums), and Mr. Frits Bolkestein for the internal market (among others responsible for the Directorate General drafting the Directives on copyright and e-commerce).

You can find the report on the hearings and the letters of the European Parliament committees giving their comments at:

In addition, you can read the full text of all questionnaires from the EP and the written answers (average 60-70 pages) by the designated Commissioners at:

The appointment of a new Commission was accompanied by a re-organisation of the Commission administration. There are now 36 departments, and directorates-general are no longer referred to by number. Changes are being made to the Commission's website to reflect the new structure. The changes also affect the URLs, so you will have to update your bookmarks. For further info:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/index_en.htm

Education: EU Ministers discuss European cooperation

The EU Education Ministers will meet informally from 23 to 25 September in Tampere (Finland) with the participation of the new European Commissioner for education and culture, Viviane Reding. Ministers will discuss the main issues of European co-operation in the field of education in the third millennium. They will study how to promote quality in education and training throughout the entire educational system and will evaluate the quality and competitiveness of education in Europe in comparison with the rest of the world. In addition, they will review possible measures to be taken on the basis of the "Bologna Declaration" on the harmonisation of university diplomas. An international report on the development of higher education systems in EU and EEA countries will be presented at the meeting.

Enlargement: High-level group to help prepare next Intergovernmental Conference

The new President of the European Commission Romano Prodi has announced the creation and composition of a high-level reflection group that will advise the new Commission on the subjects which the forthcoming Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) should address to prepare the EU for the coming enlargement. The IGC will be kicked off at the Helsinki European Council in December. The high-level group will be chaired by former Belgian Prime Minister Jean-Luc Dehaene, who will be seconded by Richard von Weizäcker, former President of the Federal Republic of Germany, and Lord David Simon, former British Minister for Trade and Competitiveness in Europe. The group will present its conclusions to the Commission in mid-
October. It will consider whether the limited agenda so far identified for the IGC is adequate.

Fixed book prices: Commission closed files on Dutch fixed book price system

The European Commission has evaluated the latest changes to the system for fixed book prices in the Netherlands, especially the abolition of the resale price maintenance for imported books. It appears that the system no longer has an appreciable effect on trade between European Union Member States. The Commission therefore considers that it no longer has jurisdiction to apply the EU competition rules to the fixed book prices in the Netherlands.

The system implemented by Dutch publishers and booksellers is also known as the "Handelsreglement". It is an agreement that lays down a number of rules regarding the trade of books in the Netherlands. The Commission stated its objection against the Dutch fixed book price system on 24 April 1998. The Commission concluded that the Dutch fixed book price system infringed EU competition rules in different ways and did not qualify for an exemption. With effect from 1 May 1998, the Dutch fixed book price system was amended, among other things, the resale price maintenance for foreign books was abolished. In light of this change DG IX of the Commission no longer considers it opportune to take action. The Commission will however continue to watch closely the impact of the book price systems in the Netherlands on trade between EU Member States.

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