



GENERAL SECRETARIAT OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EU ~ *INFORMATION SHEET* ~

European Council, 15-16 June 2006

An overall policy on transparency

Brussels, 16 June 2006

In recent years, the Council's activities have become more and more open and visible. Since the Council is the Union's main decision-making institution, and shares power of co-decision with the European Parliament for most of the Union's legislative acts, its procedures are already open to a very large extent. Part of its deliberations are public and most of its official documents are accessible to the public.

From the second half of 2002 up to the end of 2005 the Council adopted in public 199 acts in co-decision and deliberated publicly 117 times on co-decision files.

The Council also holds public debates on other major new legislative proposals as well as on policy debates on important issues which affect the interests of the Union and its citizens.

When the Council acts as legislator, the results of votes, the explanations of votes by Council members and the statements entered in the minutes are always made public.

In addition to the transparency provisions and further contributing to openness, regular press briefings are held before and after each Council meeting.

Based on the Seville European Council conclusions (2002) and the Council's Rules of Procedure, the transparency procedures were reinforced through a series of specific measures decided by the Council in December 2005.

To complete these measures, the European Council today agreed on an overall policy on transparency, which further opens up the work of the Council by making all co-decision debates in the Council public.

The 15/16 June 2006 European Council Presidency conclusions on transparency are [attached](#).

P R E S S

AN OVERALL POLICY ON TRANSPARENCY

With a view to further increasing openness, transparency and accountability, the European Council agrees on the following measures aiming at a stronger involvement of citizens in the work of the Union:

All Council deliberations on legislative acts to be adopted by co-decision shall be open to the public as shall the votes and the explanation of votes by Council Members. The Council or Coreper may decide in individual cases that a given deliberation should not be open to the public.

The Council's first deliberations on legislative acts other than those adopted by co-decision, which given their importance are presented orally by the Commission in a Council session, shall be open to the public. The Presidency may decide in individual cases that the Council's subsequent deliberations on a particular act shall be open to the public, unless the Council or Coreper decide otherwise.

The Council shall regularly hold public debates on important issues affecting the interests of the Union and its citizens. Such debates will be held further to a decision by the Council or Coreper, acting by qualified majority. Implementation of this commitment shall start during the incoming Presidency, which would submit proposals for such public debates taking into account the importance of the matter and its interest to citizens.

The General Affairs and External Relations Council's deliberations on the 18 month programme shall be public, as shall other Council formations' deliberations on their priorities. The Commission's presentation of its five year programme, of its annual work programme and of its annual policy strategy, as well as the ensuing debate, shall be public.

All public deliberations shall be broadcasted in all languages through video-streaming and there shall be an obligation for a recorded version to remain available for at least a month on the Council's internet site.

The incoming Presidency is invited, together with the General Secretariat of the Council, to develop new means of giving more publicity to public deliberations, in particular through the Council's web site and mailing list, an easily accessible and constantly updated list of forthcoming debates, appropriate background material, as well as direct communication to target audiences. They will work closely together to provide the media and citizens with an open, rapid and technically advanced communication service.

The General Secretariat of the Council shall inform the public in advance of the dates and approximate time on which public debates will take place and shall take all practical measures to ensure proper implementation of the rules of transparency.

Useful information

Access to Council documents

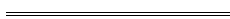
All citizens can access Council documents under the conditions laid down by the texts in force¹. A public register of Council documents is available on the Council Internet site (<http://www.consilium.europa.eu>).

Reference documents:

- Presidency conclusions, European Council, 15/16 June 2006.
- Council Decision of 22 March 2004 adopting the Council's Rules of Procedure – Official Journal L 106, 15.4.2004, p. 22.
- Presidency conclusions, Seville European Council, 21/22 June 2002, Annex II, point E.
- Council conclusions of 21 December 2005, "Improving openness and transparency in the Council" (15834/05).
- Council Information Guide (May 2006, ISBN 92-824-3239-4) provides a complete overview of the transparency instruments.
- A media guide is available (January 2006).

Useful contacts and addresses:

- Council Internet site: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu>
- Access to documents: access@consilium.europa.eu
- Public register of Council documents: <http://register.consilium.eu.int/>
- Information for the general public: public.info@consilium.europa.eu
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¹ Regulation No 1049/2001 on public access to documents, and the Council's Rules of Procedure.