

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
EUROPEAN COMMISSION



MINUTES
OF THE
CONSTITUTIVE MEETING
OF THE INTERINSTITUTIONAL COMMITTEE
PROVIDED FOR IN ARTICLE 15 OF REGULATION (EC) N° 1049/2001
ON PUBLIC ACCESS TO DOCUMENTS

held on

Wednesday, 13 March 2002
Room LOW R 1,1
STRASBOURG

CONTENTS

1.	Constitution of the Interinstitutional Committee	3
2.	Working methods of the Interinstitutional Committee	5
3.	Date and place of next meeting.....	6

Mr COX, President of the European Parliament, opened the meeting at 13.10 on Wednesday, 13 March 2002.

Present

European Parliament

Mr Pat COX, President
Mrs Charlotte CEDERSCHIÖLD, Vice-President

Mr Julian PRIESTLEY, Secretary-General
Mr Harald ROMER, Deputy Secretary-General
Mr Riccardo RIBERA D'ALCALA, Director, Private Office of the President
[REDACTED] Member, Private Office of the President
[REDACTED] Directorate General for the Presidency
[REDACTED] Directorate General for the Presidency

Council of the European Union

Mr Josep PIQUÉ, President-in-office of the Council
Mr Ramon de MIGUEL, Secretary of State for European Affairs

Mr Alberto AZA, Director of the Office of Diplomatic Information, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Mr Enrique VIGUERA, Director General of General Technical Affairs of the European Union, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Mr Pablo BENAVIDES, Ambassador, Advisor on Parliamentary relations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Mr Hans BRUNMAYR, Director General, Council of the European Union

European Commission

Mrs Loyola de PALACIO, Vice-President, Relations with the European Parliament, Transport and Energy

Mr Daniel CALLEJA CRESPO, Head of Cabinet of the Vice-president
Mr Diego CANGA FANO, Member of Cabinet of the Vice-president
Mr Giuseppe MASSANGIOLI, Director, Secretariat General
[REDACTED] Secretariat General

1. Constitution of the Interinstitutional Committee

The Interinstitutional Committee

- heard Mr COX, President of the European Parliament, who expressed his pleasure at being able formally to launch the Interinstitutional Committee on public access to documents. Mr COX said that the adoption of Regulation 1049/2001 and the constitution of the Interinstitutional Committee was the culmination of commitments going back to the Birmingham, Edinburgh and Copenhagen European Council meetings. He thanked officials in each of the Institutions for ensuring that implementation of the Regulation was proceeding on schedule. As to the Committee itself he suggested that it should act as the guardian of transparency as well as being a political motor to guarantee application of best practice, particularly in light of technological progress. He concluded by declaring formally constituted the Interinstitutional Committee provided for in Article 15, paragraph 2 of Regulation (EC) 1049/2001 on public access to documents of the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission;
- heard Mr PIQUÉ, President-in-office of the Council, who expressed his satisfaction at being present for the formal constitution of the Interinstitutional Committee which demonstrated the three Institutions' commitment to transparency in general and access to documents in particular. He referred to the Council's established policy on document access. This had meant that out of 7200 requests for documents in 2001 the Council had been able to give positive reply to 6300. Moreover, the Council was committed to ensuring direct access to as many of its documents as possible, particularly in the legislative area. Of the 300,000 document references in its register, over a third, he said, were directly accessible. The Council was willing to share with the Parliament and the Commission the experience it had acquired in setting up and operating its register. He also referred to access to third party documents and partial access to documents in which the Council paid scrupulous attention to Court rulings and recommendations from the Ombudsman. He concluded by congratulating the three Institutions for setting up the Interinstitutional Committee and their cooperation in entrenching the fundamental right of European citizens, as set down in the Treaty, to have access to documents of the Parliament, the Council and the Commission;

- heard Mrs Loyola de PALACIO, Vice-President of the European Commission, who said it was an honour for her to represent Mr Romano PRODI, President of the European Commission, at the inaugural meeting of the Interinstitutional Committee whose job would be to establish common guidelines for the three Institutions to apply in the implementation of the Regulation on public access to documents. The Committee would also monitor best practice in the area of transparency to ensure that European citizens could expect equivalent levels of information and document access from each of the three Institutions. It would act to resolve problems when these arose. The secretaries general of the three institutions would assume an important role in the preparation of its meetings and the execution of its decisions. She said that establishing public rights to information was one of the most important achievements in the recent past. Transparency was a key element of advanced democratic societies. Its realisation had been helped by the development of new technologies so that popular control of the activities of electoral representatives, in particular monitoring by individual citizens of specific decisions, was now possible in the way that had not been the case in the past. As a consequence civic rights had been enhanced in a very substantial way. Progress in making a reality the provisions on transparency in the Amsterdam Treaty had been significant and Mrs de PALACIO thought that policy on transparency would develop in coordinated way by the three Institutions. She ended by welcoming once again the establishment of the Committee, further proof of the value of interinstitutional cooperation which she stressed the Commission was always ready to promote.

2. Working methods of the Interinstitutional Committee

The Interinstitutional Committee

- decided on a proposal from Mr. COX, President of the European Parliament, that:
 - at future working meetings of the Interinstitutional Committee Presidents of Institutions could be substituted by representatives of their choice (in Parliament's case this would be Mrs CEDERSCHIÖLD);
 - meetings would held in each institution in turn following the Treaty order;
 - draft agendas would be prepared by secretaries-general;
 - committee meetings would be chaired by the president of the institution hosting the meeting;
 - draft minutes would be drawn up by the institution hosting the meeting.

3. Date and place of the next meeting

The Interinstitutional Committee

- decided that a first working meeting should be held as soon as possible, and not later than the week of the Parliament's April Strasbourg plenary session, to examine the following subject areas:
 - best practice;
 - possible conflicts;
 - future developments on access to documents;
 - information campaign for the benefit of citizens.

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The meeting closed at 13.30 hours.