

E-justice

2008/2125(INL) - 04/11/2008

The Committee on Legal Affairs adopted the own-initiative report by Diana **WALLIS** (ALDE, UK) which includes recommendations to the Commission on e-Justice (Initiative 6 Rule 39 of the Rules of Procedure).

The report notes that some 10 million people are estimated to be involved in cross-border litigation in Europe and that greater recourse to information technology (IT) is essential in order to ensure better access to justice for citizens and with a view to rationalising and simplifying judicial proceedings and reducing procedural deadlines and operating costs in cross-border litigation.

In this context, the Commission is invited to complement the European area of justice, freedom and security with an area of e-Justice by:

- taking concrete action with a view to the implementation of the European area of e- Justice;
- clearly identifying matters covered by EU action by, for instance, using a different definition or prefixing the term “e-Justice” with “EU” so as to refer to “EU e-Justice” or “EU-Justice”;
- implementing the e-Justice portal/network while addressing the needs of both EU citizens and EU legal practitioners and ensuring that transparent and easy means to access information are available by taking advantage of the trans-European networks adumbrated in Article 154 of the EC Treaty and developed by the European Public Administrations (ISA);
- making wide use of electronic tools in the development of a European judicial culture;
- fully exploiting the potential of new technologies for preventing and fighting transnational crime;
- enhancing and providing, without delay, tools such as video-conferencing for improving the taking of evidence in other Member States;
- enhancing fundamental rights, procedural safeguards in criminal proceedings and data protection as an integral part of the drafting and implementation of the Action Plan on EU-justice.

MEPs consider that the work of the Institutions should be more strongly citizen-focused and invites the Commission to give the necessary attention to developing e-learning tools for the judiciary in the context of e-Justice.

The Annex to the motion for a resolution contains detailed recommendations on the content of the proposal requested.

Recommendation 1 concerning the form and scope of the instrument to be adopted: in the absence of a resolution voted by the Council on an action plan involving the Commission in its realisation, the Commission is asked to prepare an Action Plan on e-Justice at European level. It should consist of a series of individual actions as detailed below, some of which might result in legislative proposals, for example for administrative cooperation under Article 66 of the EC Treaty, others in recommendations and others in administrative acts and decisions.

Recommendation 2 concerning the minimum content of the instrument to be adopted: according to MEPs, the Action Plan should be made up of at least the following actions:

- EU-justice Action Plan;
- action to “future-proof” legislation;
- action on civil procedure;
- action on the law of contract and consumer law;

- action on languages, multilingualism and interoperability;
- action on European e-Justice portals: the European e-Justice Portal for Citizens;
- judicial training;
- preventing and fighting transnational crime;
- video-conferencing.