Office for official publications of the EC: organisation and working

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PURPOSE: proposal for a new inter-institutional decision concerning the organisation and operation of the Communities' Office of Publications. CONTENT: At its 17 March 1998 session, the Board of the Communities' Office of Publications decided to examine and adapt the basic texts relating to the creation of the Office. The adaptation of the regulatory framework of the Office has become necessary in order to take into account observations made in 1997 by the Court of Auditors concerning the outdated character of the basic texts. Following deliberation, the institutions represented on the Board came to a decision in favour of an amended and codified act with the aim that such an act would be an improvement and more coherent, with the advantages of clarity and transparency. This draft act was approved following the deliberations of the Office's Board, as well as a joint connsultation procedure of the institutions' legal services. In essence, the draft seeks to take technological developments in the publishing sector on board, as well as changes in practices with respect to competences devolved to the authority vested with powers of appointment. In this way, the Office should be able to ensure the undertaking of the following tasks, either by itself or by outside companies: publication of the Official Journal, other publications of the Community or its services and publications from other Community organisations or bodies. In exceptional cases, the institutions or bodies may proceed with the publication of documents without the involvement of the Office, when the financial amounts, technical reasons or urgency so justify. The implementation of the Office's tasks will entail the gathering of documents for publication, the preparation and checking of texts, the awarding of contracts to suppliers, the printing of urgent or low-circulation documents, the monitoring of work, quality control, financial control of contracts, quantitative and qualitative delivery, accounting controls, archiving of publications, management of sales and the distribution. The Office would also provide the institutions with all the relevant technical and financial information for their draft publications and assist them in the preparation of framework contracts. Provisions are made with regard to comitology (creation of a Board of Directors, powers and responsibilities, setting of operating rules), as well as with regard to the Office's powers of appointment (the Commission appoints grade A1, A2 and A3 and LA3 agents) and management, in accordance with the rules applicable in the context of the Financial Regulation. Each institution is invited to formally adopt this proposal in accordance with its own procedures. Following this adoption process, the presidents of the institutions will be invited to sign the text prior to its publication in the Official Journal of the Communities and the old Decision 69/13 /Euratom, ECSC, EEC will be repealed.