EP Rules of Procedure, Rule 173: verbatim reports

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There are currently two versions of the verbatim report of proceedings (Compte Rendu in Extenso – CRE): a 'rainbow' version, containing the speeches in the original language in which they are delivered, and a translated version, where each speech is translated into other official languages. The CRE is published electronically in the Official Journal (on CD-ROM and on the internet).

Following the enlargement of the European Union in 2004, Parliament has continued to have the CRE translated into the 11 'older' official languages only, owing to insufficient capacity for translation into the languages of the new Member States.

This derogation from the rule of translation into all official languages based on Rule 139 will be in force until September 2007. As the justification provided for differential treatment as a result of the derogation is the fact that translation into all languages is impossible for practical reasons, it is clear that such a situation should not last; that such a situation should be seen as nothing more than a temporary measure, and that a fairer system must be found. It is for this reason that, in 2006, the Bureau and the Parliament agreed on the principle that verbatim reports of proceedings in the plenary should be published as a multi-lingual document including speeches in the original language only, on the understanding that filmed versions of the debates, together with live interpretation into all the official languages should be made available to all Members and to the general public on demand on an appropriate technical support (e.g. initially DVDs, subsequently video on-demand via the internet). The Bureau also decided that Members of the European Parliament should be entitled on demand and at short notice to have extracts from debates translated into their official language of choice.

The report highlights the problem with the total translation of debates and states that in terms of quality and transparency of information, it is clear that the ideal solution is the translation and publication of all debates of the European Parliament into all the official languages as Rule 173 (1) provides up to now.

There are aspects to this solution which should be considered:

- the cost of translation is extremely high (a figure in the region of EUR 10 million per annum);
- the cost-benefit; one must also consider this expense in the light of the likely readership of parliamentary debates.

It is against this background that the report by Richard **CORBETT** (PES, UK) has been adopted by the Committee on Constitutional Affairs. It aims to amend Rule 173 of Parliament's Rules of Procedure on verbatim reports. The report states that:

- a verbatim report of the proceedings of each sitting shall be drawn up as a multilingual document in which all oral contributions appear in their original language. It shall be published as an annex to the Official Journal of the European Union and preserved in the records of Parliament;
- speakers shall be required to return corrections to typescripts of their speeches to the Secretariat within one week. Members may request extracts of the verbatim report to be translated into an official language of their choice;
- a complete audiovisual record of the proceedings of each sitting, including the soundtracks from all interpretation booths, shall be produced and preserved in the records of Parliament. It shall be accessible to the public via the Internet;
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in so far as speeches, notably those delivered at solemn sessions or statements by representatives of other institutions, have already been translated into other languages, the translations shall also be made available via the Internet as an annex to the multilingual report.

The Bureau shall lay down the implementing rules relating to the verbatim report and the audiovisual record. The Bureau may decide that an exceptionally important debate be translated and published in some or all official languages. The Bureau shall monitor technological advances and may make available on the Internet unofficial computer-generated translations. The Bureau shall adopt the appropriate technical measures to ensure that there is a lasting record of all data, in particular providing for regular checks to be carried out on the condition of the media, duplication thereof and storage of the various copies in separate locations.