EU cultural programmes - ARIANE advances but no agreement on RAPHAEL

At a meeting of the Conciliation Committee, composed of representatives of the Member States and the European Parliament, held in Brussels on 28 May 1997, discussions on the EU's two proposed cultural programmes, ARIANE and RAPHAEL were held. The ARIANE programme would support books and reading. Under the agreement reached, it will run for two years (1997-1998) and will have a budget of ECU 7 million. The aim of the programme is to increase knowledge and dissemination of literary works and European history, as well as improving citizens' access to these. Actions envisaged under the programme include support for translation of literary works, support for cooperative projects, on-going training for professionals, particularly translators, and support for European literary and translation prizes. The agreement reached has now to be ratified by both the Council and the Parliament, before it can enter into force.

The Committee failed to reach agreement on the RAPHAEL programme, which would support actions in the field of cultural heritage. The main disagreement concerned the programme's budget, with the Parliament favouring ECU 86 million for the four year period (1997-2000), as opposed to the Council's common position of ECU 30 million for the same period. The Commission's initial proposal was for a budget of ECU 57 million. The Committee has a further eight weeks to try and reach agreement on the proposed programme.

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