

Press Release



Release: Immediate
Brussels, 15 April 2004

**PRESS & INFORMATION
DEPARTMENT**

Rue Wiertz · Wiertzstraat
B-1047 Bruxelles · Brussel
Tel.: + 32 2 284 20 77
Fax: + 32 2 284 49 46
Web: www.eurolib.org

Air passenger data: EP to vote on Court ruling next week unless Commission withdraws agreement

The plenary of the European Parliament will vote next Tuesday to refer the EU-US air passenger data transfers agreement to the Court, unless the Commission announces in a statement to MEPs on Monday that it is withdrawing the agreement, according to ELDR Group leader Graham Watson MEP (Lib Dem/UK).

Commenting on the decision taken by the Conference of Presidents this afternoon, Mr Watson said:

"Parliamentary group leaders held a thorough debate on the issue of air passenger data transfers with President Cox this afternoon. Although many of us feel that Parliament's position on the issue of seeking a Court ruling is clear, we decided to request a statement by the Commission on Monday on the issue. Unless the Commission announces that they are withdrawing the agreement and submitting a full international agreement to Parliament for consideration, MEPs will vote on Tuesday on whether to refer the matter to the European Court of Justice."

"Parliament has expressed its grave concerns on the legality of air passenger data transfers to the US on at least three occasions over the past year. Recently, three separate committees have recommended that Parliament should seek an opinion from the European Court of Justice on this issue. It seems clear to me from today's discussion that a majority of MEPs will support legal action if necessary."

"By giving the Commission the opportunity to make a statement on Monday, Parliament is going the extra mile to avoid a showdown. I hope that even at this late stage, the Commission will opt to avoid confrontation by withdrawing its proposal rather than forcing us to take this matter to Court."

"We share the commitment of the United States to fighting terrorism, but we will not ride roughshod over the privacy rights of Europeans in this fight."

For more information please contact: Philip TOD : +32 2 284 20 77 or +32 486 44 04 97

Det Europæiske Liberale og Demokratiske Partis Gruppe, Europa-Parlamentet - Fraktion der Europäischen Liberalen Demokratischen und Reform Partei, Europäisches Parlament - Groupe du Parti Européen des Libéraux, Démocrates et Réformateurs, Parlement européen - Gruppo del Partito Europeo dei Liberali Democratici e Riformatori, Parlamento Europeo - Fractie van de Partij van Europese Liberalen en Democraten, Europees Parlement - Grupo del Partido Europeo de los Liberales, Demócratas y Reformistas, Parlamento Europeo - Europeiska liberala demokratiska och reformistiska partigruppen, Europaparlamentet - Euroopan Liberaali- ja Demokraattipuolueen ryhmä, Euroopan Parlamentti - Group of the European Liberal, Democrat and Reform Party, European Parliament.

To receive ELDR Press releases by e-mail, please send an e-mail to ELDR-press@europarl.eu.int