

WRITTEN QUESTION P-4696/06
by Piia-Noora Kauppi (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

Subject: Public access to EU documents via internet search engines

As an institution established to serve the good of the people within its jurisdiction and around the world, information from the European Union must be accessible to the public; and access must be easily obtained. This point has been emphasised in the Treaty establishing the European Community – Article 255 states that 'citizens and residents of the European Union have a right of access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents.' Additionally, the EU registry of documents contains the heading; The European Union 'wants its work to be known and understood by the public and has provided a register that gives access to documents.' However, the European Union Institutions have not held up the ideal of easy access.

The most widely used method for finding information via the internet comes in the form of search engines, such as Google and Yahoo!. These pages display information by searching through constantly updated indexes that non-secure and public websites are passively included in if they hold relevant content or keywords. While citizens should expect to be able to use this method to find EU documents, it has been confirmed by officials from both Google and Yahoo! that certain EU institutions have proactively asked to be left out or removed from such indexes. Additionally, Google has confirmed that a dialogue has been established with EU institutions to encourage the inclusion of public EU documents in their indexes, but the EU continues to hold out. The precedent has been set for access to public information through simple internet searches by the US Government and a number of European State governments, thus making it more peculiar that the EU has not come on board.

Is it true that EU institutions (as a matter of established policy) proactively prevent public documents from being found through simple internet searches? Furthermore if this is the case, whether as a matter of policy or not, what will you do to ensure the people of Europe have access to EU public information?