

Trade secrets: protecting businesses, safeguarding the right to information

Plenary sessions [14-04-2016 - 12:41]

New EU rules to help firms win legal redress against theft or misuse of their trade secrets were voted by Parliament on Thursday. MEPs ensured that freedom of expression and information will be protected and that the rules will not restrict the work of journalists.

“With one company out of every five a victim of theft of trade secrets every year, harmonisation should allow the creation of a safe and trustworthy environment for European companies, which will see their intangible assets and know-how secured”, said rapporteur Constance le Grip (EPP, FR). “I’ve also been fighting to ensure that the safeguards laid down in this text to protect the work of journalists and whistle-blowers are as real and as unambiguous as can be”, she added. Her resolution was passed by 503 votes to 131, with 18 abstentions.

The directive, informally agreed with ministers before the vote, introduces an EU-wide definition of “trade secret”, meaning information which is secret, has commercial value because it is secret, and has been subject to reasonable steps to keep it secret.

It would oblige EU member states to ensure that victims of misuse of trade secrets are able to defend their rights in court and to seek compensation. The agreed text also lays down rules to protect confidential information during legal proceedings.

Throughout the negotiations with ministers, MEPs stressed the need to ensure that the legislation does not curb media freedom and pluralism or restrict the work of journalists, in particular with regard to their investigations and the protection of their sources.

Read the full press release on the compromise reached in December [here](#)

Procedure: *Co-decision (Ordinary Legislative Procedure), first reading agreement*

Further information

- Adopted text will be available here (click on 14.04.2016)
: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/texts-adopted.html>
- Video recording of debate (click on 13.04.2016)
: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-live/en/plenary/search-by-date>
- Video of the press conference
: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-live/en/other-events/schedule>
- EbS+ (13.04.2016)
: <http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/ebs/schedule.cfm?sitelang=en&page=3&institution=0&date=04/13/2014>
- EP Think Tank: Protecting businesses' trade secrets
: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_ATA%282016%29580872
- Audiovisual material for professionals
: <http://audiovisual.europarl.europa.eu/default.aspx>
- Text of the compromise with the Council
: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+AMD+A8-2015-0199+002-002+DOC+PDF+V0//EN>
- Press release on committee vote (28.01.2016) : <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=IM-PRESS&reference=20160126IPR11511&language=SV&format=XML>
- Procedure file:
[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2013/0402\(COD\)&l=en](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2013/0402(COD)&l=en)
- Committee on Legal Affairs: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/juri/home.html>

Press release

- Press release after informal agreement with council:
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=IM-PRESS&reference=20151215IPR07674&language=SV&format=XML>

Political groups

- Press release by the EPP group: <http://www.eppgroup.eu/press-release/Trade-secrets%3A-protecting-business-and-fundamental-liberties>
- News pages of the S&D group: <http://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/newsroom>
- News pages of the ECR group: <http://ecrgroup.eu/news/>
- Press release by the ALDE group: <http://www.alde.eu/nc/press/press-and-release-news/press-release/article/alde-welcomes-european-framework-for-trade-secrets-decisive-step-to-promote-innovation-while-ensur/>
- News pages of the GUE/NGL group: <http://www.guengl.eu/news/archives/category/gue-ngl-news>
- Press release by the Greens/EFA group: <http://www.greens-efa.eu/trade-secrets-15434.html>
- News pages of the EFDD group: <http://www.efddgroup.eu/newsroom/press-releases>

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