[DE] Bundestag Passes Freedom of Information Act

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With majority support from the Government coalition, the German Bundestag (lower house of parliament) passed the so-called Informationsfreiheitsgesetz (Freedom of Information Act - IFG) on 3 June 2005. The Act is designed to give citizens the right to access official information held by the federal authorities. Opponents of the Act fear it could lead to a heavier workload for the administrative authorities and courts. On the other hand, some people think the Act does not go far enough, particularly in view of the extensive list of exceptions to the right to information.

Now it is up to the Bundesrat (upper house of parliament) to adopt the Act. If it refuses to do so, the whole legislative process will automatically fail. Although the Government coalition could vote down the Bundesrat's veto in the Bundestag, the fact that the latter is soon to be dissolved means that there would not be time for the process to be completed.

Germany is one of the few remaining European countries in which the right of access to information (at state level) is not enshrined in law (see IRIS plus 2005-02, particularly concerning the importance of freedom of information for the media). However, freedom of information laws already exist at regional level in Berlin, Brandenburg, Schleswig-Holstein and North Rhine-Westphalia.

Informationen zum Gesetzgebungsverfahren sind abrufbar unter:

http://www.bundestag.de/aktuell/archiv/2005/inffrges/index.html

Information on the legislative procedure is available at:

http://www.bundestag.de/aktuell/archiv/2005/inffrges/index.html

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