EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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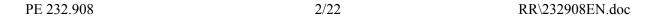*2004*

Session document

13 March 2000

REPORT

on *e*Europe - An Information Society For All: a Commission Initiative for the Special European Council of Lisbon, 23 and 24 March 2000
(COM(1999) 687 – C5-0063/2000 – 2000/2034(COS))

Committee on Industry, External Trade, Research and Energy

Rapporteur: Imelda Mary Read

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CONTENTS

PROCEDURAL PAGE

By letter of 10 December 1999 the Commission forwarded its communication on *e*Europe - An Information Society For All: a Commission Initiative for the Special European Council of Lisbon, 23 and 24 March 2000 (COM(1999) 687 – 2000/2034(COS)) to Parliament.

At the sitting of 14 February, 2000 the President of Parliament announced that she had referred the communication to the Committee on Industry, External Trade, Research and Energy as the committee responsible, and to the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Policy, the Committee on Regional Policy, Transport and Tourism, the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport and the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs for their opinions (C5-0063/2000).

The Committee on Industry, External Trade, Research and Energy had appointed Imelda Mary Read rapporteur at its meeting of 27 January 2000.

The Committee on Industry, External Trade, Research and Energy considered the Commission communication and the draft report at its meetings of 24 February 2000 and 13 March 2000.
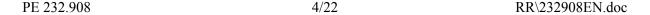
At the last meeting it adopted the motion for a resolution by 40 votes to 3.

The following were present for the vote: Nuala Ahern ,acting chairman; Imelda Mary Read, (rapporteur), Maria del Pilar Ayuso González (for Guido Bodrato), Eduard Beysen (for Willy C.E.H. De Clercq), Gérard Caudron, Giles Bryan Chichester, Nicholas Clegg, Dorette Corbey (for Massimo Carraro), Claude J.-M.J. Desama, Harlem Désir, Jonathan Evans (for Renato Brunetta), Concepció Ferrer, Christos Folias, Glyn Ford, Michel Hansenne, Malcolm Harbour, Rolf Linkohr, Caroline Lucas, Linda McAvan, Eryl Margaret McNally, Nelly Maes, Erika Mann, Marjo Tuulevi Matikainen-Kallström, Barbara O'Toole (for Elena Valenciano Martínez-Orozco), Reino Kalervo Paasilinna, Elly Plooij-van Gorsel, Samuli Pohjamo (for Astrid Thors), John Purvis, Alexander Radwan (for Paul Rübig),Christa Randzio-Plath (for Norbert Glante), Bernhard Rapkay (for Norbert Glante), Mechtild Rothe, Christian Foldberg Rovsing, Gilles Savary (for Alexandros Baltas), Ilka Schröder, Konrad K. Schwaiger, Esko Olavi Seppänen, Anna Terrón i Cusí (for Carlos Westendorp y Cabeza), Claude Turmes (for Yves Piétrasanta), Jaime Valdivielso de Cué, W.G. van Velzen, Alejo Vidal-Quadras Roca (for Anders Wijkman) and François Zimeray .

The opinion of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs is attached; the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Consumer Policy decided on 23 February 2000 not to deliver an opinion; the Committee on Regional Policy, Transport and Tourism and the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport decided on 22 February 2000 not to deliver an opinion.

The report was tabled on 13 March 2000.

The deadline for tabling amendments is on Tuesday 14 March 2000 at 17.00p.m.

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MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

European Parliament resolution on the Commission communication on *e*Europe - An Information Society For All: a Commission Initiative for the Special European Council of Lisbon, 23 and 24 March 2000 (COM(1999) 687 – C5-0063/2000 – 2000/2034(COS))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission Communication on '*e*Europe - An Information Society For All': a Commission Initiative for the Special European Council of Lisbon, 23 and 24 March 2000 (COM(1999) 687[1] - C5-0063/2000),

- having regard to the European Parliament and Council Decision 1719/1999 of 12 July, 1999[2] on a series of guidelines, including the identification of projects of common interest, for trans-European networks of the electronic Interchange of Data between Administrations (IDA),

- having regard to the Communication on a New Framework for Electronic Communications Infrastructure and Associated Services[3], the Fifth Report on the Implementation on the Current Framework[4], the report on Digital Television in the AEU[5] and the Communication on the Next Steps in the Radio Spectrum Policy[6],

- having regard to its resolution of January 14, 1999[7] on the European Commission Communication of February 4, 1998 'Globalisation and the Information Society – The Need for Strengthened International Co-ordination'[8],

- having regard to its resolution of 15 December 1998[9]on the Proposal of the Council adopting a specific programme for research, technological development and demonstration 'Quality of life and management of living resources (1998-2002)'[10],

- having regard to its resolution of 6 May 1999[11] on the proposal for a European Parliament and Council proposal for a Directive on certain legal aspects of electronic commerce in the internal market[12],

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[1]   Not yet published in OJ
[2]   OJ L203, 3.8.99, p. 1
[3]   COM(1999) 539, not yet published in OJ
[4]   COM(1999) 537, not yet published in OJ
[5]   COM(1999) 540, not yet published in OJ
[6]   COM(1999) 538, not yet published in OJ
[7]   OJ C 104, 14.4.99, p. 103-128
[8]   COM(1999) 050, not yet published in OJ
[9]   OJ C098, 9.4.99, p. 25-60
[10]   Not yet published in OJ
[11]   OJ C279, 1.10.99, p.257 + 403
[12]   OJ C030, 5.2.99, p. 4

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- having regard to its resolution of October 22, 1998[1] on the European Commission Green Paper of December 3, 1997 on the convergence of the telecommunications, media and information technology sectors, and the implications for regulation (COM(1997) 623)[2] ,

- having regard to the European Parliament and Council Directive 98/48/EC of July 20, 1998[3] amending for the third time Directive 83/189/EEC laying down a procedure for the provision of information in the field of technical standards and regulations,

- having regard to its resolution of July 17, 1998[4] on the European Commission Communication of October 8, 1997 'Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the regions: Ensuring security and trust in electronic communications – Towards a European framework for digital signatures and encryption (COM(1997) 503)[5] ,

- having regard to the European Parliament and Council decision 1999/93/EC of 13 December 1999 on a Community framework for electronic signatures[6] ,

- having regard to its resolution of 15 January 1998[7] on the Commission Communication on 'Cohesion and Information Society' (COM(1997) 7)[8],

- having regard to its resolution of 10 February 1999[9] on the proposal for a European Parliament and Council Directive on the harmonisation of certain aspects of copyright and related rights in the Information Society[10],

- having regard to the European Parliament and Council Decision 97/1336 of June 17th, 1997[11] on a series of guidelines for trans-European telecommunications networks,

- having regard to the European Parliament and Council Directive 96/9/EC of March 11, 1996[12] on the legal protection of databases,

- having regard to the European Commission Communication of October 5, 1994 on the follow-up to the consultation process relating to the Green paper on 'Pluralism and media concentration in the internal market – An assessment of the need for Community action' (COM(1994) 353)[13],

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[1] OJ C341, 9.11.98, p. 106 + 136
[2] Not yet published in OJ
[3] OJ L217, 5.8.98
[4] OJ C292, 21.9.98, p. 206 + 217
[5] Not yet published in OJ
[6] OJ L 13,   19.01.2000, p. 12
[7] OJ C34, 2.2.98, p. 121 + 145
[8] Not yet published in OJ
[9] OJ C150, 28.5.99, p.154 + 183
[10] Not yet published in OJ
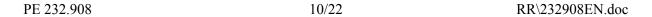[11] OJ 183, 11.7.97, p. 12
[12] OJ L77, 23.6.96
[13] C 243, 31.8.94, p.8

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- having regard to the 1st (1996) and 2nd (1997) Annual Report of the Information Society Forum;

- having regard to the opinion of the Information Society Forum on the Green Paper of the Commission on Public Sector Information in the Information Society;

- having regard to the final report (1997) of the High Level Expert Group on the social and societal aspects of the information society "A European information society for all", stressing the need for a social embeddedness of information technology,

- having regard to Rule 47(1) of its Rules of Procedure,

- having regard to the report of the Committee on Industry, External Trade, Research and Energy and the opinion of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (A5-0067/2000),

A. whereas political will is essential in order to reach the objectives put out by the Commission to promote an Information society for all,

B. whereas a fast growth of electronic communication services promises major benefits for consumers, governments, business and the European economy,

C. whereas, while Member States have set up various schemes and policies to foster the development of Information Society, co-operation amongst them and with the Union is a major factor for success to implement any measure aiming to develop Information society in Europe,

D. whereas Information society services and e-commerce have developed to a much higher extent in the United States of America than in the European Union, driven by an open market and a high level of entrepreneurial activity**,**

E. whereas each sector, such as technological research, enterprises (including the creative content industry) and public authorities, has to act and co-operate in order to make Information society a common good for all citizens and society as a whole,

F. whereas benchmarking in Member States has to be taken into consideration to improve the overall European records in this field,

G. whereas the development of a competitive, open telecommunication infrastructure promises cheaper and faster access to on-line services, fixed and mobile,

H. whereas the fast development of third generation mobile communication services will give the EU a world leading role in new information products and services,

I. whereas the explosive development of e-commerce and SMEs' probable lack of know-how and venture capitalthe projected turnover of business through the development of e-commerce and the slow decision-making process in the EU should be taken into consideration ,

J.   whereas the growth potential of the Internet has a major impact on Europe's economy and whereas it should therefore be comprehensively taken into account in the economic policy of the European Union,

K.   whereas the new information technologies create a social and economic area which is fundamentally transnational in character and whereas economic, education, social and labour policy must take account of this,

L.   whereas only 1% on average of national health budgets is devoted to information technologies,

M.   whereas a great difference exists among Member States as far as the information technology capabilities of their administrations and the use of the Internet is concerned,

N.   whereas the 5th framework programme for research includes important measures to develop inter alia a user-friendly information society and new networks between universities,

O.   whereas efforts must be taken to develop appropriate standards, common generic applications and compatible data bases and services when needed to realise the full potential of Information society across national borders,

P.   whereas the development of electronic commerce offers great prospects for European consumers, but only if it is as safe and reliable as transactions conducted on traditional markets,

Q.   whereas all citizens should be able to fully take an advantage of the development of the Information society, particularly taking into account the special needs of disabled citizens, and the opportunities that new technologies can give,

R.   whereas equal attention should be paid to the needs of all citizens outside the world of work, including in particular those who have been excluded from it prematurely,

S.   Whereas marginal categories of citizens, disadvantaged groups and poor people should be enabled to have access to the Information society, so that they can be reintegrated in the society and in labour market and that an information underclass is not created,

T.   whereas one out of four new jobs have been created in the field of information society activities during the 90s,

U.   whereas a clear, stable and predictable legal framework based on well-proven Internal Market principles is an essential condition for the development of the Information Society and e-commerce in Europe;

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1. Welcomes the Commission's *e*Europe initiative which contains objectives and a timetable for optimal development of the Information Society in Europe, ands expects the Commission to draw up detailed plans for achieving these objectives and to establish clear priorities while defining the tasks of the EU and of the individual Member States; as a matter of priority the following initiatives should be tackled in the context of *e*Europe:

   - modern, multimedia high-performance infrastructure must be created to permit the supply of, and demand for, high-quality communications services from telephone via PC and television and other receiver devices;

   - the European Union must create the appropriate legal certainty in e-commerce business and the legal framework for consumers;

   - a broad-based skills offensive should be launched ('Europe's youth into the digital age'), in particular to counteract the skills shortage in Europe; Parliament expects the Commission to draw up specific proposals such as educating pupils for pupils or class trips to IT training establishments; however, since there is no EU competence such proposals must be formulated in a non-binding way since educational policy is, in the final analysis, the responsibility of the Member States;

   - the *e*Europe initiative should be accompanied by a broad-based, Europe-wide advertising and information campaign to inform the people of Europe of the use of modern information and communications technologies and, in particular, to illustrate the great potential for e-commerce;

   - specific projects are needed to turn Europe into an Information Society; adequate appropriations for this will need to be included in the EU's budget over the next few years; only in this way can the European Union make clear its political resolve to implement the initiative consistently;

2. Regrets that the Commission's communication does not define detailed measures to be taken on both the EU and national level in order to reach these objectives;

3. Wishes that the coming action plans proposed by the Commission will identify and define on the one hand the measures that should be taken at regional or national level, and on the other hand on EU-level taking into account the rapid development in the sector itself,

4. Regrets very much that the Commission's communication, which itself contains a significant section on accessibility for people with disabilities, was not in fact accessible to blind and partially sighted people, being available only in PDF format on the Commission Web site and stresses that the current Commission proposal for a directive on copyright and related rights in the Information Society would result in the imposition of technical blocks on information on the Internet, which would prevent legal "copying" such as the transposition of information into an alternative format, and will severely hinder the participation of visually impaired people in the Information society,
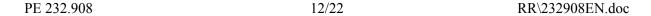
5. Stresses that the guidelines concerning the regional and Cohesion funds must be re-examined in order to ensure that full advantage is taken of these resources in order to make less developed and remote areas more competitive in the Information Society,

6. Urges the Commission to submit all areas of EU policy to an audit; the objective is to ensure that full account is taken of the changes in all areas of life as a result of information technology and the new media;

7. Stresses that developing the European Information Society can only be supported effectively if Europe has a sound knowledge and innovation structure, a broad and well-developed body of users and advanced information and communications technology;

8. Stresses that a large proportion of the innovation within the Information Society is achieved, firstly, by the ICT sector and, secondly, by ICT firms in close cooperation with various chains and sectors (transport, monetary transactions etc.); regrets that the need for this cooperation is not given due prominence in the e-Europe initiative; in particular, support should be given to clusters of SMEs;

9. Notes that approximately 80% of e-commerce is currently business-to-business. Further development of e-commerce between businesses and consumers requires the creation of a critical consumer mass. The way in which this is to be done is not obvious from the e-Europe initiative;

10. Urges the Commission to analyse the risks and opportunities that the Information society development could create on the job market, therefore to come up with plans for small business expansion and stimulation of innovation and to take initiatives to make sure that job creation in all sectors is fostered by the use of information technologies,

11. Calls on the Commission to examine the socio-economic aspects of the initiative in a broad context, with particular reference to the approaches and questions contained in the fifth framework research programme;

12. Calls on the Council to express its political will in order to eliminate the gap existing between USA and the EU in the fields of Information Society and e-commerce and asks the Commission to foresee measures to reduce this gap,

13. Asks the Commission and the Council together with Parliament to investigate new ways of speeding up the legislative work, and to adopt new attitudes as to what should be regulated in directives and what should be regulated through powers delegated to the Commission,

14. Calls on the Commission and the Member States not to undermine flexibility and stifle the growth of e-business by excessive regulation,

15. Calls on the Council to speedily adopt the e-commerce directive and urges Member States to transpose it into national law rapidly so that European businesses and notably SMEs are encouraged to invest in e-commerce in the Union by benefiting from the legal certainty of the "one-stop shop", offered by this Single Market initiative,

16. Asks the Commission to analyse the reasons why the USA are ahead the EU in Internet and e-commerce use, and include the corresponding areas both in its action framework and in the benchmarked criteria,

17. Asks the Council and the Commission to take steps at the political and legislative level to confirm European lead vis-à-vis USA in the mobile communication and the provision of Information Society Services over mobile networks and to accelerate the take up of 3rd generation wireless technology,

18. Points out that legislative measures must not endanger the will to invest in the mobile communication sector, although taking into account the need to secure sound competition also in this sector,

19. Calls on Member States to define a common approach to achieve a trans-European Information society and foster co-operation among them and with the EU in this field,

20. Calls on the Council and the Member States to take all measures necessary to extend judicial and police cooperation to include the information society, so as to guarantee the security of transactions and the confidentiality of data;

21. Considers that the development of secure identification systems, systems to preserve the confidentiality of messages and methods to prevent changes in them are paramount to develop a digitalised, competitive and mobile E-Europe – they will be a very important part of the infrastructure of such a Europe; taking note of the competitive advantage that Europe has as to smart cards and other secure identification systems,

22. Asks the Commission to define the role of national and European financing in *e*Europe initiatives, and to clarify which lines are foreseen in 2000 budget to finance the measures related to its communication objectives, and in particular for the IST programme;

23. Notes that much more attention must be paid to questions related to protecting the privacy of citizens,

24. Calls on the Member States to commit themselves to a benchmarking of their initiatives for fostering Information society in order to spread best practices,

25. Urges a major reform of infrastructures to allow access to Information society technologies in all Member States,

26. Calls on Member States to give prompt consideration to the Commission's initiatives and recommendations on reducing the cost of access to the Internet (reducing prices for rented lines, approval for licences, unbundling local loop) and to look into ways of implementing them forthwith;

27. Calls on the Member States, Community bodies and regional and local authorities to make use of all possible instruments for training, to educating and re-educating European citizens in the use of new information technologies in order to meet the need for skilled personnel in the new sectors,
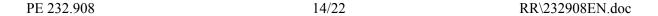
28. Asks the Commission to develop plans to exploit the benefits of a uniform VAT system for the growth of e-commerce, including consideration of sales taxation at source,

29. Points out that e-commerce will change the traditional way of doing business, particularly for SMEs, stresses the need to create a favourable environment for investment by small and medium-sized enterprises and calls for strong support from Member States and the EU, so that new technologies can be integrated into business practices and SMEs can benefit from a business conducive legal environment both at EU and global level,

30. Notes that all companies which do not take into account the opportunities of the digital and mobile environment will face difficulties, this means that enterprise and educational organisations and Member States should take actions needed to promote the awareness of the possibilities,

31. Calls on the Commission to extend the objectives of e-Europe to other Community policies and, notably through regional policy, to give special emphasis to measures to support intangible investment and access for SME and very small enterprises to new communications and information technologies;

32. Calls for the Commission to organise an e-government conference in mid-2000 to enable representatives of European administrative units to exchange experience, firstly on online administrative services, as developed in the public-private partnership model, for example, and, secondly, on the consistent introduction of IT technology in civil services, while reorganising work patterns to facilitate an exchange of ideas and know-how;

33. Stresses that the unstoppable development of e-commerce will, like any other technological change, have a major impact on almost all sectors of the economy which will lead to a shift in firms, work, regions and countries and which will bring benefits to those who are best able to adapt to the change; for example, there is likely to be a positive effect on postal services and hence on the jobs involved in such services:

34. Urges the Commission to press ahead with the application of its commercial communications policy such that new SME e-commerce businesses can advertise effectively their new services in traditional media across borders in the European Union and thus build up European brand loyalty on which their cross-border trade will rely,

35. Calls on Member States to develop innovative and comprehensive actions in the field of education for the new economy in pre-school, school, tertiary and higher education, and asks on the Commission to encourage complementarity in programmes - ensuring for instance that new educational programmes have an e-Europe element – , to give special consideration to concepts of computer supported co-operative learning, to the creation of educational information networks and databases, to using information networks for intercultural learning and to high quality standards for multimedia applications in education and training in its initiative on "Europe's youth into the digital age",

36. Underlines that e-commerce is a very useful opportunity for consumers as a whole, and for some categories of consumers in particular, such as the elderly, the housebound and the disabled, and that consumers have to be reassured as far as the difficulties of accessibility to Internet are concerned, and need reassurance that their consumer rights and data protection rights are guaranteed in a comprehensive, understandable and

effective way; consumers should have a genuine and easy access to complaints procedures - for example through an electronic ombudsman - and any measures decided should be applicable immediately, and therefore asks the Commission and the Member States to introduce a consumers dispute settlement mechanism,

37. Calls on the Commission to redirect the financial resources available (structural and cohesion funds, research appropriations etc,) for the projects in this initiative. There is a need for clarity as to which resources are to finance which projects;

38. Stresses that the Internet and e-commerce offer new opportunities for creators and raise numerous questions with regard to the definition of intellectual property;

39. Calls on the Commission to guarantee the ethical security of services offered on the Internet in the European Union, taking all possible measures to ensure respect for human rights and the rights of the child;

40. Stresses that the new developments in this sector could make a contribution to sustainable development and Calls on the Commission to support in particular environmental aspects concerning hardware and infrastructure and an approach towards use which respects resources,

41. Reiterates that e-commerce will have a positive impact on postal services and related jobs,

42. Emphasises that the linking up of researchers via the internet is a key to the future economic success of the EU, and therefore underlines the importance of giving researchers easy access to information society technologies,

43. Calls on the Commission actively to promote the development and use of intelligent transport systems based on new communications and information technology, so as to guarantee the development in Europe of safe, reliable and efficient networks, with the emphasis on intermodality, strengthening public transport and respect for the environment,

44. Considers that e-commerce is a reality that and can not be ignored; therefore member States and Commission should take the appropriated measures to make this reality the best opportunity in terms of economy, labour market and consumers' needs,

45. Calls on the Commission to ensure that the EU's competition policy affords European enterprises a level playing field in all Member States and that there are equal opportunities for access to the market;

46. Asks the Commission to inform the European Parliament about the results of the consultations with the Member States concerning the major policy review to improve the coherence of available instruments to finance risk capital,

47. Asks the Commission to include a point 11 "Strengthening employment and social cohesion in the information society" into its e-Europe initiative, giving priority to promoting literacy in new technologies for all citizens, focusing on short-time measures to fill the large number of job vacancies in Europe related to employment in the IT sector, on

a broad qualification offensive to strengthen skills also of average age and older employees needed for a knowledge based society, on creating social regulation for new forms of work generated by the IT revolution, as well as on strengthening initiatives for equal access to information networks for socially excluded persons,

48. Welcomes the Commission's recent initiative on free software and open source, which shall be a major priority in the IST work programme (WP 2000), asks the Commission to promote - just like the Internet plan of the French Government - the use of open source platforms in its internet strategy and to consider new initiatives in favour of innovative SMEs, universities etc. in order to develop user friendly application software based on open source,

49. Considers that people with disabilities should be part of the targets in each section of the communication, and that an information society for all will not be achieved unless the access needs of disabled people are mainstreamed throughout all sections of the communication and invites the Commission and the member States to take further steps toward legislation harmonisation related to availability of on-line services offered to disabled within the EU,

50. Is concerned that the promotion of Smart Cards represents a direct intervention by the EU into an area that could be market driven, and where the technology framework does not need to be prescribed; requests a more complete justification for this proposal,

51. Calls on Member States to devote a larger part of their health budgets to information technologies to better the functioning of the network amongst hospitals, laboratories and screening centres, pharmacies, primary care centres and homes; to make information broadly available - with appropriate safeguards - to healthcare professionals, administrators and patients to improve the transparency and efficiency of the system; to empower European citizens to play an active role in managing their health, and to improve the overall quality of healthcare,

52. Calls on the Commission to coordinate its efforts to provide rapid Internet access for researchers and students with its efforts to create a European research area, by promoting virtual centres of excellence and research institutes, as well as speeding up the networking of research workers and databases at European level;

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53. Asks all Member States to improve the use of information access systems in their administrations,

54. Calls on the Commission to make full use of information technology in administration and communication, in particular by promoting e-commerce through purchasing and payment procedures;

55. Expressly supports the Commission in its call at WTO level for the establishment of a competition policy with an international dimension. This is particularly important for enterprises operating in the information and communications technology sector because their activities are genuinely geared towards the international market;

56. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure, by means of an 'e-Europe test', that new legislative measures do not constrain the opportunities afforded by the new economy;

57. Calls on the Commission and the Council to guarantee free and complete public access in future to the information stored digitally in public centres (libraries, archives and universities etc.). Any restriction on this right means a major intrusion in the development potential of individual citizens;

58. Calls on the Council and the Commission to draw up a comprehensive concept for ensuring that all public areas (libraries, archives and universities etc.), particularly in rural regions, can benefit to the full from the development of the Internet;

59. Asks the Commission and the Council to ensure that the full potential of the e-Europe Initiative and the follow up action plan fully respect the Internal Market and interaction between various regulations and instruments,

60. Calls on the Commission to ensure, in this connection, that all existing directives and regulations have the same legal logic and are not contradictory;

61. Asks the Commission to establish a portal for all Community risk capital instruments, including other information sources about financial instruments,

62. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and Commission and to the governments and parliaments of the Member States.

13 March 2000

OPINION of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

for the Committee on Industry, External Trade, Research and Energy

on 'e-Europe – An Information Society for All' – Communication on a Commission Initiative for the Special European Council of Lisbon, 23 and 24 March 2000
(COM(1999) 687 – C5-0063/2000 – 2000/2034(COS))

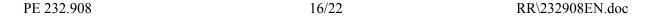Draftsman: Alejandro Cercas Alonso

PROCEDURE

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs appointed Alejandro Cercas Alonso draftsman at its meeting of 15 February 2000.

It considered the draft opinion at its meetings of 23 February and 13 March 2000.

At the latter meeting it adopted the amendments below unanimously.

The following were present for the vote: Michel Rocard, chairman; José Ribeiro e Castro, vice-chairman; Alejandro Cercas Alonso, draftsman; Theodorus J.J. Bouwman (for Hélène Flautre), Harald Ettl, Jillian Evans, Marie-Hélène Gillig, Mary Honeyball (for Fiorella Ghilardotti), Richard Howitt (for Peter William Skinner), Stephen Hughes, Ian Stewart Hudghton, Jean Lambert, Manuel Medina Ortega (for Elisa Maria Damião), Claude Moraes (for Proinsias De Rossa) and Herman Schmid.

SHORT JUSTIFICATION

The special European Council will meet in Lisbon on 23 and 24 March 2000 to discuss 'Employment, economic reforms and social cohesion – for a Europe of innovation and knowledge'. The central issue for the Council will be that of determining how to develop an economy based on innovation and knowledge with more and better jobs and social cohesion.

The preparatory debate for the summit has already begun and is focusing on a coordinated series of documents submitted by the Presidency and Commission. In one of these documents, the communication entitled 'e-Europe – an Information Society For All', the Commission sets out the e-Europe policy initiative aimed at ensuring that future generations capitalise fully on the changes ushered in by the new economy in the information society.

Several undeniable successes notwithstanding, Europe is falling behind in the transition to an economy based on innovation and knowledge. This is apparent not only in the production sphere and in the dissemination of a great deal of information technology, but also in the adjustment of social services and the approach to the new potential afforded by such technology. The persistent failure to adjust to the new climate will stifle economic growth and threaten an increase in unemployment and social exclusion.

On several occasions Parliament has urged Europe to find its own approach towards building an economy and society based on innovation and knowledge. Europe boasts a rich scientific and cultural tradition, coupled with enormous potential to generate new knowhow. The European approach must seize this opportunity to forge a specific European identity and involve its citizens more closely in this project. In order to do so, it is important that a European model of the information society be established, its concerns centred around preserving the traditions of cultural diversity, political democracy and a market economy with a social dimension. However, we do not know whether this theoretical European model of the information society would prove feasible in the current climate of globalisation.

Furthermore, this theoretical European model of the information society will serve to help its benefits take root in those countries placed at the greatest disadvantage by the market. Although much is made of the global nature of the information society, it is worth remembering that only a tiny share of the world's population is currently connected to the Internet and very few people around the world have access to the telephone networks required for connections via modems. Europe must look after its own citizens, but it has a responsibility towards the third world as well. An information society which excludes more people than it embraces does not deserve to be called a society, and would produce a dangerous and unacceptable state of affairs.

The e-Europe initiative is ambitious and sets out, sector by sector, some of the main problems facing Europe in the future. The technological revolution allied to the information society and the spread of global communication is revolutionising our lifestyles and working environments. A range of hitherto unknown forms of work will come to the fore, the beneficial effects of which will be felt across society. However, there is a clear risk that a two-speed society may emerge. If the benefits of the information society are to be felt in every sector of society and region of Europe, we must ensure a smooth transition between old and new and skilled and less highly skilled types of job. Hence the vital need for a growth in technology-related infrastructure, lifelong learning and education, an accelerated and more

effective introduction of information technologies into education, and their application to new products and processes.
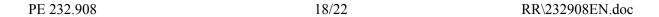
Your rapporteur also believes that the further development of scientific and technical knowhow has a leading role to play in European employment policy. It is important that scientific and technical knowhow is strengthened and updated, and a command of information technology spread, in order to create skilled jobs and build a competitive economy underpinned by social values. For this to happen, emphasis must be placed on scientific and technical culture which embraces the entire population and on the need for buoyant and flexible R&D policy in Europe. In such a broad context, policy geared towards a society based on information and knowledge must be pursued in tandem with policies covering R&D, education and vocational training, and must also be conducted in conjunction with all policies designed to support innovation.

The communication is thorough and ambitious in its analysis of the social impact of this new economy. However, your rapporteur would like to make some broad remarks on a number of the areas dealt with in committee. The following approaches are required where employment and social cohesion are concerned:
-   references to education should mention the fact that older generations require as much support as young people do. If the Commission and Council are serious about lifelong learning, they must focus more on, and make more resources available to, all age groups, including older generations which might find it more difficult to cope with new technology in the 'e-society' (see chapter 1);
-   when referring to the importance of risk capital it should borne in mind that the availability of risk capital in the US has played a pivotal role in creating jobs in the 'e-sector' in that country. For some time now, my committee has been of the opinion that the European Union ought to take action in this area in order to boost employment in Europe (see chapter 6);
-   references to access for specific target groups and to the challenge with regard to benefiting from the opportunities afforded by the information society so as to strengthen social cohesion and increase individual capacity to participate fully in every aspect of social and economic life, should extend to all areas of life and all social groups (young people, women, older generations and so forth), since we are dealing here with a knowledge-based society (see chapter 7);
-   in discussions on health and safety at work we must be careful to guard against a deterioration of services for people in more remote areas of the Union, even if they are using the healthcare online service (see chapter 8);
-   proposed training and employment measures should take account of the European strategy and financial instruments already in place.

The communication pinpoints several challenges relating to the information society and refers to a demanding programme for Member States. That said, it fails to answer questions already raised by Parliament in other debates, one such instance being the report on the Green Paper entitled Living and Working in the Information Society: People First (COM(96)0389), about which Parliament asked:
-   who will pay?
-   who will be responsible for training?
-   who will be doing the learning, and when?
-   what responsibilities will government and industry take on?

-   and lastly, what role can trade unions and civil society play?

All of these questions are important, given the growing flexibility in industrial relations, with workers in need of ongoing training and management tempted to bring in younger, cheaper and less demanding workers to replace their older and less well-prepared counterparts as a matter of course.

The growing number of self-employed people poses a particular problem, since it is difficult to allocate as much time or money to them for further training. Another problem stems from the absence of an initiative to create long-term skilled jobs. In addition, the need for European legislation regulating atypical forms of work, which will have an important role to play in the information society, has not been adequately addressed.

CONCLUSIONS

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs calls on the Committee on Industry, External Trade, Research and Energy, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following points in its draft resolution:

Paragraph 1
Welcomes the communication and calls on the Commission and Council to draw up a global strategy of action which embraces e-Europe and all aspects of the information society, including the creation of highly skilled jobs and education and training measures required to equip the workforce with the skills needed to avail of the new and rapidly changing opportunities and greater social cohesion;

Paragraph 2
Welcomes the communication from the Commission but recalls that an information society for all can make its full benefits felt only by means of the complete implementation of the internal market.

Paragraph 3
Considers that this global strategy of action should incorporate guidelines, recommendations, pointers for specific measures at the national and European levels and should be linked to national employment plans, achievable targets to be met on an annual basis together with the participation of the social partners, educators and training personnel, and it should also focus on small and medium-sized enterprises, self-employment, the service sector, the social economy and, in particular, the sectors of the information society with a potential to create a large number of jobs;

Paragraph 4
Calls for a new Employment Guideline to be drawn up or for each of the current Guidelines to be appropriately adapted for 2001 so that this global strategy of action can be taken fully into account at an early stage; asks therefore the Commission to include a point 11 'Strengthening employment and social cohesion in the information society' in its e-Europe initiative, focusing on short-time measures to fill the large number of job vacancies in Europe related to employment in the IT sectors;

Paragraph 5
Stresses the importance of ensuring that the European Social Fund and the EQUAL initiative also contribute to the objective of creating a skilled workforce for all in the rapidly developing IT sector.

Paragraph 6
Highlights the importance of having suitably trained staff in IT in educational and training establishments throughout the European Union and calls on the Commission, the Member States and the two sides of industry to ensure that this aspect is fully taken into account; believes therefore that consideration should be given to establishing a reference frame of the basic skills which are required to help workers train for activities related to information technologies and considers that certification of such basic IT skills should be made possible;

Paragraph 7
Points out that the 'Innovation' has to follow environmentally and socially sustainable paths, based on 'greening' the IT-infrastructures, products and services, and demanding social innovations as 'sustainable lifestyles' and social inclusion of the 'information poor'; calls therefore on the Member States to ensure universal access to the new service and not just exclusively to those who have the economic power to benefit;

Paragraph 8
Calls on the Commission likewise to extend to older people the specific guideline providing for free Internet kiosks to be made generally available in public buildings as from the end of 2001 and also to organise specific measures for the benefit of older people.
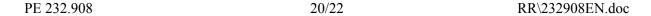
Paragraph 9
Calls on the Commission to draft a report on possible social side-effects of the information society. In it the Commission should, inter alia, consider the impact of growing use of ICT on:
- working conditions (new occupational diseases such as RSI and neck and shoulder complaints)
- flexibilisation, working times and contracts
- stimulation of the informal economy by the new economy (home working)
- job losses and their social impact
- the quality of new jobs
- the pace of life and work
- the privacy of private individuals and employees
- the environmental impact of e-commerce

and calls on the Commission to take the necessary measures in response to this report to combat any undesirable effects.

Paragraph 10
Welcomes the objectives aimed at achieving fast growth in digital literacy and Internet skills in Europe, promoting an entrepreneurial culture in the information society and making access to the Internet cheaper, first and foremost through education and training for those sections of the population which encounter greater difficulty in this regard, such as young unemployed persons, immigrants, housewives and senior citizens. The task of achieving rapid and widespread literacy could be facilitated by including the entire network of libraries, cultural

centres and similar community facilities in national programmes and a Community initiative as venues for digital literacy campaigns targeting people who are excluded from formal education and the labour market or for whom integration into society is particularly difficult.

Paragraph 11
Urges the Commission and the Member States to include all various age groups, in particular young people, teachers and students, unemployed adults, workers at risk, older workers as well as businessmen in their proposed educational and training measures and IT equipment, mindful of the fact that the concepts of 'lifelong learning' and a 'learning society' should not be equated merely with 'learning for working life' but, particularly in conjunction with information technologies, should help to use knowledge for personal and social development and hence support participation in the wide-ranging cultural, political and social life of Europe for all;

Paragraph 12
Calls on the Commission and Member States to do their utmost to ensure respect for the equal opportunities principle and prevent the information society from engendering new forms of inequality in the opportunities open to men and women to learn how to use the Internet and multimedia resources.

Paragraph 13
Calls on the Commission and the two sides of industry to take the necessary steps to bring about the conclusion of binding European agreements on teleworking, home working and atypical work, in which connection a European framework should be provided for guaranteeing social rights as the information society is created, and to consider how to encourage wider choice in working arrangements and hours by adjusting working time if necessary in order to reconcile it better with the family;

Paragraph 14
Calls for new forms of work arising from the information society to be accompanied by measures to guarantee workers' rights to social security and proper pensions and to enable them to perform such work under conditions providing a high standard of living and employment and the requisite security; calls in particular for teleworking which, by definition, transcends national borders, to be subjected to specific analysis;

Paragraph 15
Calls on the Commission and Member States to make strides towards normalising legislation covering the accessibility and availability of the on-line services offered to disabled people in the Union, and to promote the use of new technologies in social and healthcare services provided to senior citizens, dependants and the chronically ill.

Paragraph 16

Calls on the Commission and Member States to draw on new information technology in order to modernise public services and provide better access for citizens and undertakings to information and improved services; draws attention, moreover, to the opportunities afforded by new technologies and the Internet in bringing citizens into closer touch with their representatives in order to make representative democracy more effective, particularly to develop procedures for discussion with and consultation of citizens; calls, therefore, on national parliaments and the European Parliament to make the necessary technologies available to their members with a view to making their activities more transparent and accessible to the voters.

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