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REPORT

on the information society
(2004/2204(INI))

Committee on Industry, Research and Energy

Rapporteur: Catherine Trautmann

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on the information society (2004/2204(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Communication from the Commission (COM(2004) 0111),
 - having regard to the Council conclusions of 9 and 10 December 2004 (15472/04),
 - having regard to the Communication from the Commission "Towards a Global Partnership in the Information Society: Translating the Geneva principles into actions" (COM(2004) 0480),
 - having regard the Council conclusions of 8 and 9 March 2004 (2206/04),
 - having regard to the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action of the WSIS adopted on 12 December 2003,
 - having regard to UNESCO Resolution 32C/34 of 17 October 2003 on the Desirability of Drawing up an International Standard-setting Instrument on Cultural Diversity,
 - having regard to the UNESCO Executive Board's Preliminary Study of 12 March 2003 on the Technical and Legal Aspects Relating to the Desirability of a Standard-setting Instrument on Cultural Diversity,
 - having regard to the opinion in the form of a letter sent by the President of Parliament to the Presidents of the Commission and the Council on 26 November 2003¹,
 - having regard to the Council conclusions of 5 June 2003 (9686/03),
 - having regard to the Communication from the Commission (COM(2003) 0271),
 - having regard to the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity of 2 November 2001,
 - having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy and the opinion of the Committee on Culture and Education (A6-0172/2005),
- A. whereas the Tunis Summit constitutes an essential second phase for the promotion of ICTs as a factor for sustainable development and shared growth, since poverty means being deprived not only of goods but also of social inclusion,
- B. whereas ICTs constitute a strategic tool for State policies and a prime vector for mutually

¹ Adonis reference: 313638.

beneficial cooperation and research, through the Plan of Action, between developed, emerging and less-developed countries,

- C. whereas ICTs can contribute to global balance as well as to individual progress by helping to achieve the Millennium Objectives,
- D. whereas the decision by UNESCO to adopt a Convention on cultural diversity represents a crucial initiative for developing a more inclusive information society, based on the protection of the diversity of cultural expression, on international cultural exchanges and the promotion of pluralism,
- E. whereas the information society should be open to all, since education and training, health, research and commerce are priority ICT applications which are close to the public,
- F. whereas the rapid growth of ICTs should serve to strengthen democracy and participation by citizens, making them interested parties rather than simply consumers,
- G. whereas the development of ICTs should take place within a framework of independent regulatory authorities, guaranteeing access, freedom of expression and information, cultural diversity and multilingualism,
- H. whereas effectiveness on the part of the European Union derives from coordination of the Member States and the positive involvement of the Commission, in a manner consistent with its political objectives and its commitment to the less-developed countries,
- I. whereas ICTs are an integral part of the knowledge- and information-based society sought by the Lisbon Strategy for the European Union and the Barcelona Declaration,
- J. whereas the Union has a major role to play in narrowing the digital divide in geographical and social terms, through successful internal policies and the development of a partnership associating public authorities, enterprises and civil society,
- K. whereas the Union has instruments at its disposal with which to address the digital divide: development aid policy, international economic and scientific cooperation and financing institutions (EIB),
- L. whereas the EU has demonstrated, by adoption of a common legislative framework for electronic communications, the crucial importance of an open and competitive market to generate investment in new services, and to deliver high-speed connections at affordable prices,
- M. whereas the rights to education and to access to vocational and continuing training are included as basic rights in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the Union,
 - 1. Welcomes the Council's renewed commitment to work towards the success of the second phase of the WSIS;
 - 2. Broadly endorses the proposals made by the Commission, particularly as regards the decisive role of an investment-friendly regulatory framework, ICT applications in priority areas including on-line government, the importance of research and innovation and the

contribution of ICTs to development, and expects the Commission to develop a strategy that complies with the WSIS global action plan to be decided at the Tunis Conference in 2005;

3. Points out that:

- good coordination of the EU Member States facilitated the involvement of the Commission in the WSIS Process, and especially in the Working Group on Internet Governance;
- the Union's experience enables it to make a positive contribution to a regulatory environment conducive to implementation of the Plan of Action;

4. Emphasises that:

- since the development of ICTs might widen the digital divide by favouring those who have access to ICTs and know how to use them, this risk must be taken into consideration in all the actions recommended, by tailoring these to the regional, national or local circumstances;
- since ICTs contribute to competitiveness and to raising the level of knowledge and skills, equal importance should be accorded to the economic and the cultural effects of the development of ICTs, so that this benefits employment, enterprises and social cohesion;
- special attention should be paid to possible problems arising from the concentration of mobile and internet services and their content; urges the Commission to monitor the consequences of such concentration;
- individual access should therefore be developed to the same extent as collective access;
- *e*-Inclusion should centre on accessibility, on the supplying of on-line services (government services, education and continuing training, health and commerce) and on teaching and learning how to use these, with the possibility of the most essential basic services being free of charge on the agreement of all partners, and free and open source software (FLOSS) being one way of gaining access to these services;

5. Stresses:

- the strategic role of R&D at every stage and at every level of the process: development and rolling-out of new technologies, and procedures for comparison and evaluation of the Plan of Action, with the establishing of observatories;
- the need to factor into priority research socio-economic studies enabling an assessment of the human and social impact of access to ICTs;
- the opportunity presented by the current drawing-up of the 7th FPRD and the increase in the research budget;

- the importance of developing local skills and competences by supporting computer science education and research;
- the need to develop entrepreneurial and innovative capacities to enable countries to use ICTs to develop services and systems that directly address their societal needs;

6. Welcomes the:

- emphasis placed by the Commission on the need for all countries to establish independent regulatory bodies and the need for a clear framework of competition law within which investors can participate securely;
- importance given to stepping up international communications, regulatory co-operation and exchanges of best practice;

7. Recommends:

- that the Union and its Member States fast-track the setting-up of ICT research networks, by means of infrastructure instruments such as GEANT, based on centres of excellence or technological platforms and networks of experts and education and continuing training practitioners;
- an active policy of support for the use of common information-based schemes to disseminate research results in the fields for which they prove useful and which benefit from public funding;
- that public decision-makers and representatives of civil society and the private sector have an input into this where appropriate;

8. Calls on the Union and Member States:

- to view the WSIS as a spur for cooperation in traditional areas of geographical or historical proximity (Mediterranean, ACP, etc) and for new cooperation with developing countries;
- to take into account, as a priority, the infrastructure and training requirements of the LDCs;
- to take into consideration local and regional knowledge and know-how in cooperation centring on practices and contents;
- to make sure that the EU's efforts help ensure the balance between economic growth, competitiveness and employment on the one hand and social and environmental sustainability on the other;
- to make use of flexible forms of open public-private partnership (regions, States, local authorities, enterprises, associations and NGOs), involving institutional sources of financing, such as the EIB, or private ones;
- to establish a working group with Member States' regulatory authorities to promote

effective integrated and independent regulatory models, and to share experience of successful market opening measures that have encouraged investment and lowered consumer prices;

9. Notes with interest the establishing of a voluntary financing fund while also pointing out that it is not a substitute for the necessary harnessing of financing already existing or to be created;
10. Suggests that a process of reflection on new measures be launched in order to optimise the resources contributed by cooperation programmes and the EDF, such as the re-use of unspent appropriations to supplement the Plan of Action;
11. Considers that the development of internet governance is a key to the success of the WSIS and should be pursued to a timetable compatible with the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action;
12. Emphasises, however, that an international and independent internet governance system should be maintained;
13. Emphasises that accessibility and investment in ICTs depends on the stability and reliability of the internet;
14. Recalls that the challenge involved in developing the information society is to use information and communication technology to enhance the effective implementation of human rights standards at the international, regional and national levels;
15. Stresses that digital literacy programmes are essential to build up a global area of freedom and security where citizens, who are potential consumers of information, enjoy full rights of citizenship; notes that education, including education in human rights, is central to an inclusive information society;
16. Expects the Tunis Summit:
 - to facilitate progress towards a common definition of internet governance and a more representative method of organisation of the partner countries;
 - to deal collectively with subjects of general interest connected with management of the internet (domain names, address allocation), and to strengthen international cooperation in the fields of internet security and abuse (including spamming) and in the combating of cyber-crime (including child pornography), and attempts to restrict pluralism, freedom of expression and respect for human rights;
 - to clarify responsibilities, including public responsibilities, in particular:
 - to factor intellectual property and cultural diversity into the framing of the new governance structure;
 - to ensure the neutrality and interoperability of digital technologies and platforms;
 - to foster technological, economic and cultural exchanges within a framework of

fairly-regulated competition;

17. Calls on the Council and the Commission to take account of its recommendations and to continue to involve it in the follow-up to the WSIS, so as to ensure close concordance between the ambitions expressed by the EU and their implementation, not least budgetary, in Union policies;
18. Welcomes the initiative for the Bilbao meeting promoted by the Digital Cities but points out that an initiative should also be taken to create digital regions;
19. Wishes to strengthen the involvement of European civil society in the build-up to the Tunis Summit;
20. Emphasises the importance of private-sector involvement in the WSIS process;
21. Stresses that innovation in educational systems, lifelong learning programmes and e-Learning initiatives (for both teachers and students) should be fostered and recommends an explicit focus on education, training and tools for the creation of content that reflects cultural diversity;
22. Calls upon Member States to act according to the 'Education for All by 2015' UNESCO goal and to respond to the UNICEF appeals for a greater budget allocation to education in a Pact with Future Generations;
23. Points out that globalisation brings in its wake risks in relation to respect for cultural diversity in terms of languages and identities, and that the information society can also represent an opportunity for the promotion of intercultural dialogue via global networks;
24. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Background to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)

Bridging the digital divide: a development issue

The decision to launch the WSIS was taken with the adoption by the United Nations General Assembly of Resolution 56/183 of 21 December 2001. The first phase of the WSIS (Geneva, 10-12 December 2003) produced a Declaration of Principles for a World Information Society and a Plan of Action.

The Declaration of Principles lays the foundations for a global partnership and sets out extensive areas of cooperation.

The Plan of Action centres on the creation of a favourable environment capable of attracting investment and fostering sustainable growth and inclusive development, on promoting the development of information and communication technologies (ICT) products and services for all (on-line access for all in the fields of government services, education, health and commerce) and on enhancing research and development, infrastructure and research technologies.

The proposals made by the European Commission with regard to the Plan of Action are a response to the remarks and recommendations made to the Council and Commission by the European Parliament's Committee on Industry, Research and Energy in a letter forwarded by the President of Parliament.

The second phase of the WSIS will take place in Tunis on 16-18 November 2005. The objective of this second phase is to translate the principles into tangible results on the basis of the WSIS Plan of Action.

The current Communication from the Commission entitled "Towards a Global Partnership in the Information Society: Translating the Geneva principles into actions. Commission proposals for the second phase of the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS)" forms part of this approach. The most-debated issues concern governance and the financing that will enable the success of the Plan of Action.

A socio-economic component to the digital divide

The aim of the WSIS is to define a common strategy which enables a positive development of the use of information technologies that has beneficial spin-offs for economic prosperity, knowledge advancement, the consolidation of peace and the promotion of democracy.

In order for this objective to be achieved, all the facets of the digital divide need to be taken into consideration. First of all there is the purely technological divide, which is to say inequality of access to one or more ICTs. This inequality of access can stem from inadequate network coverage, or from users being unable to benefit from this access for financial or other

reasons.

The geographical dimension of the digital divide can add to social and cultural inequalities. Indeed, ICTs are unlike other technological goods in that they are vehicles for technical, administrative and political information. The precondition of being able to afford the goods and services in question may therefore combine with the precondition of having sufficient knowledge and skills to make use of these goods and services. This point is all the more important because the rapid growth of ICTs has tended, paradoxically, to exacerbate existing inequalities, since only members of mainstream society have access to them, making it necessary for the public authorities to intervene to rein in this phenomenon.

This conception of the digital divide is from a perspective of development, growth and competitiveness, interdependence and solidarity, and tallies with the United Nations Millennium Goals. The question, therefore, is what kind of world society we want and what place ICTs have in development.

Role of the European Union (EU) to be consolidated

The EU has a vital role to play. It is a political and economic area and the leading contributor to development, *inter alia* through the EDF. It also boasts a culture of balance-seeking, thanks to an economic model that allies technological performance, competitiveness and distribution of prosperity. That is why it must consolidate its geographical influence, and cultural proximity to many parts of the world to enable an opening-up of the information society to all.

Political issues

The development of participatory democracy

The WSIS is pursuing a democratic and remedial role in the bridging of the digital divide. People using ICTs should be involved as users and players, with due respect for intellectual property law. Members of the public should not see the role they play vis-à-vis ICTs reduced to that of simple consumers in thrall to the constant evolution of the techniques served up by the market.

The expected benefits for the public will be in the field of knowledge (skills and mastery of ICTs, communication and information) and the economic and social sphere, through an improvement in the quality of life, with due respect for diversity.

This is why the European Parliament is duty-bound to express an opinion on financing, governance, the selection criteria, programmes and the criteria of the added value contributed by ICTs, and on its commitment to mobilising civil society as regards these themes.

The EU should pursue the objectives of combating poverty, be this cultural or economic, and enhancing health and the environment, from a perspective of sustainable development and with due regard for cultural and linguistic pluralism. This calls for a use of ICTs that combines the principles of pluralism, equitability, freedom and faith in the security of the system.

The EU must play a full role in the debate on new participatory citizenship in a multipolar world. The fact that the Member States have agreed to the active involvement of the European Commission is an undeniable plus that will facilitate the process.

Concomitant political agendas

The EU is pursuing an objective of competitiveness and growth through the knowledge-based society advocated at Lisbon as well as the bridging of the geographical and social digital divide that exists within its borders.

The concomitance of this priority, as stated in EU policy and in the conclusions of the Geneva Summit, presents an opportunity to promote shared development in this field with the countries of the South.

The proposals for the Plan of Action which the Commission has presented in its communication are genuine specifications for a sustainable development that allies technological progress, economic development and the protection of individual rights and freedoms.

Furthermore, the discussions on the UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity are being held in parallel to the preparation of the Tunis Summit. This Convention might be adopted in October 2005, with the WSIS being held in November 2005.

It could be pointed out that the Tunis Summit will present our partners and civil society with an opportunity to verify whether we are matching our words with deeds. The EU must take its place as the indispensable partner of less-advanced and emerging countries.

Issues under discussion

Governance

The issue of governance is still to be resolved and it is important for the Tunis Summit to provide an answer. Good governance in respect of ICTs should result in confidence in them, and in their security. The organisation responsible for governance should be representative of the public and the States. Its role and the responsibilities stemming from this must be clearly defined. Ensuring freedom in the use of ICTs calls for a requisite regulation and penalties in the event of failure to comply with these rules. The EU must work for the development of an international-level monitoring mechanism.

The matters linked to the issue of governance can be divided into two categories. The first of these concerns the representativeness and legitimacy of the organisation responsible for governance, since the mandate of the ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers) is about to expire. There is therefore a need for proposals to be worked out on management of the internet and for a definition of "governance" to be found, in respect of the various players involved (governments, NGOs, private sector, civil society), their role and their obligations. The second category concerns the balance between guaranteeing freedom of expression and the broad opening-up of the internet with an eye to democracy and interchanges on the one hand, and the integration of security issues (transactions, data

protection) and regulation on the other.

Financing

The preparation of the Tunis Summit has coincided with the relaunch of the Lisbon Strategy, the establishing of the new financial perspective for the EU, and the drawing-up of, among other things, the *e*-programmes, the 7th FPRD and MEDIA. It is clearly necessary and valid to seek to achieve synergies between these programmes.

Financing of the Plan of Action is vital to the success of the process. Different modes of financing should be considered as both facilities and services must be reasoned for. Since the credibility of the project depends on its financing, it would also be worthwhile to ascertain which of all the EU activities in the programmes concerned with ICT are likely to benefit development and which appropriations would have ICT added-value, not least in the context of the EDF.

A partnership method beneficial to enterprises and individuals

It is also necessary to take into account all the possible levels of action (EU, States, local and regional authorities - *inter alia* through a harnessing of the Digital Cities network - and private enterprises). Likewise, public-private partnerships are needed in order to achieve the results expected. The benchmarking performed in Tunis will enable the most worthwhile courses of action to be pinpointed.

There is a need for large-scale action and to move beyond micro-projects. Project evaluation should bear on the benefits to the community and the structural impact of projects, just as there is a need to assess, within the EU, the contribution made by ICTs to social and geographical cohesion. In this case, it is within the Structural Funds that a ICT lever effect might be sought.

The idea of a state fund for mandatory financing has been abandoned. On the other hand, 14 March 2005 marked the setting-up in Geneva of the Digital Solidarity Fund. This relies on a voluntary contribution and is complementary to the existing mechanisms. It is a worthwhile tool, but is not exempt from criticism and is not a cure-all. Other avenues are still to be explored, including the allocation of unused development appropriations, taking a lead from the discussions concerning the Growth Adjustment Fund.

An incentive to pursue the process

Successful implementation of the Plan of Action will depend to a great extent on the ability to assess requirements in terms of ICT development, to anticipate changes in the digital divide and in user patterns and to adapt education and training measures and, lastly, will reside in the ability to adopt instruments for the economic and social comparison and evaluation of the Information Society. The EU must harness all the possibilities offered by R&D to equip the WSIS with observatories and multi-disciplinary research platforms. It should undertake to itself perform an assessment of its activities, by incorporating this into the 7th FPRD and the articulation of the *e*-programmes.

In the face of the rapid transformation of the world information society through the acceleration of technological convergence, and the widening of inequalities, it is only through the international political will for effective cooperation that the time needed to bridge the digital divide can be reduced. This could not be achieved through the market and technologies alone, but they can make a contribution if the international community proffers an 'intelligent' development plan.

21.4.2005

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON CULTURE AND EDUCATION

for the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy

on the information society
(2004/2204(INI))

Draftswoman: María Badía i Cutchet

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Culture and Education calls on the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Stresses that capacity building and digital literacy programmes are essential to build up a global area of freedom and security where citizens will, as well as being potential consumers of information, be guaranteed full rights of citizenship;
2. Recalls that the challenge involved in developing the information society is to use information and communication technology to enhance the effective implementation of human rights standards at the international, regional and national levels, which implies bringing people and countries closer to the human right standards laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the two International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR) and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR);
3. Takes the view that full citizenship in the information society means guaranteeing all people the following basic rights: 1) equitable, affordable and effective access to basic technologies, taking into account the specificities of minority, rural and peripheral communities; 2) access to public services at all levels of governance in the most effective, user-friendly and transparent way; 3) access to adequate media education and literacy at all levels of the education system and as part of lifelong learning; 4) the opportunity to participate in transparent and comprehensible political decision and policy-making processes, so as to ensure that such processes are carried out in a form that is transparent and comprehensible for the public;
4. Recommends the use of open-source IT platforms, since these ensure the accessibility and permanence of public data;
5. Notes that education, including education in human rights, is central to an inclusive

information society, and represents a civic value in itself for a global community of shared values and on human rights;

6. Stresses that innovation in educational systems, lifelong learning programmes and e-Learning initiatives (for both teachers and students) should be fostered as a key factors to transform information into knowledge with an impact on employment and economic growth;
7. Recommends an explicit focus on education, training and tools for the creation of content, particularly content that reflects cultural diversity, as well as the introduction at primary-school level of education and training that enables young people to use all media, particularly digital media, critically and creatively;
8. Calls upon Member States to act according to the "Education for All by 2015" UNESCO goal and to respond to the UNICEF appeals for a greater budget allocation to education in a Pact with Future Generations;
9. Points out that globalisation brings in its wake risks in relation to respect for cultural diversity in terms of languages and identities, and that the information society can also represent an opportunity for the promotion of intercultural dialogue via global networks;
10. Welcomes the decision by UNESCO to adopt a Convention on cultural diversity as a crucial initiative for developing a more inclusive information society, based on the protection of the diversity of cultural expression, on international cultural exchanges and the promotion of pluralism;
11. Calls for the establishment of minimum standards regulating access to ICT and facilitating e-learning and the creation of global e-schools.

PROCEDURE

Title	The information society		
Procedure number	2004/2204(INI)		
Committee responsible	ITRE		
Committee asked for its opinion Date announced in plenary	CULT 18.11.2004		
Enhanced cooperation	No		
Drafts(wo)man Date appointed	María Badía i Cutchet 25.11.2004		
Discussed in committee	25.11.2004	1.2.2005	15.3.2005
Date suggestions adopted	21.4.2005		
Result of final vote	for:	28	
	against:	1	
	abstentions:		
Members present for the final vote	María Badía i Cutchet, Christopher Beazley, Guy Bono, Marie-Hélène Descamps, Jolanta Dičkutė, Věra Flasarová, Milan Gaľa, Claire Gibault, Lissy Gröner, Luis Francisco Herrero-Tejedor, Ruth Hieronymi, Manolis Mavrommatis, Marianne Mikko, Zdzisław Zbigniew Podkański, Christa Prets, Karin Resetarits, Nikolaos Sifunakis, Helga Trüpel, Henri Weber, Thomas Wise, Tomáš Zatloukal		
Substitutes present for the final vote	Ivo Belet, Michael Cramer, Ignasi Guardans Cambó, András Gyürk, Małgorzata Handzlik, Gyula Hegyi, Nina Škottová, Witold Tomczak		
Substitutes under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote			

PROCEDURE

Title	The information society		
Procedure number	2004/2204(INI)		
Basis in Rules of Procedure	Rule 45		
Committee responsible Date authorisation announced in plenary	ITRE 18.11.2004		
Committee(s) asked for opinion(s) Date announced in plenary	CULT 18.11.2004	DEVE 18.11.2004	
Not delivering opinion(s) Date of decision	DEVE 19.1.2005		
Enhanced cooperation	0.0.0000		
Motion(s) for resolution(s) included in report			
Rapporteur(s) Date appointed	Catherine Trautmann 24.11.2004		
Previous rapporteur(s)			
Discussed in committee	1.2.2005	26.4.2005	24.5.2005
Date adopted	24.5.2005		
Result of final vote	for:	42	
	against:	1	
	abstentions:	0	
Members present for the final vote	Ivo Belet, Jan Březina, Jerzy Buzek, Joan Calabuig Rull, Pilar del Castillo Vera, Jorgo Chatzimarkakis, Den Dover, Lena Ek, Adam Gierek, Umberto Guidoni, András Gyürk, Fiona Hall, David Hammerstein Mintz, Ján Hudacký, Romana Jordan Cizelj, Werner Langen, Anne Laperrouze, Nils Lundgren, Angelika Niebler, Reino Paasilinna, Pier Antonio Panzeri, Miloslav Ransdorf, Teresa Riera Madurell, Mechtild Rothe, Andres Tarand, Britta Thomsen, Patrizia Toia, Catherine Trautmann, Claude Turmes, Nikolaos Vakalis, Alejo Vidal-Quadras Roca		
Substitutes present for the final vote	María del Pilar Ayuso González, Daniel Caspary, Zdzisław Kazimierz Chmielewski, Neena Gill, Françoise Grossetête, Edit Herczog, Peter Liese, Vittorio Prodi, John Purvis, Manuel António dos Santos, Esko Seppänen, Hannes Swoboda		
Substitutes under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote			
Date tabled – A6	31.5.2005		A6-0172/2005