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Committee on Culture and Education

2005/2167(INI)

24.2.2006

OPINION

of the Committee on Culture and Education

for the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy

on a European Information Society for growth and employment
(2005/2167(INI))

Draftsman: Giulietto Chiesa

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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. Maintains that, because of the extraordinary technological development which has radically transformed them, the media in present-day societies are now able to decisively influence the ideas and behaviour of citizens and are therefore intrinsic to the workings of democracy in each and every country, and that e-accessibility is necessarily founded on human rights; calls on the Commission to respect these fundamental values of the audio-visual model in its i2010 Initiative, and to see that justice is done to the special role which the audio-visual media, with their dual nature as economic and cultural goods, have to play in promoting cultural diversity;
2. Stresses that the i2010 programme represents a decisive phase in the emergence of the information society which should enable everyone to be a participant through access to technology and knowledge, a user through interactivity and the new forms of social interaction offered by networks, and a critical citizen with freedom of choice;
3. Stresses the importance of digital convergence and advocates the removal of obstacles to the economic, social and cultural development of individual States, an objective formulated at the World Summit on the Information Society (Tunis Commitment, 18 November 2005);
4. Considers that any further proposals should contain clear definitions of the terms 'information society services', 'media', 'media services' and 'audio-visual services' used by the Commission;
5. Points out that the advent of the Information Society is imposing new responsibilities on those who provide information and communication, and is creating new ways for citizens, from particularly vulnerable population groups (elderly people, people with disabilities, those living alone or in social difficulties, etc.) to exercise their rights, which enable them to benefit to the full from the spread of new information and communication technologies (ICT);
6. Takes the view that the current debate on the future of the Union provides a very good opportunity to discuss institutional matters with a view to consolidating and clarifying the European institutional model and above all for the institutions, especially the Commission, to manifest their interest in the wider issues of democracy and in the concerns of citizens;
7. Proposes that, to achieve good governance and ensure full citizenship to all European individuals in the Information Society, a Charter of eRights should progressively be adopted by public administrations in Europe as a shared set of principles and guidelines defining the framework within which all citizens can enjoy those rights; proposes that such principles be translated into implementation actions and programmes at the national

and regional level to achieve a competitive and competent society in the digital age and ensure social and territorial cohesion;

8. Notes that, since the switchover from analogue to digital encourages a proliferation of forms of delivery, it should take place using coordinated policies and an appropriate legal framework so as to counteract the uniformity which could result from media concentration;
9. Notes that fair and non-discriminatory access to transparent, diverse and complete information as well as high quality services, in a secure environment, via any telecommunication service or platform - from the Internet to mobile phones - based on open and interoperable standards is a right essential to the enjoyment of active citizenship in the Information Society age, that should be included in a Charter of eRights;
10. States that the Charter should also include rights for all citizens to be able to understand and interact with the administrations involved and therefore to participate equally in decision-making and policy-making processes; considers that rationalisation, re-engineering, transparency and access of and to public services are fundamental prerequisites for the development of a participative citizenship;
11. Stresses how important it is, in order to ensure non-discriminatory access to information society content and prevent a digital divide within the EU, that the technical requirements should be met; reiterates, therefore, its calls for the establishment of open, interoperable standards, particularly in the field of application program interfaces (API) pursuant to Article 18 of Directive 2002/21/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 March 2002 on a common regulatory framework for electronic communications networks and services (Framework Directive);
12. Urges the Commission and Member States to help ensure that technology is more accessible for citizens and meets the moral demands of society;
13. Points to the importance of guaranteeing a universal right of access to the necessary media education and literacy skills – especially in electronic media that convey images – and in the new interactive digital technologies in order to avert new forms of social and cultural exclusion; and considers that equal access to a free-to-air media environment with a varied range of high-quality content is a fundamental right to be enjoyed by European citizens; stresses in this connection the role played by public service broadcasting content in promoting social cohesion, democratic discourse and pluralism in Europe, and insists that the performance of these tasks must continue to be guaranteed in future;
14. Stresses that the production of content which respects cultural and linguistic diversity presents an opportunity to encourage new skills and new jobs, particularly in the design and creation sectors, throughout the 25 Member States, and that these new occupations should be able to develop within a harmonised regulatory framework which guarantees them economic security and legal certainty;
15. Stresses the major role of specialised education in information and communication technology (ICT), both at school and in the context of lifelong education in particular for

women, ensuring that people are kept up to date and able to make use of modern technologies for their professional and personal needs;

16. Believes that, as advocated in Council of Europe Recommendation 1466 (2000), media education should serve to provide citizens, from their earliest youth, with the technical or other wherewithal to bring a critical interpretation to bear on, and use with a view to deriving personal benefit from, the ever-expanding volume of information and communication; maintains in addition that, helped by a learning process of this kind, citizens will be in a position to formulate messages and select the media best suited to impart them and thus become able to exercise their right to freedom of information and expression to the full;
17. Believes that public service delivery in the Information Society should clearly reflect the increasingly sophisticated needs of individual users and groups and therefore be based on an adequate response by the supplying industry to such needs with a view to effective and customised service design;
18. Considers that the implementation of the i201 programme must be accompanied by an analysis of the economic, cultural and social effects of the move to the information society; considers that particular account must be taken of this in the European research programmes (Financial Perspectives on R & D and on Innovation and Competitiveness);
19. Welcomes the opportunity which this reflection period offers the European institutions to legislate in such a way as to meet the wider concerns of the public and to reflect them in their policies;
20. Points to the importance of creating an appropriate environment for small and medium enterprises, the backbone of the European economy, to enable them to exploit their full potential of innovation and creativity;
21. Calls upon the Commission to invest its research resources in assessing the impact of the Information Society on European society and culture;
22. Urges that, in the era of convergence, mobility and interactivity in all political decisions including those within the EU – whether in the setting of the regulatory framework to govern the services and content transmitted by the new media, or in the fields of infrastructure measures or of competition law and subsidies – the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, which not only lays down an obligation on the Member States to protect cultural diversity and promote multiculturalism but also enshrines the dual nature of the audio-visual media as both economic and a cultural goods, should be fully complied with; recalls that the information society and properly managed ICT may prove extremely positive in strengthening and protecting cultural diversity and multilingualism;
23. Notes that ICT and the information society, if skilfully managed, may help to narrow social differences, bridge the digital divide and encourage social and territorial cohesion;

24. Notes that the Commission is required to guarantee and promote media pluralism by interpreting and implementing the provisions which concern the electronic media infrastructure;
25. Draws attention to its repeated request to the Commission to draw up a green paper on concentration of media ownership and respect for the principles of freedom of information and pluralism, bearing in mind that this would encourage debate on the underlying issues at a time when technologies and the market are undergoing sweeping transformations; regrets that this point is not covered in the i2010 work plan;
26. Calls on the Commission to establish a regulatory framework for the internet, given that it is the fundamental vehicle for an economy based on information;
27. Welcomes the Commission proposal to launch a safe information society strategy in 2006 seeking to increase both investor and user confidence in internet services and their reliability as a means of addressing the issues of fraud (affecting purchases), illegal and harmful content (concerning the protection of minors and human dignity and the protection of privacy) and technological shortcomings (so as to ensure the efficient and effective use of ICT).

PROCEDURE

Title	European Information Society for growth and employment
Procedure number	2005/2167(INI)
Committee responsible	ITRE
Committee asked for its opinion Date announced in plenary	CULT 29.09.2005
Enhanced cooperation	No
Drafts(wo)man Date appointed	Giulietto Chiesa 11.07.2005
Discussed in committee	23.11.2005
Date suggestions adopted	23.1.2005
Result of final vote	for: 24 against: 0 abstentions: 2
Members present for the final vote	Christopher Beazley, Ivo Belet, Giovanni Berlinguer, Guy Bono, Marie-Hélène Descamps, Jolanta Dičkutė, Milan Gaľa, Claire Gibault, Vasco Graça Moura, Luis Herrero-Tejedor, Bernat Joan i Mari, Manolis Mavrommatis, Doris Pack, Zdzisław Zbigniew Podkański, Christa Prets, Matteo Salvini, Pál Schmitt, Nikolaos Sifunakis, Hannu Takkula, Thomas Wise, Tomáš Zatloukal
Substitutes present for the final vote	Emine Bozkurt, Alejandro Cercas, Erna Hennicot-Schoepges, Catherine Trautmann, Jaroslav Zvěřina
Substitutes under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote	