

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3599/03
by Armando Cossutta (GUE/NGL)
to the Commission

Subject: Payable Internet services

One of the main Italian providers has made its Internet and e-mail services subject to payment since 11 November this year. From now on all those who want to continue using its services will have to pay an annual fee of around EUR 30.

This is a worrying sign of the direction in which Internet providers are moving. There is a tendency towards privatising the Net, which runs counter to the programme announced by the European Council in Lisbon. Furthermore, users only knew about the introduction of the new system when they were denied access to their own data and were asked to pay for the service, without a clear warning from the provider.

1. What steps will the Commission take to ensure free access to the Internet for European citizens?
2. Does the Commission not consider that the behaviour of the Italian service provider referred to above is a blatant abuse and detrimental to the people who trusted it to handle their private correspondence?
3. Does the Commission not consider that this action is contrary to the proposals announced by the European Council in Lisbon regarding the creation of a knowledge-based society?