

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0895/09  
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to the Commission

Subject: Microsoft and the Commission's subsidy application forms

On 15 January 2008, the Commission sent Microsoft a statement of objections concerning its dominant position, which, it said, was restricting innovation and consumer choice. It stated that, because of the inclusion of Internet Explorer in Microsoft Windows, 90% of computers used Internet Explorer as their browser. Web designers and software developers therefore geared their products primarily to Internet Explorer. This gave Internet Explorer a competitive advantage which distorted the market. Accordingly, the linkage between Internet Explorer and Microsoft Windows must be abandoned. At the same time the Commission's own subsidy application procedures more or less compel applicants for subsidies to use this Microsoft software, further consolidating Microsoft's dominance.

Is it necessary for the Commission's products and services to be accessible for everybody on the Internet?

If so, is the Commission aware that it makes subsidy application and evaluation forms available on the Internet only in Microsoft Word format (e.g. for the Youth in Action programme and the Europe Fund 2009)?

If so, how does the Commission view the fact that it virtually compels organisations and consumers to use Microsoft Word in order to complete these subsidy application and evaluation forms because alternative programs do not work and give rise to errors?

Does the Commission also perceive the inconsistency between its justified dispute with Microsoft and efforts to make Internet users less dependent on Microsoft products, on the one hand, and its own failure to provide alternatives to Microsoft programs, on the other?

If so, will the Commission itself within eight weeks set an example by altering these forms and no longer compelling users to use Microsoft products on Commission websites?