

ORAL QUESTION O-0121/01

pursuant to Rule 42 of the Rules of Procedure  
by Angelika Niebler, on behalf of the PPE-DE Group  
to the Commission

Subject: Stimulating Internet access

The eEurope initiative and the eEurope action plan launched by the EU and all of the Commission's follow-up communications focus on one key point where action is crucial if the Information Society in Europe is to be promoted: cheaper Internet access.

Competitive flat-rate pricing for Internet access has proved to be very beneficial for increased use of the Internet (e.g. in the US and UK). If users are not charged per minute, they spend more time using the Internet and become more familiar with commercial-, cultural- and research- related on-line activities. Flat-rate pricing also accelerates consumer demand for broadband access and services.

A competitive market for flat-rate Internet offerings depends on the ability of Internet Service Providers (IPSS) to provide flat-rate pricing to their customers. The latter is possible if IPSSs have access to capacity-based interconnection instead of per minute interconnection.

1. Does the Commission agree that the market conditions are now in place for the encouragement of flat rate Internet services, and that investments in the necessary infrastructure are being encouraged?
2. Are there further steps that the Commission and Member States could take to encourage these developments, particularly the availability of capacity-based interconnections?

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Forwarded: 17.12.2001

Deadline for reply: 24.12.2001