

European Council: A Strategic Goal for the Next Decade

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The European Council held an extraordinary meeting on 23-24 March 2000 in Lisbon under the title "Employment, economic reforms and social cohesion - for a Europe of innovation and knowledge". The main reason for this meeting was to redefine the European strategy for growth, competitiveness and employment as part of a knowledge-based economy.

In its conclusions, the Presidency stressed the importance of the development of the information society. The knowledge-based economy is considered to be a future engine for growth, competitiveness and job development. It will also improve the citizens' quality of life and the environment. In order to prepare for the transition to a competitive, dynamic and knowledge-based economy and society, the creation of conditions for e-commerce and Internet to flourish is a fundamental issue. To this effect, access to the communications infrastructure must be inexpensive, and all citizens must have the skills needed to make use of the information society. Info-exclusion must be prevented by different means of access, and the fight against illiteracy must be strengthened. Fast connections to Internet, predictable and confidence-inspiring e-commerce rules and the maintaining of the European lead in key technology areas should be secured. Due to the speed of technological change, new and more flexible regulatory approaches are required for the future.

Moreover, the Council and the Commission are invited to draw up a comprehensive eEurope Action Plan for the forthcoming European Council in June 2000. This task must be carried out by using an open method of coordination based on the benchmarking of national initiatives, combined with the Commission's recent eEurope initiative as well as its communication "Strategies for jobs in the Information Society".

The European Council calls particularly on: the Council of the European Union along with the European Parliament to adopt during 2000 pending legislation on the legal framework for electronic commerce, on copyright and related rights, on e-money, on the distance selling of financial services, on jurisdiction and the enforcement of judgments, and the dual-use export control regime; the Commission and the Council of the European Union to consider how to promote consumer confidence in electronic commerce, in particular through alternative dispute resolution systems; the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament to conclude in 2001 work on the legislative proposals announced by

the Commission following its 1999 review of the telecoms regulatory framework; the Member States and, where appropriate, the European Community to ensure that the frequency requirements for future mobile communications systems are met in a timely and efficient manner, and to fully integrate and liberalize telecommunications markets by the end of 2001; the Member States, together with the European Commission to work towards introducing greater competition in local access networks before the end of 2000 and unbundling the local loop in order to help bring about a substantial reduction in the costs of using the Internet; the Member States to ensure that all schools in the European Union have access to the Internet and multimedia resources by the end of 2001, and that all the teachers needed are skilled in the use of the Internet and multimedia resources by the end of 2002; the Member States to ensure generalised electronic access to main basic public services by 2003; the European Community and the Member States, with the support of the EIB, to make available in all European countries low cost, high-speed interconnected networks for Internet access and foster the development of state-of-the-art information technology and other telecom networks as well as the content for those networks.

Presidency Conclusions - Lisbon European Council, 23-24 March 2000.

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/lis1_en.htm

