European Commission: Communication on Challenges for Europe's Information Society Beyond 2005

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The European Commission recently adopted a Communication which aims to launch a broad policy debate on an EU Information Society strategy up to 2010. This strategy will succeed the current eEurope Action plan which runs until the end of 2005 (see IRIS 2002-7: 4). In its Communication, the Commission reconfirms ICT as a key element of the Lisbon strategy and stresses its importance for overall economic performance and for the quality of life of EU citizens. In order to promote a wider use of ICT, it identifies a series of key policy challenges that the EU faces in the last five years of the Lisbon agenda. Firstly, there is a need to adjust current policies to new developments in the EU and the other world ICT markets and to participate in decisions at the global level. Secondly, it is deemed equally important to safeguard a strong presence in research and development. As regards the EC regulatory framework for electronic communications, full implementation by Member States and appropriateness of its content in the light of rapidly evolving technologies need to be ensured. As to other ICT related regulations, concerted action would have to cover the fields of protection of copyright, rules applying to mobile and micro payments, the protection of privacy and the needs of law enforcement agencies. Furthermore, particular attention has to be paid to the link with other EU Information Society initiatives, to issues of Internet security and the access of small businesses to competent, affordable and targeted support services. Finally, governments should adopt a comprehensive approach to promote efficiency and effectiveness in the public sector, while adapting on-line services to the needs of businesses and citizens. The Commission considers the following issues as relevant for a coherent and forward-looking European Information Society policy beyond 2005:

- support content providers and promote the emergence of innovative services in order to overcome regulatory and marketplace-related barriers,

- deal with e-inclusion ensure equal access to and availability/affordability of ICT services for all at national, regional and local level and face challenges of wide use of ICT by citizens, particularly digital literacy;

- focus on wider, efficient and effective use of ICT in public services;

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- strengthen ICT component during learning and training processes, make ICT skills available to all citizens, apply ICT in the workplace in order to raise efficiency, improve working quality of work and create better jobs;

- ICT as a key industrial sector;

- interoperability;

- enhance trust in the use of Internet through measures of security, privacy protection, (intellectual) property protection and take into account the dependability of systems and networks;

- exploitation of ICT by business. On the basis of its Communication, the European Commission now launches a public on-line consultation round on the challenges which will lead to the adoption of a new strategy during 2005.

"Challenges for the European Information Society beyond 2005", Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, COM (2004) 757 final

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