Information society, eEurope: Commission initiative for European Council in Lisbon, 23-24 March 2000

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The Council had an open debate on the information and knowledge society. In order to structure the debate, the Presidency had prepared a questionnaire for the Ministers to discuss which focused on : - the targets set by the Commission in its eEurope communication in the field of RTD, and in particular on the role of information and communication technologies for the realisation of the European Research Area, the priorities for action in the short to medium-term in order to achieve the objectives set out in the two Commission communications, the interrelation between national and Community efforts in this area - the ways in which the eEurope and European Research Area initiatives could best be exploited to ensure effective networking of European researchers; - the creation, by the end of 2001, of a high-speed transeuropean network linking research institutions, universities, libraries, scientific centres and, progressively, schools; - to what extent electronic networks can be used to achieve the goals of making science more attractive to young people, bridging the "skills gap" and creating an information and knowledge society for all, thus preventing exclusion; the Commission's proposed eEurope action plan aimed at ensuring - the achievement of the targets set by the Lisbon Summit by defining the actions and measures to be taken. The President summed up the debate by noting that: - all delegations agreed that the relationship between the European science and technology policy and the development of the knowledge and information society was of vital importance and a closer link between the two would have to be established; - there was a clear need to avoid possible social and economic exclusion resulting from the unequal access by European citizens to electronic information systems.