Electronic commerce, a European initiative

1997/2061(COS) - 29/10/1997 - Economic and Social Committee: opinion, report

The ESC will support the Commission's efforts to formulate a set of Community principles for developing the European Information Society and promoting electronic commerce in the EU so that Europe can live up to both its international role and its responsibilities towards European citizens. The regulatory framework must not simply be an instrument for promoting electronic commerce; it must also be a means of preventing mass unemployment. The following basic conclusions have been drawn from working on the text: - Electronic commerce presents a challenge both for the productive sectors of the economy (commerce, industry, crafts, banking, etc.) and for all users and consumers. The public sector is called upon to play a key role in promoting electronic commerce. Security problems must be solved as soon as possible so that transactions are reliable and justifiable concerns about the protection of personal data can be allayed. SMEs should be able to benefit from electronic commerce on an equal basis by taking advantage of the opportunities that it now offers and modernizing their operations. The Commission must set up without delay the necessary lifelong training programmes so that employers and workers can cope with the new working conditions. The European Union should take part in the global dialogue with uniform, integrated positions which safeguard European interests. - The European Union must directly promote research and development programmes for new technologies.