Education, training and new technologies: eLearning initiative and action plan 2001-2004

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PURPOSE: to present a Commission Communication on e-Learning - Designing tomorrow's education.
CONTENT: the Lisbon European Council 23-24 March 2000 underlined the importance of incorporating new information and communication technologies in the EU's education and training systems. The eEurope Action Plan developed as a result, followed by the eLearning initiative. eLearning brings together the different education components of eEurope actions, of the employment guidelines of the Luxembourg process and in other Community actions, such as, for example, research to ensure their global coherence and their effective presentation to the education world. Against this background, the Communication outlines four main lines of action on which the eLearning initiative is based: - equipment: the efforts here will concentrate on multimedia computers, for the connection and improvement of access to digital networks in the different forums of learning, training and knowledge; - training at all levels: this must focus on the development of the skills required to use the new technologies. It must be an integral part of initial and continuing training for each teacher and trainer; - the development of good quality multimedia services and contents: by the end of 2002, the capacity of the vocational guidance services should be substantially strengthened so as to allow everyone to access information on initial and continuing training opportunities in the new technologies and on the skills and qualifications required on the jobs market and be able to pilot or adjust their training and career pathways; - the development and networking of centres for acquiring knowledge: this refers to transforming teaching and training centres into centres for acquiring knowledge which are versatile and accessible to everyone and, of course, equipping them and training their teachers. With regard to the framework for implementation, the Commission will prepare a framework for attaining the goals of eLearning. In particular, benchmarking of education and training policy actions will be carried out in line with the Lisbon conclusions by using indicators which have been defined in the Luxembourg process and in the eEurope action plan. The Commission's role is to support the Member States as they implement the eLearning initiative and to co-ordinate and strengthen their efforts, mainly be co-financing certain activities. In October 2000, a Commission working document will comprehensively describe all the actions planned at Community level to support the eLearning initiative. The eLearning initiative should be integrated into the European Social Agenda to be adopted by the Nice European Council in December 2000. To achieve the eLearning Community framework of support, the Commission will give special focus to the following areas: the recognition of qualifications, language learning, education in communication and the media and virtual mobility. At the Community level, the Commission will undertake specific actions bringing together the players involved in education, training and culture through the following means: strengthening of the cooperation developed inthe framework of the European Schoolnet; creation of European gateways; general framework for discussion; setting up observation mechanisms; training network to provide trainers; setting up an eLearning Internet site; promoting employability and finally, stimulating personal fulfilment and motivation among 'learners'.