

Information society: multiannual programme to promote the linguistic diversity of Europe (MLIS)

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The Commission Communication examines the multi-annual programme to promote the linguistic diversity of the Community in the information society (MLIS). MLIS was set up in 1996 and was designed to run for a three year period. It was allocated a budget of EUR 15 million and since its inception has co-financed 35 projects involving nearly 190 organisations. Under current restructuring plans, MLIS will be incorporated, along with INFO 2000 objectives, into the new eContent programme. The following action lines for MLIS were established: - To support the creation of a framework of services for European language resources; - To encourage the use of modern language technologies, resources and standards; - To promote the use of advanced language tools in the Community and member States' public sector. The evaluators report concludes that whilst expectations are high, both amongst programme co-ordinators and those on the ground, the limited budget available for the MLIS programme has hindered its full potential. It was also noted that many of the projects remain incomplete and will need to be reassessed under the objectives of the new eContent programme. MLIS projects were further overshadowed by the existence of other EU linguistic programmes - notably in the field of the Fifth Framework programme. In light of past experience the assessment report proposes nine recommendations, which the Commission Communication agrees to take on board. Most importantly it proposes the establishment of an EU language policy framework, the establishment of a co-ordinated language based website incorporating all of the EU's multi-media linguistic programmes and the establishment of value for money benchmarks when evaluating future projects.