Information Society in Europe: multiannual community programme 1998-2002 PROMISE

1996/0283(CNS) - 27/06/2001 - Follow-up document

This evaluation report has been submitted to the committee of representatives of the Member States established in accordance with article 5 of the PROMISE Council Decision in order to assist the Commission in the implementation of the programme. The committee has examined the report and discussed the conclusions and recommendations intensively. The Commission's responses to the main recommendations of the evaluation panel are largely based on the results of the discussions with the PROMISE committee. In its overall appraisal the evaluation panel states that there are clear examples of effectiveness of the programme, in particular, the web activities, information and data gathering as well as the targeted initiative to develop and spread good practices amongst SMEs. The panel recognises also some areas which have potential and underlines specifically the Information Society Forum. The panel states further that there was clear progress towards a more strategic approach in the execution of the programme through focussing on multipliers and leverages. The Council Decision setting up the PROMISE programme as such is called enthusiastic and all encompassing, a cover-all response·, which the panel could only applaud. On the other hand, the panel observed that the scope of the Council Decision is simply too wide and the stated objectives cannot be achieved with such amounts of money. Moreover, the Council Decision failed to anticipate the pace of change in the Information Society. The panel states further that PROMISE lacked clear links to the Commission's Information Society policy objectives and that the work-programmes were too disperse and clearly lacking focus. The main recommendation of the panel to cope with these weaknesses is to set up a strategic focus, by giving PROMISE specific policy directions to reflect policy priorities. PROMISE should have quantifiable goals and concentrate on proven strengths, in particular by facilitating networking and by providing access to information. There are quite a number of specific recommendations of the expert panel dealing with management and implementation aspects as well as with each type of PROMISE activities (awareness raising, optimising socio-economic benefits of IS and the global dimension). The Commission shares to a large extent the views expressed and the basic analysis, which lead to the panel's detailed and very valuable recommendations. However, most of the specific recommendations concern activities, which have been discontinued in the meantime. Others deal with organisational aspects, which have lost relevance since the Information Society Directorate General was re-organised on 1.12.2000. Under these circumstances it does not appear very useful to discuss individual specific recommendations of the panel. The panel's recommendations have led to a serious reflection on the future of PROMISE. Taking account of parallel developments in the Community's Information Society policy, the Commission has decided to re-focus the activities of PROMISE in support of the eEurope policy initiative and to rationalize the PROMISE management.