Information society, eEurope 2005: action plan, Seville European Council, 21-22 June 2002

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PURPOSE : to present a Communication from the Commission on the Action Plan entitled "eEurope 2005: An information society for all" to be presented in view of the Sevilla European Council, 21/22 June 2002. CONTENT : the new Action Plan aims to provide a favourable environment for private investment and for the creation of new jobs, to boost productivity, to modernise public services and notably education, and last but not least to give everyone the opportunity to participate in the global information society. This is the key message behind this action plan. eEurope 2005 is a crucial step towards the 'Lisbon goal' of turning Europe into the world's most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy by 2010. It represents a focusing of our activities on those areas where public authorities can improve the environment for investment and ensure that the benefits of the Information Society are felt by all Europeans in the years to come. Broadband-enabled communication will bring social as well as economic benefits. It will contribute to inclusion, cohesion and cultural diversity. It offers the potential to improve and simplify the life of all Europeans and to change the way people interact, not just at work, but also with friends, family, commmunity and institutions and the way companies operate. This is what users are interested in and this is where eEurope 2005 starts from. Whereas the earlier eEurope 2002 Action Plan focuses on extending internet connectivity across Europe, eEurope 2005 will concentrate on translating this into improved economic productivity and better, more accessible services for all European citizens, underpinned by secure, widely available broadband infrastructure. During eEurope 2002, progress was made towards the Lisbon goal on a wide front, ranging from a doubling of the proportion of homes with Internet access to the launch of the fastest research backbone network in the world. eEurope 2005 - to be presented to the Seville European Council this June - is more focused, setting the following main goals for Europe by 2005. The Action Plan has two groups of actions that reinforce each other. On the one hand services, applications and content, covering both online public services and e-business. On the other hand the underlying broadband infrastructure and security matters. By 2005 Europe should have: - modern online public services, particularly e-government, e-learning and e-health; - a dynamic e-business environment; - widespread availability of broadband access at competitive prices; - a secure information infrastructure. 1) Firstly, policy measures to review and adapt legislation at national and European level; to ensure legislation does not unnecessarily hamper new services; to strengthen competition and interoperability; to improve access to a variety of networks; and, to demonstrate political leadership. eEurope 2005 identifies those areas where public policy can provide an added value and therefore focuses on a limited set of actions in priority areas. Some key targets are: - Connecting public administrations, schools, health care tobroadband; - Interactive public services, accessible for all, and offered on multiple platforms; - Provide online health services; - Removal of obstacles to the deployment of broadband networks; - Review of legislation affecting e-business; - Creation of a Cyber Security Task Force; 2) eEurope will facilitate the exchange of experience, of good practices and demonstration projects, but also of sharing the lessons from failures. Projects will be launched to accelerate the roll-out of leading edge applications and infrastructure. 3) policy measures will be monitored and better focussed by benchmarking of the progress made in achieving the objectives and of the policies in support of the objectives. 4) an overall co-ordination of existing policies will bring out synergies between proposed actions. A steering group will provide a better overview of policy developments and ensure a good information exchange between national and European policy makers and the private sector. This steering group would also make an early participation of candidate countries possible. In conclusion, this action plan is a proposal to Member States to take some far-reaching commitments. It is an invitation to the private sector to work with the Commission and Member States to realise the eEurope objectives. It sets out the initiatives the Commission will or is willing to take. Overall the action plan sets the scene for a co-ordinated European policy approach on information society issues. The eEurope action plan has been confirmed as a key element in the Lisbon strategy.