# Computer problem: the Year 2000

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Even today, nobody can be quite sure of what will happen to the worlds computers when the so-called millennium bug appears next year. The bug, or the Y2K computer problem as it is otherwise known, may cause widespread damage or disruptions as many older systems cannot handle dates after 31 December 1999. In a report drawn up by Alan DONNELLY (PES, UK) the Committee commends the Commission for its work in raising awareness of the Y2K problem. With less than a year to go, the Committee expresses deep concern over the lack of progress in some Member States in tackling the millennium bug, as well as, over the lack of cross-border cooperation in this field. Over the coming months, the Committee urges the Commission to continuously use its influence to ensure that those Member States lagging behind seriously tackle the problem. It also calls on the Commission to ensure that information on known problems and best practices are made widely available, and in particular to SMEs. Another area of concern to the Committee is that little or no attention has been paid so far to consumers in the Y2K awareness campaigns. The Committee therefore calls for specific awareness actions for consumers, who may otherwise find themselves unprepared for Y2K-related product deficiencies. The Committee asks the Commission to clarify with due haste to what extent existing EU Directives concerning liability for defective products and services can be invoked by consumers hit by Y2K problems. As it seems as if there will not be enough time to fix every possible problem, the Committee urges all organisations to prioritise and ensure that key services will be provided over the date change period, and to establish contingency plans to cope with unexpected problems. The Committee also stresses the need for increased cross-border and international cooperation in the most sensitive sectors, in particular air traffic and nuclear energy, which pose a potentially serious health risk to citizens. It is widely recognised that there is an acute shortage of skilled programmers in Europe at a time when the industry is faced both with the Y2K problem and the introduction of the Euro. The Committee therefore considers that the EU should if possible postpone all proposed legislation with significant IT impact until after the Year 2000 period in order to avoid making an already scarce resource even more so.