Information society, eContent: European digital content, linguistic diversity. 2001-2004 programme

2000/0128(CNS) - 10/10/2003 - Follow-up document

This Communication concerns the mid term evaluation of the eContent programme (2001 -2004). The evaluation was carried out by a consortium of companies. During the years 2001-2002, 58 projects were co-financed, involving over 468 organisations. The evaluators formulated recommendations for the second part of the current programme as well as giving indications for a possible continuation of the activities. The key evaluation findings are as follows: The benefits of the programme are significant in comparison with the level of resources allocated to it. The programme fulfils the role of demonstrating the potential economic benefits of information held by the public sector as well as increased market access opportunities provided by linguistic and cultural adaptation of digital content to target audiences. The evaluators recognised the positive impact of the current programme and expressed a clear recommendation to continue supporting digital content via Community policies and programmes. More specifically it was concluded that: - the programme intervention logic was well designed, with a hierarchy of objectives ranging from the political framework of facilitating "access for all" to the Internet, through the operational goals of the action lines and the results expected from the individual projects selected; - the programme stimulated projects that would not have happened in the same form or with the same transnational dimension, thereby showing a high level of additionality and good use of public funds; - the programme reached its target audience, mainly SMEs, representing 43% of the participants, followed by public sector organisations (40 %). In terms of funding, 44% went to SMEs, with 29% being received by companies employing less than 50 people; - the programme was overall well managed. The paper goes on to make some recommendations for the implementation of the eContent programme, and to make suggestions for a follow-up programme. The Commission responds to the recommendations, and invites the European institutions to: - recognise of the role of digital content as a means to increase access to information by the citizens and to stimulate the economic and social development of European businesses; - support the role of the eContent programme as supporting demonstrators for the reuse of public sector information and the creation of European multilingual and multicultural content.