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

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Reino PAASILINNA (PES, FIN) welcoming the Commission's e-Europe 2005 Action Plan. It noted that the success of the Plan - which would give everyone the opportunity to participate in the worldwide information society - would largely depend on the implementation by the Member States of a regulatory framework that could foster investment, innovation, employment and sustainable competition. Implementation should therefore be strictly monitored, lead to a reduction of sector-specific regulation and initiate the transition to general competition law. The Commission was urged to submit a roadmap indicating the specific objectives to be attained at the end of 2003 and to establish a scoreboard for Member States' interim achievements in the three key areas of e-Government, e-Learning and e-Health. The report stressed that Member States should take decisive action to guarantee broadband connections at an affordable price, "with the emphasis on the principles of technology neutrality and free competition". They should also seek to promote not only the adoption of digitial television but also a move to the third generation (3G) of mobile communications and deployment of complementary broadband infrastructures. This meant that they should implement the package of telecommunications regulations without delay so as to achieve a level playing field in this area. There was also a need to stimulate demand in the 3G sector and guarantee security of investments, and the Commission was urged to cooperate closely with the Member States to eliminate technical and administrative obstacles and to standardise the relevant procedures. MEPs also called on the Commission to continue its policy of encouraging the use of open platforms in order to guarantee consumers' freedom of choice. Other recommendations included: ensuring that all citizens, businesses and administrations have access to the public electronic services of all the administrations in the EU via a secure access system; providing sufficient free Internet time to EU citizens to enable them to become familiar with the services offered by e-Government and carry out their civil activities as part of a network; exploring how the use of ICT could help to increase information on and participation in democratic processes in Europe, for example on the occasion of the EP elections in 2004; eliminating the gulf that exists between boys and girls in IT and educational and training systems from an early age; ensuring that people living in the EU's rural areas have adequate access to the Internet; and developing electronic public administration services in health care and other fields. Lastly, Member States were urged to respect the target date for making the Cyber Security Task Force operational (mid-2003) so that the growing problem of security can be tackled effectively and without delay.