Electronic communications: network and information security, role of the public sector

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The committee adopted the report by Ornella PACIOTTI (PES, I) on the Commission communication. It pointed out that that the present level of computer network security was highly inadequate and noted that network attacks could be targeted at essential infrastructure such as transport, communications, energy and water supply networks and financial and banking services. Network vulnerability therefore carried with it serious risks for the smooth operation of the EU's economy and the daily lives of its citizens. Stressing that any response to those weaknesses based on exclusively voluntary action by those directly concerned would be inadequate, the committee agreed that there was a need for a European approach, which would help the internal communications market to benefit from common solutions and to operate effectively on the international stage. The committee also said that the Commission should provide information on problems encountered in implementing the existing directives on data protection and formulate a European strategy, including laying down standards, developing encryption and certification systems on a European scale, actions to prevent and combat crime, raising awareness among citizens, users and public and private operators by means of information campaigns for disseminating best practices and stepping up scientific research in the weakest areas. It therefore welcomed the Commission's plans to set up a network security task force and said that it should have clearly-formulated objectives and be supplied with sufficient human and financial resources. Lastly, the Commission and Council were urged to develop a uniform legal basis, within the framework of Eurojust, for the investigation and prosecution of computer criminals.