Europe's way to the information society: an action plan

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This Commission communication lists a series of measures and a timetable for implementing the information society. This action plan covers four main areas: 1) Regulatory framework: - liberalization of infrastructures: in order to speed up the current liberalization of the telecommunications sector, an agreement in principle must be reached on the liberalization of infrastructures in the telecommunications sector and clear implementation dates must be set. A communication will be presented in September 1994 and a Green Paper on the infrastructures will be published before the end of the year; - European authority: the question of setting up a European authority will be discussed with the Member States with a view to tabling proposals by January 1996; - standardization: the Commission will start a debate with a view to publishing a communication on the widespread use of standardization in information and telecommunication technologies. A major seminar, to which all interested parties are invited, will be held in November 1994, on the basis of which the Commission will launch suitable projects during 1995; - interconnection of networks and interoperability of services: the Commission will update the ONP (open network provision) framework, concentrating on the interconnection rules between existing and new service providers, the entities concerned and standard interfaces between networks and services, in order to offer fair and open access to networks. The Commission will submit proposals by the end of 1995 and calls on the Council and the European Parliament to adopt the ISDN and IDA (interchange of data between administrations) TEN programmes by the end of 1994; - tariffs: cost-based prices are one of the objectives which the Commission has set itself in order to safeguard the transition to a competitive environment. Binding directives exist but have not been fully transposed by the Member States and the Commission is therefore starting infringement proceedings; - funding the universal service: the Commission will present a report by the end of 1995 and will develop common principles for taxing access in this context; - global dimension: the Commission is involved in negotiations on basic telecommunications services within the framework of a general agreement on trade and services (GATS) and in discussions in the new World Trade Organization and World Intellectual Property Organization. Bilateral discussions with countries such as Japan and Canada will be extended to the subject of the information society. The G7 in Naples has agreed to organize a conference of ministers in Brussels at the end of 1994 in order to discuss the development of an open, competitive and integrated world information infrastructure; - intellectual property rights: the Commission will re-examine existing measures and present a Green Paper over coming months; - privacy: the Commission will try to get the framework directive on data protection adopted by the autumn; - electronic protection, legal protection and security: the Commission is preparing a Green Paper on the legal protection of coded transmissions on the internal market. It will examine the Member States' legislation on unauthorized access in order to see if it needs to be harmonized and decide on the appropriate level of intervention. As regards security, the Commission will submit a supplementary proposal on coding requirements in the world of business and commerce and on the integrity of signatures by September 1994. It will present a communication on information security and explore ways of cooperating with third countries on coding, especially the USA; - media ownership: the Commission will shortly present a communication on the follow-up to the Green Paper on pluralism and the concentration of the media on the internal market; - competition: competition rules represent a positive contribution to the implementation of the information society and the Commission will take account of new, emerging global markets when applying these rules; - audiovisual: a proposal for revising the 1989 "Television without frontiers" directive will be submitted shortly. 2) Networks, basic services, applications and content: Support needs to be given to new private-sector partnerships which will play a key role in the implementation of the information society. - Euro-ISDN: the Commission's proposals on the ISDN TEN should be adopted by the end of 1994; - integrated wide-band communications (IBC): the Commission will encourage the creation of a European wide-band communications steering committee comprising the main actors; - mobile communications: the Commission will present a report on the results

of consultations on its Green Paper by the end of 1994 and will make provision for measures for each of these markets in 1995; - satellite communications: the Commission will shortly adopt a directive liberalizing satellite telecommunications equipment and services. The Council and the European Parliament should adopt a directive on the mutual recognition of licences for satellite services by the end of 1994; - basic services: the Commission will launch a European forum of basic services and set up a group in charge of examining the standardization of Internet and ISO protocols; - implementation of projects: during the initial stage, the Commission will set up an information society projects office; - funding: the private sector will fund the information society, but the Commission will ensure that existing funds (RDT framework programme, trans-European networks, Structural Funds) are used as efficiently as possible; - audiovisual: the follow up to the Green Paper on the audiovisual sector will address both the regulatory aspects (promotion of European programmes) and mechanisms to encourage the sector (MEDIA). 3) Social, societal and cultural aspects: The Commission will set up a high-level panel to advise on the following aspects: employment and working environment (creation of new jobs), societal aspects (daily life, leisure), cultural aspects and linguistic aspects. The Commission will publish a communication on the European linguistic challenge and the new language industry by January 1995. 4) Promotion: a series of promotional activities has been planned in order to raise public awareness of the information society from autumn 1994 onwards.