Computer problem: the Year 2000

1998/2047(COS) - 25/02/1998 - Non-legislative basic document

OBJECTIVE: the purpose of this Commission communication is to outline a series of actions designed to encourage suppliers and users of information systems to resolve the problems posed by the inability of a large number of systems to achieve correctly the transition from 1999 to the year 2000. CONTENT: the main problem results from the fact that since the early days of electronic computing, only two digits have generally been used to represent the year in date fields (DDMMYY). As a result, in many applications, the year 2000 will be interpreted as the year 1900, causing failures in arithmetic computations and data processing. The millennium bug is a cause for concern to companies of all sizes and to every sector of the economy, it also represents a major risk to consumers and an important challenge to the public authorities, especially as recent surveys show that progress with preparations is still very limited and varies from country to country. At the same time, administrations, companies and citizens are also worried by the fact that the problem arises during the early stages of the single currency. The Commission stresses that responsibility for resolving the problem of the millennium bug rests first and foremost with suppliers and users but also emphasises the part which governments and associations can play in raising awareness, especially among the most vulnerable categories such as consumers and SMEs. The Commission, for its part, will encourage and facilitate cooperation between individual, national or sectoral initiatives, especially in the infrastructure sectors (telecommunications, energy, transport), and will launch a dialogue on this matter both within the Community and with third countries. With the Member States, the Commission will monitor progress, exchange information and experiences and identify and compare best practices and will provide regular reports to the Council.