Information society, eEurope: Commission initiative for European Council in Lisbon, 23-24 March 2000

2000/2034(COS) - 16/03/2000 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted its resolution on eEurope drafted by Ms. Imelda READ (PES, UK). The European Parliament welcomes the Commission's eEurope initiative which contains objectives and a timetable for optimal development of the Information Society in Europe and expects the Commission to draw up detailed plans for achieving these objectives and to establish clear priorities while defining the tasks of the EU and of the individual Member States. However, it regrets that the Commission's communication does not define detailed measures to be taken on both the EU and national level in order to reach these objectives, as well as the fact that important aspects such as sustainability, social cohesion and employment are given no special focus. It therefore hopes that the action plans proposed by the Commission identify and define the measures that should be taken, on the one hand, at regional or national level and, on the other hand, at EU level, taking into account the rapid development in the sector itself. The Parliament stresses that developing the European Information Society can only be supporteed effectively if Europe has a sound knowledge and innovation structure, a broad and well-developed body of users and advanced information and communications technology. It also urges the Commission to analyse the risks and opportunities that the Information society development could create on the job market, therefore to come up with plans for small business expansion and stimulation of innovation and to take initiatives to make sure that job creation in all sectors is fostered by the use of information technologies. Parliament calls on the Council to express a political commitment to eliminating the gap between the US and the EU as regards the Information society and e-commerce and asks the Commission to foress measures to reduce this gap. It also calls on the Commission and the Member States not to undermine flexibility and stifle the growth of e-business by excessive regulation. The European Parliament considers that the development of secure identification systems, systems to preserve the confidentiality of messages and methods to prevent changes in them are paramount to develop a digitalised, competitive and mobile eEurope, and it takes note of the competitive advantage that Europe has as to smart cards and other secure identification systems. According to the Parliament, more attention must be paid to questions relating to protecting the privacy of citizens. Parliament calls for a new Employment Guideline to be drawn up or for each of the current Guidelines to be appropriately adapted for 2001 so that a global e-Europe strategy of action can be taken fully into account at an early stage; it therefore asks the Commission to include a point 11 'Strengthening employment and social cohesion in the information society' in its e-Europe initiative, focusing on short term measures to face the risks of job losses in Europe related to the IT sectors. Parliament points to the importance of ensuring that the needs of older people and disabled people, as well as equality concerns are taken into account in any actions undertaken. Parliament calls for new forms of work arising from the information society to be accompanied by measures to guarantee workers' rights to social security and proper pensions and to enable them to perform such work under conditions providing a high standard of living and employment and the requisite security. The Commission is called upon to develop plans to exploit the benefits of a uniform VAT system for the growth of e-commerce, including consideration of sales taxation at source. It is also called upon to extend the objectives of eEurope to other Community policies and, notably through regional policy, to give special emphasis to measures to support intangible investment and access for SMEs and very small enterprises to new communications and information technologies. The Parliament expressly supports the Commission in its call at WTO level for the establishment of a competition policy with an international dimension. This is particularly important for enterprises operating in the information and communications technology sector because their activities are genuinely geared towards the international market. Parliament calls on the Council and the Commission to: - guarantee free and complete public access in future to the information stored digitally in public centres, and - draw up a comprehensive consept for ensuring that all public areas (libraries,

archives, universities, etc.) particularly in rural regions, can benefit to the full from the development of the Internet. Lastly, the Commission is asked to establish a portal for all Community venture capital instruments, including other information sources about financial instruments.