Telecommunications: trans-European networks, guidelines (rev. Decision 1336/97/EC Annex I)

2001/0296(COD) - 01/08/2005 - Follow-up document

This document constitutes a **mid term review of the eTEN Programme** in accordance with article 14 of the eTEN Decision. An evaluation of the eTEN Programme was commissioned from a consortium and took place between January and December 2004. The two objectives were:

-To evaluate ex postthe implementation and performance in relation to objectives and results of the programme over the period July 2000 to June 2004, extended to include an assessment of the longer term socio-economic impacts of the programme,

-To evaluate ex antepossible programme re-orientations in the near future (until end 2006) and possible policy options for a new phase of the programme from 2006.

The document describres the main characteristics of the ETen Programme and the re-orientation which brought eTEN in line with new policy objectives defined in the Lisbon Agenda. eTEN is now concerned with accelerating the takeup of trans-European eServices of common interest in the EU and is a support programme for the achievement of objectives defined in the eEurope Action Plan 2005. eTEN had an annual budget of around EUR 45 million in the years 2003 and 2004 and operated mainly through the disbursement of grants following annual Calls for Proposals. This level of funding is expected to continue in 2005 and 2006.

eTEN supports two kinds of projects, so-called “Initial Deployment” projects and “Market Validation” projects. Initial Deployment projects are downstream and support the roll-out phase of an eService; they are funded at up to 10% of project costs. These represent a small fraction of funded projects. Market Validation projects are upstream and seek to validate the cost benefit of an eService; they are funded at up to 50% of project costs and represent the largest fraction of funded projects and proposals submitted.

The Commission gives a general appraisal of the evaluation. It feels that it is clear from the report that the eTEN Programme has a major role to play in the future deployment of the Information Society in Europe. Further, the Commission welcomes the report’s acknowledgement that the programme is now well managed and that following its re-alignment in July 2002, it is now more strategically positioned and is a key part of Information Society policies. However, it is also clear that under its present form, eTEN will not achieve its potential and needs to be substantially re-cast in a more demand led form in a future follow-on initiative.

Taking both the ex-ante and ex-post conclusions into account, the Commission is now engaged in the definition of such a new follow on Programme. The Commission also acknowledges the report’s recommendations for the short and medium term and is engaged in improvements to the current programme.

The document looks at the evaluation report’s conclusions and recommendations and points out that most of the recommendations have already been incorporated in the Work Programme for 2005.

The Report identifies a need for a major change in the current form of the programme and proposes an optimal mix of approaches including a more coordinated strategy which is led by demand. Under this approach, requirements would be defined by committee and projects would be implemented by a public procurement procedure. The Commission will investigate the prospects for applying the Open Method of

Coordination to support policy learning, good practice exchange, benchmarking and better co-ordination of strategies across local, regional and national activities.

To a significant extent, the increase in productivity required for the realisation of the Lisbon objectives will be realised through the use of effective eServices. The Commission takes note of the objective recommended in the Evaluation Report for the future programme which is “To contribute to the deployment of eServices (or

eSolutions) addressing key needs of the public sector, as well as interoperability of services and systems across borders, thus helping to reduce the barriers for citizens and companies to participate fully in the internal market and benefit from an efficient and effective delivery of public services.”

There is a need to change the intervention approach from supply-driven to demand-driven. Experience shows that the use of Open Calls for Proposals does not lead to the coordinated implementation of trans-European public eServices. A variety of mechanisms for a more co-ordinated approach described in the document will need to be evaluated when defining the follow up programme.

The Commission agrees with the report that, if real impacts are to be achieved, projects should address a significant part of the demand in selected areas. The deployment of larger scale services in the common interest will need both a larger budget than is currently available and will depend on the availability of more attractive conditions of participation than those offered by the current 10% limit which the stakeholder community have clearly rejected as being too small.

Recommendations have been taken into account in redesigning the programme as a key element in a new initiative to follow-up eEurope 2005, namely the i2010 initiative. Furthermore, the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme, which includes a proposed follow-up programme to eTEN, has been adopted by the Commissionand submitted to the European Parliament and Council as part of the new Financial Perspectives.