Basic information

1997/2061(COS) COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic)	Procedure completed
Electronic commerce, a European initiative **Subject** 3.45.05 Business policy, e-commerce, after-sales service, commercial distribution 4.60.06 Consumers' economic and legal interests	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
ECON Economic and Monetary Affairs, Industrial Policy	MANN Erika (PSE)	14/07/1997

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
ENER Research, Technological Development and Energy	MALERBA Franco E. (UPE)	02/07/1997
RELA External Economic Relations	PLOOIJ-VAN GORSEL Elly (ELDR)	27/10/1997
ENVI Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection		

Council of the European Union

Council configuration	Meetings	Date
Economic and Financial Affairs ECOFIN	2053	1997-12-01
Competitiveness (Internal Market, Industry, Research and Space)	2079	1998-03-30
Competitiveness (Internal Market, Industry, Research and Space)	2007	1997-05-21
Industry	2043	1997-11-13

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
16/04/1997	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(1997)0157	Summary
21/05/1997	Debate in Council		
25/06/1997	Committee referral announced in Parliament		

13/11/1997	Resolution/conclusions adopted by Council		
01/12/1997	Debate in Council		
30/03/1998	Debate in Council		
23/04/1998	Vote in committee		Summary
23/04/1998	Committee report tabled for plenary	A4-0173/1998	
13/05/1998	Debate in Parliament		
14/05/1998	End of procedure in Parliament		
01/06/1998	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information

Procedure reference	1997/2061(COS)
Procedure type	COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic)
Procedure subtype	Commission strategy paper
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 148
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	ECON/4/08808

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A4-0173/1998 OJ C 167 01.06.1998, p. 0005	23/04/1998	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T4-0284/1998 OJ C 167 01.06.1998, p. 0175-0203	14/05/1998	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(1997)0157	16/04/1997	Summary

Other institutions and bodies

Institution/body	Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
EESC	Economic and Social Committee: opinion, report	CES1191/1997	29/10/1997	Summary
CofR	Committee of the Regions: opinion	CDR0350/1997 OJ C 180 11.06.1998, p. 0019	12/03/1998	

Electronic commerce, a European initiative

1997/2061(COS) - 29/10/1997 - Economic and Social Committee: opinion, report

The ESC will support the Commission's efforts to formulate a set of Community principles for developing the European Information Society and promoting electronic commerce in the EU so that Europe can live up to both its international role and its responsibilities towards European citizens. The regulatory framework must not simply be an instrument for promoting electronic commerce; it must also be a means of preventing mass unemployment. The following basic conclusions have been drawn from working on the text: - Electronic commerce presents a challenge both for the productive sectors of the economy (commerce, industry, crafts, banking, etc.) and for all users and consumers. The public sector is called upon to play a key role in promoting electronic commerce. Security problems must be solved as soon as possible so that transactions are reliable and justifiable concerns about the protection of personal data can be allayed. SMEs should be able to benefit from electronic commerce on an equal basis by taking advantage of the opportunities that it now offers and modernizing their operations. The Commission must set up without delay the necessary lifelong training programmes so that employers and workers can cope with the new working conditions. The European Union should take part in the global dialogue with uniform, integrated positions which safeguard European interests. - The European Union must directly promote research and development programmes for new technologies.

Electronic commerce, a European initiative

1997/2061(COS) - 14/05/1998 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

In adopting the report by Mrs Erika MANN (PSE) Parliament encouraged the development of electronic commerce and supported the idea of drawing up a European framework policy applicable in this area. It considered that every possible effort must be made to exploit the potential for new job creation in high-grade information-based services by introducing new and special education and training facilities to impart these new skills. To ensure that undertakings and citizens could benefit fully from the advantages of electronic commerce and in order to avoid the fragmentation of the internal market Parliament stressed the need for coordination at European level of appropriate policies and regulations in this area. The Commission was called on to make proposals without delay seeking to create an internal market in the field of electronic commerce and to ensure that freedom to provide services throughout the Union was complete for all European undertakings. SMUs in the retail trade, marketing and tourism should be able to benefit from information measures, training measures and ad hoc research programmes to prepare for the conversion process. Parliament considered that a large number of problems were recurrent and that it would be appropriate to resolve them by means of a common regulatory framework. These should include in particular consumer protection, reliability, definitions of concepts such as place of establishment for service providers, place of transaction and intellectual property rights. Stressing that new taxes should not be imposed on electronic commerce which would penalize it by comparison with traditional forms of commerce, Parliament called on the Commission to examine whether electronic commerce should be taxed using the existing system or rather whether the current principles of taxation should be completely reformulated in the light of new developments. It considered that in any case agreement had to be reached at European level concerning taxation issues, and in particular VAT, in order to provide legal certainty, to avoid undue revenue losses and to ensure neutrality. While it was important to provide a clear regulatory framework, it was also necessary to adopt measures to provide improved training and better information to consumers and undertakings with regard to the characteristics and potential of electronic trading. Parliament recommended that governments should play a key role in this field by strengthening education and training and by offering government services on line. It considered it vital in strengthening consumer confidence in electronic commerce to eliminate restrictions on the use of encryption. Lastly, given the global scale of the Internet it again stressed the need to conclude international agreements in this field, for example by drawing up a universal code on electronic commerce within the framework of the WTO. Parliament considered that by establishing a regulatory framework, the European Union was establishing an advantageous negotiating position with a view to these discussions.

Electronic commerce, a European initiative

1997/2061(COS) - 16/04/1997 - Non-legislative basic document

OBJECTIVE: to encourage vigorous growth of electronic commerce in Europe. SUBSTANCE: this document proposes a whole range of measures in the field of electronic commerce, a field of great importance for European competitiveness in the world markets. These specific measures should be implemented in the wider context of the initiatives of the Information Society and would, in particular, be integrated into the Rolling Action Plan for the Information Society (COS0464). The Commission's political objective was to implement immediately a consistent framework of technological, regulatory and support actions by the year 2000. The key elements of the document were the following: (1) to promote the technology and infrastructure needed to put in place structures which would provide efficient access systems for users. This objective would require a fully competitive telecommunications market and the refocusing of R&D efforts so that Europe's high level of scientific and technological capability could be translated more successfully into marketable products and services. It would also require a broad consensus on standards and on the interoperability of electronic market systems; (2) to capitalize on the single market by ensuring a consistent regulatory framework for electronic commerce in European and in wider global markets. This framework should boost the confidence of businesses and consumers in secure technologies (such as digital signatures, digital certificates and electronic payment mechanisms) so that they make use of electronic commerce by dismantling remaining legal barriers and preventing the creation of new obstacles; (3) to foster a favourable business environment for electronic commerce by promoting adequate skills, and by making consumers and industry aware of the opportunities it offered. This would be realized through training, information and demonstration projects, and by exploiting synergies between government and industries; (4) to work towards a global consensus from a common European position to ensure effective participation in current international cooperation and negotiation. Europe should defend its own strengths and interests within international groups and fora.