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COMMUNICATION TO THE COMMISSION

e-Commission 2006-2010: enabling efficiency and transparency

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1. INTRODUCTION

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have been recognised as a key contributor to achieving the Lisbon targets, notably at the Feira and Sevilla European Councils of 2000 and 2002. The two consecutive eEurope action plans have fostered the deployment and use of ICT in business, administrations and the public at large to enhance competitiveness, increase the availability of services and improve inclusion.

Within the Commission, the administrative reform (“the Reform”) has stressed the instrumental role of ICT in supporting the modernisation of the administration through the e-Commission¹ initiative, which has served as the framework for ICT developments in the Commission from 2001 onwards. During this period, the maturity of our institution in the field of IT governance has evolved significantly.

The Communication to the Spring European Council² in March 2005 stresses the role of ICT in the revised Lisbon strategy, for “*both the private and public sectors*” and as “*the backbone for the knowledge economy*”. In this context, the Commission plays an active role in promoting the use of ICT in society, as demonstrated by the recently adopted i2010³ strategy.

The Commission’s strategic objectives for 2005-2009, along with Community budget pressure, reinforce the need to sustain the efforts towards an e-administration with a view to delivering high-quality, cost-effective, transparent, secure and accessible public services.

It is therefore proposed that our commitment to the e-Commission, currently due to end in 2005, should be renewed, in full accordance with the revised Lisbon strategy, the new Commission initiative i2010 and the forthcoming e-government ministerial declaration of November 2005. In so doing, the Commission would demonstrate to the Member States that it is applying its information society policy to its own administration.

2. E-COMMISSION: THE STATE OF PLAY

e-Commission 2001-2005 has been a logical and political framework to create a vision for all ICT activities in the Commission and set ICT as an enabler of the Reform. It consisted of actions under three strands: the Commission’s internal administration, working with other administrations and partners and services to citizens and business, supported by a major evolution in the underlying technical infrastructure (Annex I).

¹ SEC(2001) 924, Actions 7, 8 and 9 of the Reform White Paper.

² COM(2005) 24 – Communication to the Spring European Council - Working together for growth and jobs - A new start for the Lisbon Strategy.

³ COM(2005) 229 - i2010 – A European Information Society for growth and employment.

2.1. Internal administration

Progress has been achieved in key areas. Commission-wide information systems have been enhanced and adapted to support the Reform.

In the human resources area, the SYSPER2 project has allowed the redesign of the central human resources management processes. New processes, like the revised staff appraisal, have been directly supported. Other processes, like recruitment, have been analysed and reworked to simplify and streamline them when introducing the new system. Sysper2 now allows any official to consult, for the first time, the most important aspects of his/her personnel file on-line.

The new Financial Regulation, applied since 1 January 2003 has provided the regulatory basis for the transition to accrual based accounting. This transition has been supported by the development of ABAC, which represents a significant evolution of the Commission's financial systems.

In the monitoring and planning area, the Chopin system allows DG COMP to effectively, coherently and realistically plan its work and resources including its Annual Management Plan.

Many internal procedures based on document handling have been streamlined. For example, most inter-service consultations are now carried out electronically (CISNET) and new rules for document management are being implemented with a new organisation (Document Management Officers) and new or adapted information systems (e-Domec projects).

To accompany the deployment of such information systems, the Commission has developed appropriate training courses. These will be available on-line, especially for staff members working in the Delegations and Representations.

IT governance and interoperability⁴ are being strengthened so as to ensure both coordination and knowledge sharing in the area of the Commission's information systems. Furthermore, the problems of interoperability, notably between corporate systems, are being tackled in areas such as finance, human resources or document management.

A survey to assess the progress of the e-Commission in the Commission's internal administration was conducted in 2004⁵. The results were positive overall in terms of the sophistication of the Commission's internal on-line services as compared with similar benchmarks carried out under the eEurope umbrella. However, some improvements are still expected by users in areas such as user-friendliness, support of managers' needs, and the access to and reuse of information.

⁴ SEC(2004) 1267 - On the improvement of information technology governance in the Commission, SEC(2004) 1265 - e-Commission: Interoperability *Integrated Information for Integrated Management*.

⁵ Towards an e-administration: report of the first measurement 2004 - Web-based survey on e-Commission progress - Version 1.2
(http://www.cc.cec/home/dgserv/digit/info/reference/index_en.htm).

2.2. Working with other administrations and partners

The information flows between the Commission and other European Institutions and with the national administrations are largely electronically based. For example, parliamentary questions are now managed electronically, resulting in a significant reduction of paper flows with the Parliament; practically all statistical information transmitted from Member States to Eurostat is now done electronically.

The IDA⁶ programme has facilitated inter-administration and inter-institutional working by electronic means, through the funding of several sectoral projects⁷ and the provisions of horizontal services and guidelines⁸. Most notably, CIRCA⁹ now provides an internet-based environment to support the collaboration of thousands of working groups with all DGs, while TESTA¹⁰ provides secure network facilities for the exchange of data between administrations.

Many information systems have been deployed to support policy areas as diverse as customs, internal market, competition, energy, transport or development aid: for instance, to improve the efficiency of the Common Transit Regime (New Computerised Transit System), to solve problems of the misapplication of Community law (SOLVIT), to implement the network of competition authorities (ECN-Interactive), to facilitate nuclear declarations of new Member States (ACCESS), to give national administrations the opportunity to exchange information on the use of digital tachographs (TACHOnet) or to manage development aid projects (CRIS).

A public consultation exercise conducted in 2005¹¹ has shown that transparency and enhanced access to information are improvement priorities expected by external users. According to this survey, the Commission is considered to be lagging behind some Member States in terms of the sophistication of its on-line services for business, citizens and partners.

2.3. Better serving citizens and business

An important development in this area was the launch in January 2005 of the IDABC Programme¹², which aims at extending the benefits of the former IDA programme by encouraging and supporting the development and establishment of operational pan-European e-government services for business and citizens.

In general, there is now better access to Commission information and the Commission is in turn able to consult citizens and business on policy issues. For instance, the Interactive Policy Making system (IPM, a project financed by the IDA programme) provides access to the opinions and experiences of EU citizens, business

⁶ Interchange of Data between Administrations.

⁷ For a complete list see <http://europa.eu.int/idabc/en/chapter/550>

⁸ For a complete list see <http://europa.eu.int/idabc/en/chapter/5644>

⁹ Communication & Information Resource Centre Administrator.

¹⁰ Trans-European Services for Telematics between Administrations.

¹¹ Towards an e-administration: report of the 2005 Benchmark – Strand 2 & 3 - Web-based survey on e-Commission progress (http://www.cc.cec/home/dgserv/digit/info/reference/index_en.htm).

¹² Decision of the Council and of the European Parliament 287/2004/EC

and interest groups and enables them to participate in policy discussions and the preparation of impact assessments.

The development of an information system common to five Directorates-General (DGs) to support the implementation of the Sixth Framework Programme for Research and Development is under way. This will ultimately allow the electronic submission of proposals, evaluation assisted by secure electronic means, and e-transactions throughout the lifetime of projects. A similar approach is envisaged for the Education and Culture and the Environment programmes.

The ongoing Europa Second Generation project is modernising the European Union's website and the associated back-office organisation, taking into account the requirements of end users and embodying a service-oriented approach. The portals providing access to European law (EUR-LEX) and to statistical information (Eurostat portal) illustrate this evolution. However, increased coordination is necessary to ensure greater coherence and higher visibility of Commission policies. The recently adopted Action Plan "to improve communicating Europe"¹³ will be instrumental in tackling this challenge and the e-Commission initiative should actively support it.

On the e-procurement front, the efforts to build the information systems to support the action plan proposed by the Commission¹⁴ should become an integral part of the e-Commission agenda.

3. E-COMMISSION STRATEGY FOR 2006-2010

In order to renew its commitment to the e-Commission, the Commission needs to apply to its own administration the European information society policy in the e-government field.

e-Government is defined as "*the use of information and communication technologies in public administrations combined with organisational change and new skills in order to improve public services and democratic processes and strengthen support to public policies*"¹⁵.

In the Commission context, this definition has to be articulated along two different dimensions: (1) external, concerning the services supplied by the Commission to citizens, business and partner administrations directly or indirectly, i.e. by supporting the definition and operational implementation of the Union's policies and (2) internal, to achieve a best-practice e-administration offering improved services to its staff.

¹³ SEC(2005) 985 – Action Plan to improve communicating Europe by the Commission.

¹⁴ COM(2004) 841 – Action plan for the implementation of the legal framework for electronic public procurement.

¹⁵ COM(2003) 567 – The Role of eGovernment for Europe's future.

3.1. Increasing the Commission's e-government maturity

Making the Commission a best-practice knowledge-based public administration is an objective inherited from the Reform. In this context, increasing its e-government maturity is seen as a success factor for the Commission.

3.1.1. Maturity Model

An e-government maturity model provides guidance to define strategies for better control of ICT-supported services.

The following four-level model is used:

- **Level 1 – Simple website:** Information is provided online about public policies and administrative procedures, but there is little or no change in the nature of the interaction of external stakeholders with the institution.
- **Level 2 – On-line government:** Simple electronic interaction mechanisms are implemented (like e-mail or web-based forms) in an effort to provide better services to customers.
- **Level 3 – Integrated government:** Parts of administrative activity are automated. The services offered are not based on existing procedures that are simply revamped to use ICT but are the product of a genuine integration between interaction channels, back office information systems and administrative processes. However, some steps in administrative workflows are still paper-based.
- **Level 4 – Transformed government:** No paper forms need be filled in. Administrative activity is completely automated end-to-end, crossing organisational boundaries. Services are built up from the viewpoint of internal and external users, rather than based on the organisation's set-up, so as to maximise user satisfaction through better quality and more transparency while also increasing efficiency.

3.1.2. External Dimension

The Commission is a decentralised organisation that manages many information systems delivering services to other administrations, partners, business or citizens. It cannot therefore be expected to achieve the same maturity level throughout the Institution.

Along the external dimension, the Commission may be considered to have reached level 3 or 4 of the model in some specific domains supported by information systems and their associated processes. For instance, the new European computerised transit system supporting customs transit operations between the EU Member States is a good example of level 4. However, the integration between such systems is still largely missing.

The external dimension challenge is to progress towards more integration of information systems and associated processes, within the limits defined by the existing legal provisions, so as to ensure the consistency of services provided to partner administrations, business and citizens.

3.1.3. *Internal dimension*

The need for more integration between the Commission's corporate systems in different areas such as finance, human resources or document management was outlined by the 2004 Communication on interoperability. It has been confirmed by the first operational results of the new IT governance processes following the adoption of the Commission's 2004 Communication on IT governance.

Further integration would enable the Commission's information systems portfolio to be optimised through the identification of similar functionalities. It would thus increase the added value of the existing information systems by reducing the complexity and number of systems that staff have to interact with in their daily work.

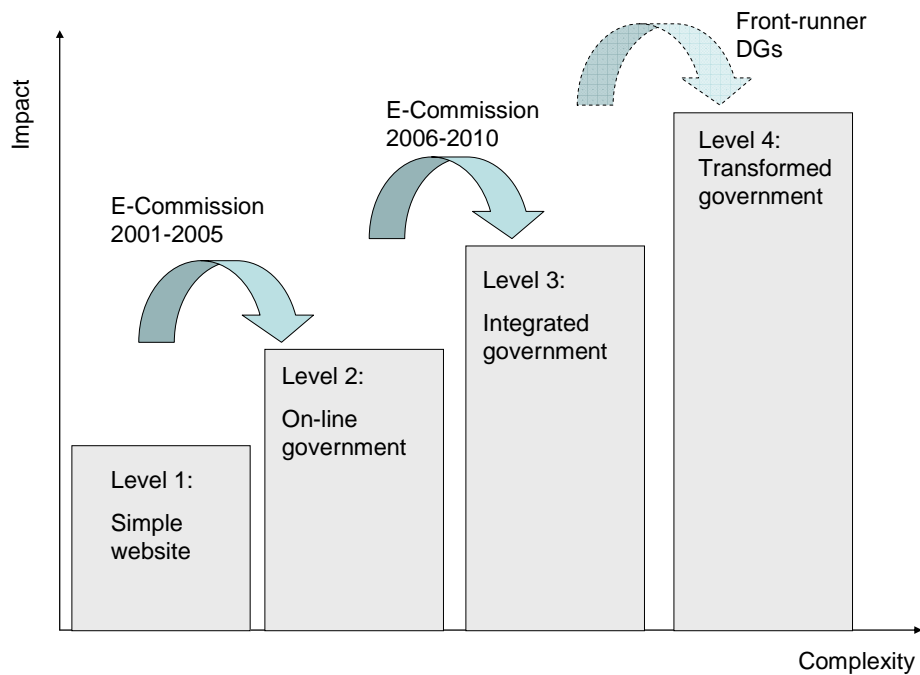
The internal dimension challenge is to progress towards more integration and interoperability of the Commission's corporate systems to provide intuitive and seamless services to staff and management.

3.1.4. *Climbing the e-government maturity ladder*

The Commission is considered to have reached, on average, level 2 on the e-government maturity scale, i.e. an on-line administration.

In line with the Communication to the Spring European Council in March 2005, which emphasises the role of ICT for the revised Lisbon strategy, i2010 defines three priorities, one of which is to promote ICT-enabled public services to increase transparency, accessibility and cost-effectiveness. The e-Commission is explicitly mentioned as part of this approach, enabling the Commission to show the way forward.

In this context, the Commission should pursue its efforts in implementing an e-administration, moving towards an integrated administration functioning as a coherent whole vis-à-vis its internal and external stakeholders.



The e-Commission objective is to reach, by 2010, the next level of e-government maturity, i.e. to implement an integrated Commission. It aims at delivering better quality and more transparent services for staff and external stakeholders, guaranteeing security of information including the protection of personal data, based on streamlined processes and interoperable information systems supported by a cost-effective, resilient and highly performant ICT infrastructure.

3.2. Strategic orientations for the e-Commission

Two underlying principles — efficiency and transparency — should guide the e-Commission efforts to deliver high-quality services to staff, national administrations, partners, business and citizens.

Efficiency, meaning achieving more with the same resources, is clearly a goal in itself. Being in a position to assure both policy stakeholders and citizens that tax-payers' money is efficiently spent is also a key objective. Transparency is instrumental in that respect and is an integral part of the Partnership for European Renewal proposed by President Barroso¹⁶.

Efficiency and transparency should be the underlying principles of the e-Commission efforts.

These principles clearly cannot be implemented by technological solutions alone. Organisational and cultural changes are key factors for success in this area, as shown by the most advanced e-administrations. The analysis of administrative processes is

¹⁶ COM(2005) 12 – Strategic Objectives 2005–2009: A Partnership for European Renewal - Prosperity, Solidarity and Security - Communication from the President in agreement with Vice-President Wallström.

also a key factor in ensuring optimal support by ICT¹⁷. The e-Commission thus aims at promoting this approach throughout the Institution, building upon current experiences in some front-runner DGs such as DG REGIO, DGT, DG TAXUD or DG ENTR.

The Commission has already proved its ability to set up a well-performing ICT infrastructure and to build large-scale information systems. The challenge is now to guarantee their quality, availability and security. They should be conceived from the perspective of users, both internal and external, integrating data, information and services from various infrastructure elements and information systems.

Continuously improving the alignment with the Commission's objectives and the quality, availability, reliability and security of information and related ICT services is a strategic orientation for the e-Commission.

4. ENABLING THE E-COMMISSION

4.1. Setting up a strong sponsorship

It is proposed that the Vice-President for Administrative Affairs sponsors the e-Commission and oversees its implementation in line with best e-government practices, which underline political sponsorship as a critical success factor for e-administration initiatives.

A yearly e-Commission progress report will be presented to the Vice-President for Administrative Affairs by DIGIT, which is mandated to coordinate e-Commission actions under the direct supervision of DIGIT's Director for Information Systems, in full compliance with the Commission's existing IT governance provisions and based on the list of candidate actions identified in Annex II.

The Vice-President for Administrative Affairs will sponsor specific large-scale e-Commission activities in areas such as security, simplification of human resources management and administrative processes. More specifically, the Vice-President for Administrative Affairs, in agreement with the Commissioner for Information Society and Media, will sponsor communication and training efforts aiming at raising awareness within the Commission of the best e-government practices.

4.2. Guaranteeing ICT operational excellence

The e-Commission can be successful if and only if it relies on a rock-solid delivery platform, i.e. a technical infrastructure and associated services¹⁸ which guarantee that business continuity, security of information flows and an adequate quality of services are provided to all users, including delegations, representations and agencies. Due attention should be paid to mobility aspects (remote access and transfers between Commission departments), so as to allow staff to use corporate ICT services at any

¹⁷ "Each business case should comprise an analysis of the business process being considered to avoid automation of sub-optimal, paper-oriented procedures", Chapter 4 of the Communication on IT governance, SEC(2004) 1267.

¹⁸ Examples of such services are: support, back-up, disaster recovery.

time, from anywhere on virtually any technical platform (e.g. PC, PDA, mobile phone).

The evolution of the Commission's standard desktop environment to minimise support intervention costs, for example by avoiding the need to transfer PCs when staff move, and to conform to open standards will remain one of DIGIT's priorities. The convergence of data (PC) and voice (telephone) services offered by IP telephony will help to optimise the use of the current network infrastructure and to offer new services to end-users, for instance videoconference at the desktop and the extension of the professional telephone for teleworkers.

Mechanisms to ensure the financial and operational sustainability of trans-European information systems developed under various programmes should be defined, as provided in the legal basis¹⁹ for IDABC²⁰.

Guaranteeing operational excellence necessitates the availability of sufficient human resources as well as the definition of an investment plan taking into account the current budget constraints and fragmentation. To this end, a communication on the financing of ICT infrastructure is under preparation.

4.3. Optimising and integrating ICT assets

The 2004 Communication on IT governance was a first step in strengthening coordination and knowledge sharing within the Commission in the area of information systems, with a view to reducing the duplication of effort and guaranteeing the alignment of new information systems with the Institution's priorities. Making such provisions function in an optimal manner in a decentralised organisation like the Commission is a challenge requiring continuous attention. Furthermore, it is important that e-Commission needs are taken into account in the elaboration of new legal instruments so as to ensure that the legal provisions for the necessary electronic data exchanges are defined and that the necessary ICT support can be financed and operated in a sustainable and systematic manner.

In this context, several projects are worth mentioning to show that the move towards the next e-government maturity level is under way:

Streamlining internal administration

- E-HR service provision that fully integrates the Commission's staff career management. The critical HR-processes will be reviewed and fully supported by ICT, especially recruitment, internal mobility, the matching of persons to jobs. Administrative activity will be streamlined by the digital administration of all aspects of the personnel file from time management to financial entitlements in a self-service portal for both staff and managers (chef de file: ADMIN);
- Decision Making Portal, which aims to provide authorised users an integrated view of the Commission's decision-making process. It will provide a common

¹⁹ Decision 2004/387/EC, Article 10(8).

²⁰ *Interoperable Delivery of pan-European eGovernment Services to Public Administrations, Businesses and Citizens.*

user interface for functionalities from several existing systems: e-Greffe, CIS-NET, SG-VISTA, Poetry, Comitology register and Agenda Planning (*chef de file*: SG);

- E-College, which more specifically aims to provide optimal ICT support for decision-making procedures at College level (*chef de file*: SG);
- Corporate portal and corporate data warehouse, which aim to provide Commission's staff with personalised access to information and systems to increase the overall efficiency of the institution as well as the personal productivity of staff (*chef de file*: ADMIN).

Working with external administrations and partners

- A new large scale information system, SFC2007, which focuses on coherent, transparent, simple and paperless administration for the handling of the Structural Funds, the Rural Development Funds and the Fishery Funds (*chefs de file*: DG REGIO, DG EMPL, DG AGRI, DG FISH);
- Excise or Transit Control System, information systems to support the move towards a simple and paperless environment for customs and trade (*chef de file*: DG TAXUD);
- From 2006, only electronic notification of Member States state aids will be accepted, through the State Aids Notification Interactive system. (*chef de file*: DG COMP);
- Large-scale integrated ICT systems to support the creation of a European area of freedom, security and justice (*chef de file*: DG JLS);
- Integration of the Community Independent Transaction Log system with the UN system to support the implementation of the Kyoto protocol and the EU emission trading scheme regulation (*chef de file*: DG ENV);
- A new system allowing the validation and follow-up of veterinary certificates with a view to supporting import decisions taking into account identified risks (*chef de file*: DG SANCO);
- Information systems to facilitate the exchange of transport related data: an electronic driver cards telematic network (TACHOnet), a driving licence network (RESPER), and a "Réseau des plaques d'immatriculation" (REGNET) (*chef de file*: DG TREN);
- sTESTA and IDABC Certification Services to continue providing a secure accredited transport infrastructure and secure applications through the use of Public Key Infrastructure certificates.

Better serving citizens and business:

- Support for the "Action Plan to improve communicating Europe by the Commission", by ensuring a well-structured Europa website, facilitating access to

multilingual information through a powerful search engine, and providing a flexible technical platform for hosting new services such as video streaming or mobile services (*chef de file*: DG PRESS);

- ‘Your Europe’²¹ portal, which is a joint initiative of several Directorates General and aims to offer a European single point of access providing practical information for citizens and business who wish to live, work or carry out business in another EU country (*chef de file*: DG ENTR);
- Promotion of multilingualism of information systems and web pages whenever necessary and within the limits of translation capacity (*chefs de file*: DGT, SCIC);
- Support for the e-procurement action plan (*chefs de file*: DG MARKT, DG BUDG, OPOCE, DG ENTR);
- Observation of the situation of volatile energy markets to give energy operators a clear vision of the reality of such markets (EMOS); provision of information on community road accidents (CARE) (*chef de file*: DG TREN);
- Extension and integration of current ICT systems in support of the implementation of the 6th Framework Programme for Research and Development to take into account new functionalities needed for the 7th Framework programme for Research and Development (*chef de file*: Research family DGs);
- IDABC projects to support pan-European e-government systems, in particular for business and citizens (*chef de file*: DG ENTR).

The Communication on IT governance also singled out infrastructure consolidation as a means to optimise the Commission’s ICT assets. Current efforts in this field should be pursued and more widely deployed if a clear added value, improved quality of service and return on investment is demonstrated.

4.4. Developing a strong administration – ICT partnership

While significantly contributing to the efficiency and transparency of the institution, the benefits of ICT can only be reaped to the full if they are used to serve the Commission’s strategic goals.

The recently adopted²² Commission’s Enterprise Architecture Framework provides a model for achieving alignment between the Institution’s priorities and the underlying information systems. This is in line with the 2002 recommendations of the audit report on IT governance in the Commission²³ and the 2004 Communications on interoperability and IT governance.

In order to exploit the potential of this approach, training and communication efforts are necessary to raise management’s awareness of ICT-related disciplines, including

²¹ <http://europa.eu.int/youreurope>

²² By the Comité Technique Informatique (CTI) – Information Systems (IS) on 25 May 2005

²³ N° IAS 02 Z-HOR 021, Défi 8 – Mettre à plat les processus.

IT governance, security policies, process and project management, internal control standards and support for continuous professional development via e-learning.

Staff expect accessible, clear and simple ICT tools, ensuring data of optimal quality, and adequate training. Tackling this challenge requires a Commission-wide response based on a strong partnership with end-users and the provision of sufficient resources for the training of staff in the use of the ICT tools necessary for their tasks. Constant monitoring of both internal and external user satisfaction is a cornerstone of this user-centric approach.

4.5. Enabling trust

The e-Commission requires trustworthy and reliable ICT infrastructure, applications and support services. Information security, including aspects of personal data protection, is widely recognised as a key priority requiring both organisational and technological action. Particular attention will be paid to document management systems that should guarantee the same level of security and access control as for physical documents²⁴.

Several security provisions have already been implemented²⁵, but further improvements are needed in order to systematically take risks and security into account when designing, developing and deploying new information systems and ICT infrastructure elements.

4.6. Resources

In recent years the goal of doing more with the same has been pursued in the Commission, not the least in the ICT domain, however creating the technical conditions for the e-Commission will require both human and financial resources. Within its consolidated strategic planning and budgetary procedures, the Institution should thus be prepared to make the necessary investment to implement its ambitions.

5. CONCLUSION

This Communication focuses on enhancing efficiency and transparency through the optimal use of ICT in the Commission. It defines the e-Commission as the objective of the Commission to increase its overall e-government maturity by evolving into an organisation offering integrated transaction services by 2010. **Better, more cost-effective, transparent and secure services will benefit staff, national administrations, partners, business and citizens.**

Achieving this objective requires committed sponsorship at political level and support from senior management. It also necessitates:

²⁴ In line with the forthcoming “Modalités d’application des dispositions concernant les documents électroniques et numérisés, annexées au règlement intérieur de la Commission par la décision n° 2004/563/CE, Euratom de la Commission du 7 juillet 2004”.

²⁵ See, amongst others, Commission Decision C(95)1510 on the protection of information systems, currently under revision.

- Deepening the partnership between stakeholders and the IT community by increasing training and awareness raising among Commission's management and staff;
- Constantly monitoring end-user satisfaction with ICT services and information systems provided for staff and external clients;
- Building on the existing information systems and ICT infrastructure;
- Implementing enhanced security mechanisms;
- Sharing experience with front-runner DGs.

The Commission is invited to:

- Endorse the strategic orientations and approach proposed in this Communication for the e-Commission 2006-2010;
- Mandate DIGIT to coordinate this activity in line with the IT governance provisions in close partnership with all Commission services and to carry out a review of the progress made in a Communication to the Commission in early 2008.