



# Evaluation of PROMISE Final Report

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# Contents

Executive Summary	5	
1 Introduction	9	
1.1 Background	9	
1.2 Reason for this evaluation	10	
1.3 Scope and objectives of the evaluation	10	
1.4 Methodology	11	
1.5 Reader	16	
2 The PROMISE programme	17	
2.1 History and objectives of PROMISE	17	
2.2 Work programme 2000	19	
2.3 Work programmes 2001 and 2002	23	
3 Effectiveness of PROMISE	27	
3.1 Benchmarking	27	
3.2 Identifying and dissemination of best practices	<del>32</del>	Deleted: 33
3.3 The eGovernment and eHealth Ministerial Conferences	<del>34</del>	Deleted: 35
3.4 Information services	<del>37</del>	Deleted: 38
3.5 Information Society Forum	<del>38</del>	Deleted: 39
3.6 Relation with the legal objectives and measures	<del>40</del>	Deleted: 42
4 Efficiency, organisation and coherence of PROMISE	<del>43</del>	Deleted: 45
4.1 Programme management	<del>43</del>	Deleted: 45
4.2 The budget implementation	<del>44</del>	Deleted: 46
4.3 Project management and co-operation with other parts of DG INFSO and the Commission	<del>46</del>	Deleted: 48
4.4 Coherence of PROMISE 2000-2002	<del>48</del>	Deleted: 50
5 Utility of PROMISE	<del>49</del>	Deleted: 51
5.1 Impact of the re-focus on the utility of PROMISE	<del>49</del>	Deleted: 51
5.2 Relation of PROMISE with other IS activities in the Commission	<del>49</del>	Deleted: 51
Annex I Other IS activities in the Commission	<del>50</del>	Deleted: 53
Annex II Council Decision	<del>52</del>	Deleted: 55
Annex III Research methodology	<del>58</del>	Deleted: 62
Annex IV Interviews conducted by evaluators	<del>63</del>	Deleted: 69
Annex V Documentation	<del>64</del>	Deleted: 71



## Executive Summary

### The evaluation

This report presents the findings of the final evaluation of the multi-annual Community programme to stimulate the establishment of the Information Society in Europe, PROMISE. The evaluation was undertaken between August 2003 and November 2003 by EIM Business & Policy Research on behalf of the European Commission and under guidance of a Steering Committee appointed by the Commission. The final evaluation is used to provide ex post information on the performance and value of the programme and present lessons for the MODINIS programme which will succeed PROMISE.

### The PROMISE Programme

PROMISE was adopted on 30<sup>th</sup> March 1998, covering a 5 year period starting 1<sup>st</sup> January 1998 and ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2002. A total of €25 million was allotted for PROMISE. In response to the mid-term review and prompted by political developments in the area of IS in the first half of the year 2000, the Commission re-focused the activities of PROMISE in support of the eEurope 2002 Action Plan. PROMISE was used to monitor progress towards the objectives of the eEurope 2002 Action Plan by benchmarking Member States' performance in the objective areas. Also included in PROMISE were identification and dissemination of best practices, the contribution to the eGovernment 2001 and 2003 and the eHealth 2003 Conferences, information services and the Information Society Forum (ISF).

### Strengths

The benchmark exercise was said to have established real value for eEurope. The benchmarking exercise produced a set of indicators that did not exist before. Despite some (earlier) criticism on the methodology and the data, the general opinion about the indicators of persons interviewed for this evaluation was that most relevant subjects were covered, and that the quality of the data was good. The benchmark exercise also produced a number of spin-off activities in the area of statistics on and benchmarking of the IS.

The indicators generated a lot of attention. The indicators were an appropriate activity for raising awareness of the IS because they fitted with the contemporary logics of ranking and comparing. The indicators entailed an element of competition or peer pressure among Member States with respect to their performance in implementing the IS. This element was considered the key in the success of the indicators by most interviewees.

PROMISE contributed to the financing of the eGovernment 2001 and 2003 and the eHealth 2003 Conferences. According to key persons involved in PROMISE the choice to contribute to the conferences was based on the notion that the conferences offered a structure for the dissemination of best practices with a lot of leverage. The choice for the conferences was effective. The conferences were very successful events with considerable impact in terms of follow-up actions by national policy-makers and industry. They also triggered follow-up actions by the Commission. PROMISE derived most of its utility from the contribution to the financing of the eGovernment and eHealth Conferences.

### Lessons and recommendations

In hindsight, more could have been done to disseminate best practices. They received less emphasis in PROMISE than they deserved. In the MODINIS work programmes the balance should be shifted towards dissemination and exchange of best practices. Greater efforts should be made to support exchange of best practices at the regional level. In order to support the exchange of best practice at the regional level, co-ordination and co-operation with DG-REGIO should be improved.

With respect to the information services, SMEs were said to be unlikely to use the integrated European web portal ([http://europa.int.eu/information\\_society](http://europa.int.eu/information_society).) to look for information. They were said to need something tangible. Information on the Commission's IS policy is simply too abstract to be of (direct) value for their daily business. Public dissemination through websites should be re-designed to better meet the needs of SMEs.

The ISF was quite successful in the first few years. It made a number of important contributions. After that the creativity of the Forum's contributions declined. The forum's budget was cut, but it was never formally ended. The ISF 'withered' because the issues were explored. What has been lacking according to one of the interviewees is that the Commission did not limit the term of operation of the ISF in particular spans of time with clear targets. The Council decision on MODINIS provides the legal base for support to the work of social and economic experts and the establishment of an eEurope Steering Group. The eEurope Steering Group should have a clear mandate to address certain topics for a certain period of time. This mandate should be regularly reviewed and renewed. The ISF needs to be formally closed; the Members should be thanked for their work and informed about the new arrangements under the MODINIS programme.

The role of the PROMISE Committee in the design of the benchmark indicators was limited. The Commission involved experts from the Member States to develop the indicators. The Committee was informed about the results. The Commission should fully engage the Management Committee in the preparation and adoption of the MODINIS work programmes.

The PROMISE budget was (considerably) underspend in 1998 and 1999. Although considerable progress was made in budget utilisation in 2000-2002, there was still room for improvement. Budget utilisation should be further improved by multi-annual planning and timely initiation of public procurement actions, where needed.

The Commission should ensure an effective transfer of knowledge about programme implementation as staff are replaced, and a clear allocation of responsibilities between Units for programme and budget implementation.

The implementation of PROMISE was rather ad hoc. The programme did not define the role and tasks of the activities under PROMISE in relation to clear objectives. The programme lacked a clear strategic vision. As a result, the coherence of the programme was not entirely clear. The work programmes for MODINIS should have a clear strategic plan, but should also leave flexibility to adapt to political, technological and economic opportunities as they arise. The Commission should develop clear performance indicators for measuring the contribution of the programme's activities to the programme's objectives.





# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

On the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2002 the multi-annual Community programme to stimulate the establishment of the Information Society (IS) in Europe (PROMISE) ended. The programme covered a 5-year period starting on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1998.

The objectives of the programme, as formulated in the legal base, were:

- raising public awareness and understanding of the potential impact of the IS;
- optimising socio-economic benefits of the IS in Europe;
- enhancing Europe's role and visibility within the global dimension.

A total of €25 million was allotted for PROMISE. Table 1.1 gives the annual budget allocations.

table 1.1 Budget per annum (in million)

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	Total
in euros	10,0 mln	6,0 mln	2,5 mln	5,0 mln	4,0 mln	27,5 mln
percentag	36%	22%	9%	18%	15%	100%

Source: *Work Programmes 1998-2002*.

The Council Decision also settled the annual breakdown of the budget for each of the three categories of actions to be implemented: awareness, optimisation and global dimension. The Commission, however, did not follow that breakdown in the PROMISE Work Programme approved each year. An explanation can be found in the re-focus that took place in 2000 (see chapter 2 for details). The budget framework based on the yearly work budget by category is indicated in table 1.2. The programme is described in more detail in chapter 2.

table 1.2 Budget Framework 1998-2002 based on work programme budgets

Year	Categories	Budget in Euros	Budget in %
1998	Awareness	2,800,000	28%
	Optimisation	7,050,000	70.5%
	Global dimension	150,000	1,5%
	<b>Total 1998</b>	<b>10,000,000</b>	<b>100%</b>
1999	Awareness	1,600,000	26.7%
	Optimisation	3,500,000	58.3%
	Global dimension	900,000	15%
	<b>Total 1999</b>	<b>6,000,000</b>	<b>100%</b>
2000	Awareness	450,000	18%
	Optimisation	2,000,000	80%
	Global dimension	50,000	2%
	<b>Total 2000</b>	<b>2,500,000</b>	<b>100%</b>
2001	Support for eEurope Monitoring & Benchmarking	4,200,000	84%
	Information Services Including Web Publishing	500,000	10%
	Information Society Forum	300,000	6%
	<b>Total 2001</b>	<b>5,000,000</b>	<b>100%</b>
2002	Surveys and data collection	2,600,000	65%

Year	Categories	Budget Euros	in Budget in %
	Identification, dissemination of best practices, information services	1,400,000	35%
	Total 2002	4,000,000	100%
Total 1998-2002		27,500,000	

Source: EIM, 2003.

## 1.2 Reason for this evaluation

The legal base of the PROMISE programme requires that two evaluations had to be carried out, a mid-term evaluation and an evaluation ex post. The mid-term evaluation was carried out in 2000.

The final evaluation is required with a view to rendering accountability to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. From 1<sup>st</sup> January 2003 onwards PROMISE has been succeeded by the MODINIS programme. The evaluation of PROMISE is also intended to present lessons for MODINIS.

## 1.3 Scope and objectives of the evaluation

The mid-term evaluation reviewed the first two years of the programme. It concluded that the scope of the Council Decision was too wide, and that the stated objectives could not be achieved within the budget. PROMISE needed to focus its activities more sharply and define its priorities more clearly. Following these results as well as political developments in the area of the Information Society, the Commission decided to re-focus the activities of PROMISE in 2000.

The overall aim of this evaluation is to assess the programme's performance on the following aspects:

- programme effectiveness;
- programme efficiency and cost-effectiveness;
- programme utility;
- intervention logic.

More specifically this means that this evaluation assesses:

- 1 The new focus of PROMISE. The activities of PROMISE were re-focused in support of the eEurope 2002 Action Plan in 2000. More precisely PROMISE was subsequently used to monitor progress towards the eEurope 2002 objectives by benchmarking Member States' performances in the area of the IS. However, because of the transitional character of the programme, PROMISE evolved in an ad hoc, continuous manner. As a result, some felt there was a lack of transparency, both internally and externally, in the activities of PROMISE. This evaluation addresses these feelings of intransparency, making an inventory of the activities carried out under PROMISE in the period 2000-2002. Using the first period (1998-1999) of PROMISE as a starting point we will assess how the nature of the programme changed in the light of the mid-term evaluation and what its new focus was.
- 2 The effectiveness of the new focus. Given the re-focus of the activities of PROMISE in support of the eEurope 2002 Action Plan, this evaluation is first and foremost an assessment of the impact of PROMISE on the implementation of eEurope 2002. The main research question in this respect is: how effective was PROMISE as a means (fly wheel) for the implementation of eEurope? Nevertheless, the activities of PROMISE in the period 2000-2002 were still linked to the programme's original objectives and measures as formulated in the legal base. This will also

enable the assessment of the programme's effectiveness with respect to (some of its) original objectives.

3 The management of the re-focused programme.

In 2003-2005, PROMISE is succeeded by the MODINIS programme. The conclusions from this evaluation can therefore be taken into account in the development and adoption of the MODINIS work programmes.

## 1.4 Methodology

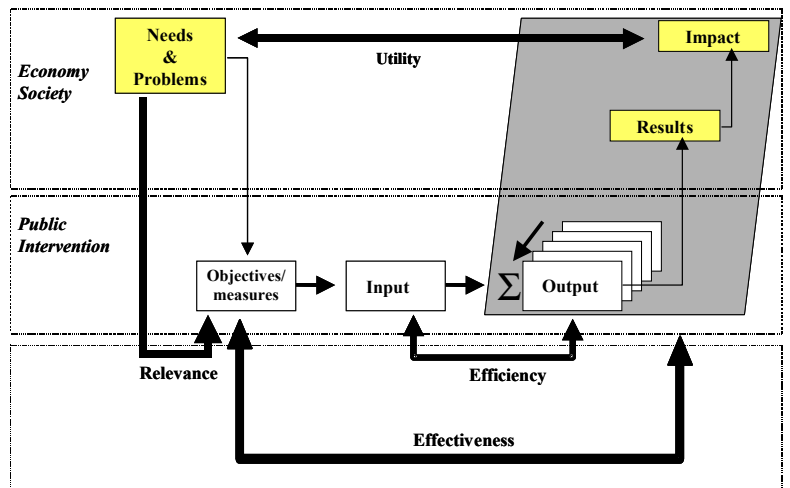
### 1.4.1 Conceptual framework

Figure 1.1 presents a general intervention logic model for public intervention. This model is applied as the conceptual framework in the evaluation study and displays a number of links. More specifically it links:

- the objectives of the programme to the needs and problems in society and/or in the economy (relevance)
- the programme's financial and human resources (input) to output (efficiency). In the case of PROMISE the output consists of all activities undertaken within the programme, i.e. surveys, studies, websites, benchmarking exercises, etc.
- programme objectives to results and the wider socio-economic impact of the programme (effectiveness). The link between objectives and results and impact is realised through the programme's output
- the programme's impact in terms of actions by Member States to the needs and problems in society and/or in the economy (utility)

figure 1.1 conceptual framework for this evaluation

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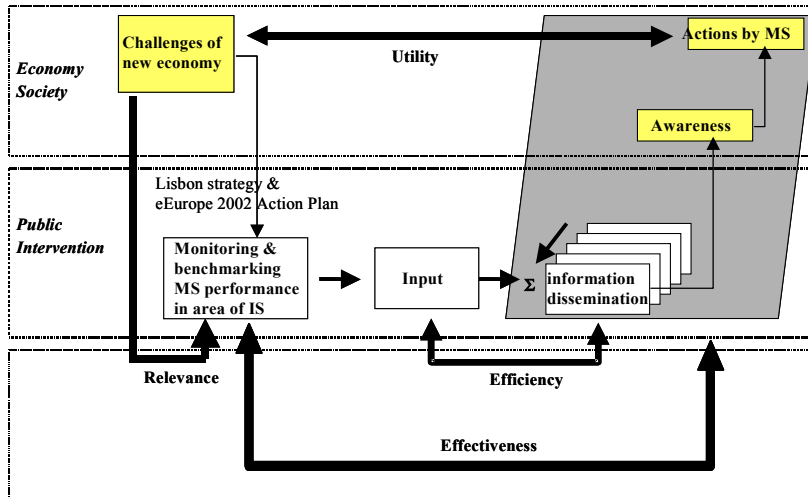


Source: EIM, 2003.

1.4.2 The conceptual framework operationalised for PROMISE

Figure 1.2 presents the intervention logic model for PROMISE. The model is explained below.

figure 1.2 Conceptual framework operationalised for PROMISE



Source: EIM, 2003.

PROMISE was re-focused in support of the eEurope 2002 Action Plan. More specifically it was used to monitor progress towards eEurope 2002 objectives by measuring and comparing Member States' performances in the area of the IS<sup>1</sup> (corresponding to **objectives and measures** in figure 1.1).

The re-focus of PROMISE was largely the result of political developments in the first half of 2000. These political developments in turn were prompted by developments in the economy and society, i.e. the challenges of the new knowledge-based economy (**needs and problems** in the economy and/or society). This is explained in the following paragraphs.

#### *Context of the re-focus*

On 23/24 March 2000 the European Council held in Lisbon concluded that "the European Union is confronted with a quantum shift resulting from globalisation and the challenges of the new knowledge-driven economy. These changes are affecting every aspect of people's lives and require a radical transformation of the European economy."<sup>2</sup> The Council recognised "it is urgent for the Union to act [quickly] to harness the full benefits of the opportunities presented."<sup>3</sup> The Council consequently agreed an overall strategy (known as the Lisbon strategy) made up of two pillars:

- Preparing the transition to a competitive, dynamic and knowledge-based economy;
  - Modernising the European social model, investing in people and combating social exclusion.
- The goal of the Lisbon strategy was to make the EU the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy with improved employment and social cohesion by 2010.<sup>4</sup>

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One of the measures necessary for the implementation of the Lisbon strategy was to create adequate 'framework conditions' for the information society in Europe. In December 1999 the Commission had launched eEurope, with the general objective to accelerate the development of "an information society for all".<sup>5</sup> The Lisbon Council endorsed the eEurope initiative, inviting the Council and the Commission "to draw up a comprehensive eEurope Action Plan to be presented at the European Council in June [2000], using an *open method of co-ordination* based on the benchmarking of national initiatives, ..."<sup>6</sup>

The Feira European Council in June 2000 endorsed the eEurope 2002 Action Plan, which set targets for the European Institutions, the Member States and the private sector for 2002 at the latest.<sup>7</sup> The European Commission was subsequently entrusted with new tasks, i.e. to monitor, benchmark and report (on a regular basis) on the implementation of the eEurope 2002 Action Plan and on progress in achieving the Action Plan's objectives.<sup>8</sup> However, much of the relevant information to monitor and benchmark the implementation of eEurope was not yet available from standard sources since the exercise required information on indicators of the development of the new economy. Hence, indicators needed to be developed. The Commission decided to use PROMISE to "fill the gaps".<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Terms of Reference for this evaluation.

<sup>2</sup> Lisbon European Council, March 2000; Presidency Conclusions.

<sup>3</sup> Lisbon European Council, March 2000; Presidency Conclusions.

<sup>4</sup> European Commission, *eEurope 2005: an information society for all*, An Action Plan to be presented in view of the Sevilla European Council, 21/22 June 2002

<sup>5</sup> COM(2001) 350 final.

<sup>6</sup> Lisbon European Council, March 2000; Presidency Conclusions.

<sup>7</sup> COM(2001) 350 final.

<sup>8</sup> COM(2001) 350 final.

<sup>9</sup> COM(2001) 350 final.

The role of PROMISE was not to support the transition of Europe to a competitive, dynamic and knowledge-based economy directly, but to act as a *flywheel*. The actions (**output**) of PROMISE consisted of information, i.e. benchmarking indicators and best practices, and dissemination of information through workshops/conferences and information services (website). The aim of its actions was to raise the awareness of IS in Member States (**results**) and trigger follow-up actions in the objective areas of the eEurope 2002 Action Plan in Member States (**impact**). The primary target level of PROMISE was the (national) policy level. If Member States changed their policy on the political objectives of the eEurope 2002 Action Plan due to PROMISE this could be considered as a significant impact.

#### 1.4.3 *Research questions and strategic focus*

On the basis of the operationalised framework the following evaluation questions can be derived. More specified questions are listed in Annex II. The list of persons interviewed for this evaluation is included in Annex III.

Effectiveness:

- Were the activities of PROMISE appropriate in view of raising awareness of the IS and triggering follow-up actions (at the policy level) in the objective areas of the eEurope 2002 Action Plan in Member States? As part of this question the value (strengths and weaknesses) of the PROMISE activities with respect to raising awareness of the IS and triggering follow-up actions (at the policy level) in the objective areas of the eEurope 2002 Action Plan in Member States are assessed.
- Did PROMISE raise awareness of the IS and trigger follow-up actions (at the policy level) in the objective areas of the eEurope 2002 Action Plan in Member States? There is no pre-designated (quantitative) level of awareness and follow-up actions to determine whether PROMISE may be considered to be a success. Therefore an assessment is made of the extent to which PROMISE raised awareness of the IS and triggered follow-up actions in Member States. Whether the results and impacts are extensive enough to be called a success will, to some extent, be a subjective judgement.
- Was the balance of the activities appropriate with a view to raising awareness and triggering follow-up actions (at the policy level) in the objective areas of the eEurope 2002 Action Plan in Member States?
- Was the budget of PROMISE appropriate? How much budget would have been appropriate?
- What was the impact of the re-focus on the programme's effectiveness?

With respect to the efficiency and organisation of PROMISE, the following issues were addressed:

- Programme management. As part of this item the following issues were addressed:
  - The decision making process, including the relation between the programme management and the PROMISE Committee
  - Where was the overall responsibility?
  - The decision making in connection with the implementation of the benchmark exercise. Was it appropriate? How should the decision to make a programme ideally be made?
- Budget implementation. As part of this issue the following questions were raised:
  - Was there an underspend?
  - Was the budget implementation inefficient?
- How was the project management arranged and how was the co-operation with other parts of DG INFSO and the Commission?
- Coherence of the re-focused programme.
- How did the re-focus affect the programme's efficiency and organisation?

With respect to the utility of PROMISE, the following questions are answered:

- What was the value-added of PROMISE in relation to other IS activities in the Commission?
- What was the impact of the re-focus on the programme's utility?

It should be emphasised that the aim of this evaluation was not to evaluate eEurope<sup>1</sup>. This evaluation had to be kept within its proper bound. The focus was on evaluating the effectiveness, efficiency and utility of PROMISE.

#### 1.4.4 *Bottom-up approach*

For this evaluation we applied a bottom-up approach. This consisted of the following steps.

##### *Mini-evaluations*

This means that, initially, mini-evaluations of the various activities undertaken within the programme took place. For each activity, it was studied to what extent the various activities succeeded in attaining their objectives (effectiveness of the activities) by looking at how the activities raised awareness and prompted follow-up actions at the policy level in Member States. Similarly for each activity the link between the financial and human resources (input) and the output has been studied (efficiency and cost-effectiveness).

##### *Aggregation of results of mini-evaluations and consistency*

The results of the mini-evaluations were aggregated and translated to the programme level. In this aggregation process, at first the objectives of the various activities were connected with the objectives and measures of the PROMISE programme (taking into account the re-focus in 2000). This analysis helped to define and describe the accents and threads running through the objectives and measures of the PROMISE programme in the evaluation period.

In a second step the effectiveness and efficiency of the various activities were compared with the aim to:

- aggregate some quantitative data to the programme level;
- look for best practices at activity level;

<sup>1</sup> There are a number of parallel activities within Unit A4 of DG INFSO:

- September, mid-term evaluation of eEurope objectives
- October/November, ex post assessment of instrument for co-operation between MS (external study)

– study the interactions between the various activities.

This procedure formed the basis for lessons to be learnt at activity level (how can the effectiveness and efficiency of an activity be maximised?) as well as at the programme level (what is the right mix of activities to enhance the programme's effectiveness, utility and efficiency?).

*Analysis of the effectiveness, utility and efficiency of the PROMISE programme as a whole and lessons to learn*

In the final step of the bottom-up approach, the PROMISE programme as a whole has been evaluated. In this final step, the conclusions of the mini-evaluations were integrated with the results of a series of qualitative interviews with a more programme related and future-oriented focus. For this purpose, the interviewees were asked for their opinion about the effectiveness, efficiency and utility of the PROMISE programme as a whole in relation to the objectives of the re-focus and with respect to other programmes. Confronting them with the results of mini-evaluations enhanced the quality of the interview outcome and the lessons, which could be drawn according to the interviewees.

## 1.5 Reader

The report is organised as follows:

Chapter 2: Background and factual description of PROMISE

Chapter 3: Appraisal of the effectiveness of PROMISE

Chapter 4: Appraisal of the efficiency, organisation and coherence of PROMISE

Chapter 5: Appraisal of the utility of PROMISE

The appendices contain a description of other IS activities in the European Commission, the Council Decision of 30 March 1998, the research methodology and lists of interviewees and documentation.

## 2 The PROMISE programme

### 2.1 History and objectives of PROMISE

In May 1994 the High Level Group of the Information Society published the report 'Europe and the Global Information Society', the Bangemann report. The report argued that Europe was participating in the 'new revolution', "but with an approach still too fragmentary and which could reduce expected benefits". The expected benefits are given in table 2.1.

table 2.1 Expected benefits of Information Society

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A more caring European society with a significantly higher quality of life and a wider choice of services and entertainment.
Commercial success from new products and services.
New opportunities for regions to express their identities while minimising geographical drawbacks.
More efficient, more transparent and more responsive public services.
More effective management and more competitive companies with better access to services, customers and suppliers.
Commercial opportunities for Europe's telecommunications operators.
New and strong-growing markets for hardware and software suppliers in the computer and consumer electronics industries at home and abroad.

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Source: *Bangemann report, 1994.*

The Commission activities to promote the IS started soon after the publication of the Bangemann report. Table 2.2 lists a number of preparatory actions related to the promotion of the IS that are directly related to PROMISE or were included within PROMISE.

table 2.2 Key actions prior to PROMISE

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Establishment of the Information Society Forum
Establishment of the Information Society Activity Centre and the creation within ISAC of ISPO, the Information Society Project Office
The 1996 and 1997 project grant programmes
The 1996 and 1997 Information Society Awareness Weeks
The ESIS European Survey of Information Society projects
The Eurobarometer 50.1 market research exercise

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Source: *Mid-term evaluation, 2000.*

PROMISE was adopted on 30<sup>th</sup> March 1998, covering a 5 year period starting 1<sup>st</sup> January 1998 and ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2002.

The main objectives of the programme were:

- increasing public awareness and understanding of the potential impact of the Information Society and its new applications throughout Europe, stimulating people's motivation and ability to participate in the change to the Information Society;
- optimising socio-economic benefits of the Information Society in Europe, by analysing its technical, economic, social and regulatory aspects, by appraising the challenges raised by the transition to the IS, inter alia as regards employment, and by promoting synergy and cooperation between European and national levels;
- enhancing Europe's role and visibility within the global dimension of the Information Society.

Table 2.3 gives the actions prepared in 1998, linked to the three objective areas.

table 2.3 PROMISE Work Programme 1998

<i>Objective</i>	<i>Activities</i>
Awareness raising: budget €2.8m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– European IS Day campaign</li> <li>– Information services: ISPO website, newsletters, help desk, leaflets</li> <li>– Support of the Information Society Forum</li> <li>– Promotion of the Information Society through European media</li> <li>– Subventions typically relating to ongoing or pre-1998 awards for seminars, conferences, etc</li> </ul>
Optimising the socio-economic benefits: budget €7.05m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– ESIS conference and extension of ESIS to CEECs and Mediterranean countries</li> <li>– Virtual 3D exercise explaining EU institutions</li> <li>– IS studies co-ordination</li> <li>– Investment in the Eurobarometer survey of opinion and attitudes</li> <li>– Review deliverables from projects funded by ISPO grants 1996-1998</li> <li>– Targeted actions: grant-aided support for the activities in Member States – the Epsilon call for proposals</li> <li>– Subventions typically relating to ongoing or pre-1998 awards for seminars, conferences, etc</li> </ul>
The global dimension: budget €0.15m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Action plans for information exchange with non-EU countries</li> </ul>

Source: *PROMISE Work Programme 1998*.

The PROMISE work programme 1998 stated that there was a slightly higher emphasis on awareness "as it [was] the first year of the programme. In fact ... actions aimed at optimising socio-economic benefits of the IS, can be more fruitful only if the people, the businesses, and the social players concerned are already aware, motivated and ready to participate in the evolution towards the IS. In the following years, a further budget shift to the optimisation of the socio-economic benefits should take place."

The main objectives of the PROMISE work programme 1999 was to "overcome perceived shortcomings and lack of cohesion in the Commission, and increase the consistency and synergy of Member States policies and activities for the promotion of the Information Society, ..." For this purpose the following actions were implemented (table 2.4).

table 2.4 PROMISE Work Programme 1999

<i>Objective</i>	<i>Activities</i>
Awareness raising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- European IS Day campaign - Framework contract, restricted call or subvention when applicable</li> <li>- SME focused awareness raising and IS best practices workshop</li> <li>- Framework contract, restricted call when applicable</li> <li>- Multimedia room/mobile roadshow – Framework contract, call for tenders</li> <li>- Information services - Framework contract for support services</li> <li>- Targeted actions - Support for specific actions in Member States via application of grants</li> </ul>
Optimising the socio-economic benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prolongation of Member States ESIS survey and planning for the future work frame</li> <li>- Continuation of the extension of ESIS to CEECs and the Mediterranean countries</li> <li>- Establishment of European IS Best Practices- Gallery</li> <li>- Eurobarometer Survey</li> <li>- Information Society Forum - Framework contract for support services when applicable</li> <li>- Follow-up and review of project deliverables of ISPO calls 1996-1998</li> <li>- Reservation for new actions and extension for existing ones</li> <li>- Targeted actions- Support for specific actions in Member States via application of grants</li> </ul>
The global dimension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implementation of IDEIS call for proposal</li> <li>- Enhancing European IS visibility through inventories and link interfaces - Framework contract, restricted call if applicable</li> </ul>

Source: PROMISE Work Programme 1999.

## 2.2 Work programme 2000

Preparations for the work programme 2000 were made in mid 1999. The Commission focused the execution of the PROMISE programme on two objectives and three measures related to the original Council Decision:

- Increasing public awareness and understanding of the potential impact of the Information Society and its new applications throughout Europe, stimulating people's motivation and ability to participate in the change to the Information Society;
  - The monitoring of peoples' awareness of and familiarisation with the Information Society services and applications.
- Optimising socio-economic benefits of the Information Society in Europe by analysing its technical, economic, social and regulatory aspects, by appraising the challenges raised by the transition to the Information Society, inter alia as regards employment, and by promoting synergy and cooperation between European and national levels;
  - The contribution, on the basis of identified best programmes and practices, to the European wide take-up of successful examples in Information Society policies, projects and services;
  - The promotion of exchange of expertise and experience between ongoing studies and activities at European and national level.

The work programme was approved by the PROMISE Committee in its meeting of 8-9 December 1999.

However, in the course of 2000 the following developments took place:

- 1 The publication of the mid-term evaluation. In accordance with article 8 of the PROMISE Council Decision the programme was subject to an intermediate evaluation which was undertaken by a panel of independent experts. The final report was submitted to the Commission in January 2000. The expert panel applauded the cover-all response of the PROMISE programme but concluded that the scope of the Council Decision was simply too wide. Moreover, the given objectives could not be achieved with the amount of money available. The panel saw clear progress towards a more strategic approach in the execution of the programme through focussing on multipliers and leverages. The panel stated further that PROMISE lacked clear links to the Commission's Information Society Policy objectives and that the work programmes were too disperse and clearly lacking focus. In the view of the panel such broad objectives as increasing the IS global awareness and optimising socio-economic benefits could no longer be the driving force behind the PROMISE programme. The main recommendation was to set up a strategic focus, by giving PROMISE specific policy directions to reflect policy priorities. PROMISE needed to have quantifiable goals and concentrate on proven strengths, by, in particular, facilitating networking and by providing access to information.
- 2 Re-focus of PROMISE on monitoring and benchmarking progress towards the objectives of the eEurope 2002 Action Plan. In section 1.4.2 of this report we described the (political) events that led up to the re-focus.

These developments made it imperative to revise the work programme 2000 in order to:

- suspend the launching of new actions which would not be in line with the new Information Society priorities.
- focus the work programme 2000 activities, in so far as possible in the remaining period of the year, on the new priorities and context.

Projects cancelled were:

- promoting the IS through European television;
- the IS and regional television;
- the IS and the press;
- the IS know-how transfer for cities and regions;
- European IS best practises gallery;
- Cooperation for the IS take-up by SMEs;
- Implementing IDEIS (International Dialogue and information Exchange for the Deployment of a global Information Society).

Other activities, launched as part of prior PROMISE work programmes were to be completed by the end of 2000.

The overall objective of the revised Work programme 2000 was to support implementation and follow-up of the e-Europe Action Plan, in particular through:

- data collection and benchmarking to monitor the achievement of its overall targets and those in each of the key action lines;
- supporting the further improvement and integration of the ISPO website into a European public web portal on IS, providing effective and interactive communication on IS related information with citizens, the business sector and administrations.

Therefore the budget for the Eurobarometer Survey was raised substantially. In 2000 half of the amount planned was earmarked for the Eurobarometer.

The PROMISE work programme for the year 2000 was approved by Commission Decision on 28 March 2000. The budget allocation for the revised Work programme 2000 is given in table 2.5, while table 2.6 shows the main characteristics of the activities in this work programme.

table 2.5 Revised PROMISE Work Programme 2000

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Budget</i>
<b>1 Awareness raising and understanding of the potential impact of IS</b>	
1.1 Information services and tools	400,000
1.2 Communicating IS to the public: The CERP challenge	50,000
	450,000
<b>2 Optimising the socio-economic benefits of IS in Europe</b>	
2.1 Exploring the IS development in the EU	475,000
2.2 Eurobarometer Survey	1,200,000
2.3 Information Society Forum	205,000
2.4 Reserve impact of the ICTs on ultra peripheral regions of the EU	120,000
	2,000,000
<b>3 Enhancing Europe's role and visibility within the global dimension</b>	
3.1 Technical consultations and support for European initiatives	50,000
	50,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,500,000</b>

Source: PROMISE Work programme 2000.

table 2.6 Planned activities in Work programme 2000

<i>Activities</i>	
<b>1.1 Information services and tools</b>	<p>Further development, expansion, and promotion of the ISPO website, going beyond the simple provision of information to include more services and interactivity. One of the key objectives of eEurope is to ensure that governments fully exploit the Internet to make information and services as accessible as possible. The further development, expansion and promotion of the ISPO website are to make evident that the Commission in general and DG INFSO in particular are fully aware of and can exploit the benefits of web technology. In April 2001 the ISPO website was merged with the <u>Information Society site on Europe to become the IS Thematic website.</u></p>
<b>1.2 The CERP<sup>1</sup> Challenge</b>	<p>The CERP Communication Challenge 2000 is an international public relations competition amongst students of communications/public relations' courses of European Universities, for the best ideas/campaigns to promote IS to the public. Part of this activity is announcing the competition throughout European colleges and universities. The Challenge assignment is designed to enable a team of students to address a real life public relations communications issue. In 1999 CERP carried out a pilot challenge which was quite successful. The Challenge will provide a meaningful public relations educational experience for students. Apart from its other merits, this is a cheap way of generating ideas and research that will otherwise cost considerably more than this budget.</p>
<b>2.1 Exploring the IS development in the EU and in the CEECs and Mediterranean Countries (ESIS 2 extension)</b>	<p>ESIS 2 is recognised as a rich source of information about the development of the IS in Central and Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean Countries, and also in the EU. The Warsaw IS Conference, which took place in May 2000, has confirmed this interest and participants called for the extension of the eEurope initiative to Central and Eastern Europe. ESIS 2 also contributed to the EUMEDIS for the Mediterranean Countries by providing useful information for the preparation of proposals for the current call. The objective is to provide useful information about the development of the IS in the EU, in Central and Eastern Europe and in the Mediterranean Countries.</p>
<b>2.2 Eurobarometer survey</b>	<p>In order to monitor the impact of eEurope there is a need for up-to-date and focused data collection to support the follow-up of the Action Plan. There are various ongoing statistical data gathering initiatives at national and international level related to the IS and the knowledge economy, including some by Eurostat and national statistical offices, and others by private consultancies and industry associations. However, these statistics were not sufficient to cover all the areas where e-Europe is expected to have an impact, it is sometimes difficult to assess their quality, and often, they are not comparable. Hence the need for specific surveys and/or studies to monitor the impact of e-Europe and provide a solid basis for reporting on its progress at all levels. Work programme 2000 foresees data collection on the attitudes of the general public towards applications and products and on the usage of ICT within relevant groups (general practitioners, teachers, entrepreneurs, mayors etc.). Aim is to establish an annual series of surveys to provide eEurope relevant data both in EU Member States and in third countries.</p> <p>In 2000, the following activities were foreseen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a qualitative survey on non usage and hurdles to usage of ICT in EU and EFTA Countries;</li> <li>- a pan European survey on internet access and use;</li> </ul> <p>a pan European survey on ICT access and use in education and training.</p>
<b>2.3 Information Society Forum</b>	

<sup>1</sup> European Public Relation Confederation

#### Activities

The IS Forum plays an advisory role to the Commission. Its mission is to provide the opportunity for representatives from a variety of different groups and interests to contribute to open debate and reflection on the challenges of the Information Society. The need has been recognised for a re-focus and reorganisation in the composition and working methods of the Forum, to overcome perceived weaknesses in the participation of members and the visibility of their work and to make this more effective. Activities for the remaining part of 2000 concentrate on redesigning the IS Forum, which should, in the future, focus on a limited number of actions and initiatives and make more extensive use of electronic and networking online facilities to carry out collaborative work. The re-focus and reorganisation was discussed at the Warsaw IS Conference, which took place in May 2000..

#### 2.4 Reserve impact of the ICTs on ultra peripheral regions of the EU

A study as to the impact of the information and communication technologies in the outermost regions of the European Union has been launched in order to analyse those needs which could be met by new technologies and to outline the measures to be taken to exploit the changes brought about by information technologies. The study will give a picture of the state of the Information Society in these regions and indicate the condition for its development and the potential actors in that process. It will also study the possibility of co-operation with neighbouring regions. Finally the outcomes will set out the parameters for a possible Community initiative specifically for those regions. The target groups are ultra peripheral regions of the EU

#### 3.1 Technical consultations and support to European initiatives

The re-focus led to part of this action being cancelled. Furthermore, no major new activities were launched with regard to this project.

Source: PROMISE Work programme 2000.

## 2.3 Work programmes 2001 and 2002

PROMISE work programmes 2001 and 2002 were in line with the re-focus of PROMISE.

In terms of objectives set in Council Decision 98/253/EC, work programmes 2001 and 2002 concentrated in particular on actions addressing objective two, optimising the socio-economic benefits of the IS in Europe. In addition, some actions in support of objective one, increasing awareness and understanding of the IS in Europe were included. The third PROMISE objective, to enhance Europe's visibility within the global dimension of the Information Society, was addressed indirectly by the close link to eEurope, but was not covered by specific actions of the work programmes.

The focused objectives for 2001 and 2002 were:

- contribution to benchmarking activities for the development of the Information Society in Europe;
- identification, analysis and improved dissemination of best practices related to priority areas of the eEurope 2002 Action Plan.

Tables 2.7 and 2.8 below present a general description of PROMISE activities in the period 2001 and 2002. In table 2.9 we will specify the activities of the two work programmes in more detail.

table 2.7 PROMISE Work programme 2001

Activities	Budget	Programme objective
1 Benchmarking Surveys and data collection	3,600,000	Awareness raising and Optimising socio-economic benefit
2 Identification and dissemination of best practices Studies and conferences	600,000	Optimising socio-economic benefit
3 Information services including web publishing		

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Budget</i>	<i>Programme objective</i>
Website, newsletter, help desk	500,000	Awareness raising and optimising socio-economic benefits
4 Information society forum	300,000	Optimising socio-economic benefits
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,000,000</b>	

Source: PROMISE Work programme 2001.

table 2.8 PROMISE Work Programme 2002

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Budget</i>	<i>Programme objective</i>
1 Benchmarking Surveys and data collection	2,140,000	Awareness raising and Optimising socio-economic benefit
2 Identification and dissemination of best practices Studies and conferences	1,750,000	Optimising socio-economic benefit
3 Information services Website, newsletter, help desk	110,000	Awareness raising and optimising socio-economic benefits
4 Information Society Forum	-	Optimising socio-economic benefits
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,000,000</b>	

Source: PROMISE Work programme 2002.

table 2.9 Planned activities in work programmes 2001-2002

<i>Activities</i>	
<b>1.1</b>	<p><b>Benchmarking</b></p> <p><u>Surveys:</u></p> <p>Surveys will be undertaken on a regular basis. Such surveys will be launched using the Eurobarometer approach and methodology addressing both the general public and sub-sectors of the population, such as doctors and teachers, whose Internet use patterns are particularly important to eEurope monitoring.</p> <p><u>Studies:</u></p> <p>In addition to survey-based data collection there is also a need for more qualitative data on developments. These data is obtained through a series of focused studies which address key elements of the eEurope Action Plan, where quantitative data are of limited usefulness, or difficult to collect, for example the development of eGovernment or the provision of European content on the Internet.</p>
<b>1.2</b>	<p><b>Identifying and dissemination of best practices</b></p> <p><u>Studies</u></p> <p>The objective is devising qualitative benchmarks to enable Member States to exchange best practice. To be effective quantitative benchmarking needs to be linked to qualitative benchmarks on best practice approaches. Therefore, a key element in the eEurope benchmarking exercise is to devise qualitative benchmarks to enable Member States to exchange best practice. This is particularly the case in areas where quantitative benchmarks are difficult to establish such as government on-line and security of networks. Linkages need to be established between exemplary performance in the quantitative benchmarking exercise and supportive policy measures. Studies will be required to establish best practice examples of policies which have resulted in high performance on quantitative indicators, in order to provide Member States with a portfolio of successful policy approaches, which could support their own progress towards the targets. The number and nature of such studies will be dependent on the outcome of the qualitative benchmarking exercise and cannot be definitively established in advance.</p> <p><u>Workshops and conferences:</u></p> <p>Further activities will be required in order to underpin the successful achievement of eEurope. Securing the eEurope objectives will require the involvement of all relevant parties in a common effort to remove barriers and secure solutions. In many cases this will require a process of consultation and consensus building with interested parties e.g. industry, academia, trade unions, users. It is therefore intended to support a series of targeted workshops and conferences in eEurope related areas to discuss specific eEurope targets and spread awareness of the achievements and challenges of eEurope.</p>
<b>2.</b>	<p><b>Information services including web publishing</b></p> <p>The presentation of Information Society content e.g policies, initiatives and projects on the web, initiated in 2001 with the implementation of the eEurope portal. This will focus in particular in merging IS related contents of existing web-sites controlled by the Commission, identifying and including new content (and services), with special attention to the results of the eEurope benchmarking process. Further exploit Internet interactivity in order to support: information services, communication services and transaction services.</p>
<b>3.</b>	<p><b>Information Society Forum</b></p> <p>The Forum consists of experts representing a broad range of interests. The original objective of the Forum was to deliver advice and recommendations with respect to the challenges to overcome for the development of the Information Society. The Forum should be re-oriented, increasingly focusing on questions related to the optimisation of eEurope. Given its civil society membership structure and the fact that it is well suited to work on the potential of the new economy in the context of the enlargement, the advise of the Forum will be required to address specific questions in these contexts.</p>

Source: PROMISE Work programmes 2001 and 2002.



## 3 Effectiveness of PROMISE

In this chapter we assess the effectiveness of PROMISE. We divided the activities of PROMISE introduced in the last chapter into the following five categories:

- benchmarking;
- best practices;
- conferences;
- information services;
- Information Society Forum.

For each of these categories we assessed the effectiveness using the research questions specified under 'effectiveness' in section 1.4.3 as a point of reference. The results are presented below.

This evaluation does not primarily refer back to the legal base for assessing the effectiveness of PROMISE. Nevertheless we still linked the activities of PROMISE in the period 2000-2002 to the programme's original objectives and measures of the programme as formulated in the legal base. This will enable us to also assess the programme's effectiveness with respect to (some of its) original objectives. This is done in section 3.6.

### 3.1 Benchmarking

#### 3.1.1 *Background*

##### *Benchmarking: a tool for policy assessment*

Benchmarking is currently regarded as the most useful methodology for measuring progress towards the eEurope objectives. Benchmarking is however very difficult to carry out in the absence of the ideal conditions to apply it. In an ideal situation there are two perfectly similar circumstances to be compared, by means of quantitative indicators referring to the same variables.<sup>1</sup>

The quantitative indicators must be significant and must address a set of critical factors common to the practices to be compared. Furthermore, accurate checks and measuring and ranking techniques are needed to deliver good benchmarks.

##### *Benchmarking eEurope*

eEurope is about using new technologies to make a difference. The benchmarking programme is about assessing that difference. It is more than simply measuring progress. By measuring and monitoring developments which are indicative of what is happening in the Information Society, benchmarking eEurope will make it possible to take stock of the state of affairs and take informed decisions for the future.

The facts and figures from the benchmarking programme will be used to:

- evaluate the net overall impact of eEurope and the information society;
- show the current levels of activity in key areas;

<sup>1</sup> First Annual Report, Deeds, [www.deeds-ist.org/PG4/Annual\\_Report-ic14.pdf](http://www.deeds-ist.org/PG4/Annual_Report-ic14.pdf)

- shape future policy, by informing policy-making.

### 3.1.2 The benchmark exercise under PROMISE

#### *Development of the indicators*

In 2000, the PROMISE programme was re-focused in support of the eEurope 2002 Action Plan. Much of the relevant information to monitor and benchmark the implementation of eEurope was not yet available from standard sources since the exercise required information on indicators of the development of the new economy. As SBIS<sup>1</sup> states: 'Available official statistics were found seriously inadequate to the task of monitoring Europe's progress in the IS. The bulk of official statistics were tuned to the economic and social systems typical of a Europe emerging from World War II, when manufacturing dominated over services, tangible assets over intangible and traditional over flexible employment models'. Also, many existing data were only available on national level or for a limited number of Member States and not regularly updated.

Hence, indicators needed to be developed. For data collection a number of guidelines were applied<sup>2</sup>:

- The methodology should be one for all Member States.
- Data should be recent because Internet statistics quickly become dated and lose their relevance to policy development.
- Data should be cross-checked with existing data sources from Member States, notably statistical offices, other international institutions such as the OECD, and private sector studies.
- Data has to cover all 15 Member States and Norway and Iceland and, where possible the US, which gives additional results for comparison.

For the development of indicators the Council involved experts from the Member States. Indicators were devised by particular working groups.

eEurope benchmarking was based on a list of 23 key indicators agreed in November 2000 (table 3.1).

The data collection was based on:

- the Eurobarometer methodology;
- studies launched on different aspects of the IS;
- the use of other sources of information such as OECD.

The Eurobarometer methodology involved telephone surveys (i.e. the Eurobarometer methodology). In some cases (e.g. in Greece, Portugal and other areas with insufficient telephone penetration) the telephone surveys were substituted by face-to-face interviews. The objective was to make relevant and up to date information available at short notice.

table 3.1 23 key indicators

<i>Objective</i>	<i>key indicator</i>
<b>1. A cheaper, faster, secure Internet</b>	
Cheaper, faster internet	Percentage of population who regularly use the Internet Percentage of households with internet access at home Internet access costs
Faster internet for researchers and students	Speed of interconnections and services available between and within the national research and education networks (NRENs) within EU and world-wide
Secure networks and smartcards	Number of secure servers per million inhabitants

<sup>1</sup> www.sibis-eu.org.

<sup>2</sup> eEurope Benchmarking Report, 5.2.2002 see eEurope website.

<i>Objective</i>	<i>key indicator</i>
	Percentage of Internet-using public that have experienced security problems
<b>2. Investing in people and skills</b>	
European youth into the digital age	Number of computers per 100 pupils in primary/ secondary/ tertiary levels Number of computers connected to the Internet per 100 pupils in primary/secondary/tertiary levels Number of computers with high speed connections to the Internet per 100 pupils in primary/secondary/tertiary levels Percentage of teachers using the Internet for non-computing teaching on a regular basis
Working in the knowledge-based economy	Percentage of workforce with (at least) basic IT training Number of places and graduates in ICT related third level education Percentage of workforce using telework
Participation in the knowledge-based economy	Number of Public Internet Points (PIAP) per 1000 inhabitants  Percentage of central government websites that conform to the WAI accessibility guidelines at level A
<b>3. Stimulating the use of the Internet</b>	
Accelerating e-commerce	Percentage of companies that buy and sell over the Internet
Government on-line	Percentage of basic public services available on-line Public use of government on on-line services Percentage of public procurement which can be carried out on-line
Health on-line	Percentage of health professionals with Internet access Use of different categories of web content by health professionals
European digital content for global networks	Percentage of EU websites in the national top 50 visited
Intelligent Transport Systems	Percentage of the motorway network (vs. total length of network) equipped with congestion information and management systems

Source: PROMISE Work Programme 1999.

The first results from eEurope benchmarking were analysed in the Spring European Council on March 23-24 2001. This has been followed by the eEurope benchmarking report dated February 5<sup>th</sup> 2002.

#### *Quality of the indicators*

Regular measurement of the indicators was planned. Table 3.2 shows the actual measurement and the frequency of measurement. Four indicators were not measured at all, while other indicators were not measured as frequently as planned. Annual measurement is planned in the eEurope 2005 benchmark. Transfer to Eurostat and national statistical bureaus is a solid basis for this.

table 3.2 Measurement of indicators

Indicator	2000	2001	2002	Source
1. percentage of households with Internet access at home	X	X	X	Eurobarometer
2. percentage of population with Internet access at home	-	X	X	
3. Internet access costs	X	X	X	Eurobarometer/ OECD/Teligen
4. speed of interconnections and services available for researchers and students	-	X	-	EC Terena
5. number of secure servers per million inhabitants	X	X	-	OECD/ Eurobarometer
6. percentage of Internet-using public that have experienced security problems	X	X	X	OECD/ Eurobarometer
7. number of computers per 100 pupils	-	X	X	Eurobarometer
8. number of computers connected to the Internet	-	X	X	Eurobarometer
9. number of computers with high speed connections	-	-	X	
10. percentage of teachers using the Internet for non-computing teaching on a regular basis	-	-	-	
11. percentage of workforce with (at least) basic IT training	X	X	-	Eurobarometer
12. number of places and graduates in ICT related third level education	-	-	-	-
13. percentage of workforce using telework	X	-	-	ESDIS
14. number of Public Internet Points per 1000 inhabitants	X	-	-	ESDIS
15. percentage of central government websites	X	-	-	CGEY
16. percentage of companies that buy and sell over the Internet	-	X	-	Eurobarometer
17. percentage of basic public services	-	X	X	Eurobarometer, CGEY
18. public use of government on-line services percentage of public procurement	X	X	X	Eurobarometer
19. percentage of public procurement on-line				
20. percentage of health professionals with Internet access	-	X	X	Eurobarometer

+ = indicator measured, - = indicator not measured

Indicator	2000	2001		
21. use of different categories of web content by health professionals	-	X		
22. percentage of EU websites in the national top 50 visited	-	X		
23. percentage of motorway network (vs. Total length of network) equipped with congestion information and management systems	-	-		

Sources: eEurope Impact and priorities, eEurope Benchmarking Report, website and interviews.

The benchmarking exercise has been criticised for its methodology and data. A need for reliable and directly comparable IS-data for all Member States had to be matched with a 'need for speed' (data should be recent because Internet statistics become outdated quickly and lose their relevance for policy development). Therefore some concessions had to be made.

Our interviews produced the following comments concerning the quality of the indicators:

- “Quick and dirty”
- “They [the indicators] are of sufficient quality to be credible”
- “The advantage is speed, the drawback is that information is not always correct”<sup>1</sup> [and hence had to be corrected by the Commission before the results could be published].

Quote:

[as for benchmark data] Decision makers on the PROMISE re-focus insisted that imperfect data were better than no data. The key benchmark data are highly relevant, for example on the use of internet and eCommerce, but a few are questionable, with the number of motorway miles providing for eSteering of traffic as an example. Too large [statistical] confidence intervals is another criticism, given sample sizes. But on the other hand the project has initiated a process of learning-by-doing which has made the benchmark criteria and their measurement a lot better since”.

Nevertheless, most interviewees we asked about the indicators agreed that the benchmarking exercise had established real value for eEurope. It produced a set of political indicators that did not exist before.

Meanwhile most of the initial shortcomings have been corrected. The general opinion on the indicators is that the most relevant subjects are covered, and that the quality of the data exceeds the quality of alternative sources like private research firms by far.

Quote:

“Without PROMISE, useful statistics for all of the European Union would not have been available”.

#### *Spin-off activities from the benchmark exercise*

The benchmark exercise led to a number of spin-off activities. Given the limited scope of this evaluation and the fact that we were largely dependent on a limited number of interviews, it was not possible to give a more exhaustive outline of the spin-off from the benchmark exercise. We can only present pieces of the full effect:

- More interest in and budget for the IS measurement with National Statistical Offices, more and better IS figures, and standardisation between Member States. This is for instance the case with the National Statistical Institutes in Finland, Sweden and Denmark.<sup>2</sup>
- The benchmark exercise was used as input for setting up of OECD statistics.<sup>3</sup>
- Follow-up benchmarks. An Italian regional development agency reported that it used the eEurope benchmark methodology to develop a regional benchmark. The region is now trying to expand the benchmark to include all ten regions in Italy. On the other hand, two interviews with representatives of German regions indicated that the monitoring and benchmarking of eEurope has little follow-up in this country.
- Input for eEurope 2005 Action Plan. The benchmark indicators of eEurope 2005 were adjusted on the basis of experience gained with the earlier version. For the eEurope 2005 Action Plan the indicators will be produced in co-operation with National Statistical Offices and EUROSTAT.

<sup>1</sup> E.g. the contractor investigated the number of Internet connections at home. Instead of using the number of people with a telephone they used the total population as denominator.

<sup>2</sup> See also: Nordic Information Society Statistics 2002, Nordic Council of Ministers, Statistics Denmark, Statistics Finland, Statistics Iceland, Statistics Norway, Statistics Sweden, 2002.

<sup>3</sup> For instance: Measuring the Information Economy, OECD, 2002.

*Effectiveness of the benchmark exercise in raising awareness of the IS and triggering follow-up actions at the policy level in Member States*

The indicators generated a lot of attention. They had coverage in the press, and were referred to in articles. Trade organisations and citizen organisations used the information to back up their policy statements. In addition, the indicators can be found in a great number of policy documents and on a great number of websites.<sup>1</sup> Hence, with respect to raising awareness, the benchmark exercise can be regarded as very effective.

The indicators were an appropriate activity for raising awareness of the IS because they fitted with the contemporary logics of ranking and comparing. The indicators entailed an element of competition or peer pressure among Member States with respect to their performance in implementing the IS. This element was considered the key in the success of the indicators by most interviewees.

Quote:

"Rankings related tot ICT make excellent material for headlines in newspapers".

Whether the benchmark exercise had impact in the sense that Member States actually adjusted their policies as a result of it, is hard to establish. One interviewee indicated that in Germany the impact of benchmarking was limited overall. The *communis opinio* among the other policymakers we interviewed was that the benchmark indicators had increased their awareness and had made them think, but only a few were able to give concrete examples of policy actions taken as a direct result of the benchmark exercise.<sup>2</sup> Evaluation experts refer to this as the attribution problem. Policy changes in the area of the IS are generally influenced by many additional factors. The influence of a single source is then hard to establish. This is not to say that the benchmark exercise had no impact, only that the impact is hard to disentangle from the web of other factors influencing policy changes in the area of the IS.

*Indirect effect of the benchmark exercise*

The benchmark exercise had an important indirect effect. According to Commission officials involved, the benchmarking study on eGovernment acted as a trigger for the eGovernment 2001 Conference. This conference, in turn, created a chain of events, with a follow-up conference on eGovernment under the Italian EU Presidency (July 2003), and the eHealth 2003 Conference<sup>3</sup>. The conferences can be considered very successful events with considerable impact.

## 3.2 Identifying and dissemination of best practices

### 3.2.1 Background

Examples of good practices are designed to inspire policy makers at different levels to critically assess their own approaches and when necessary to adapt their policies accordingly. A good knowledge of

<sup>1</sup> For instance:

- Information Society Commission: eInclusion: expanding the Information Society in Ireland, October 2003.

- [www.infosociety.gr](http://www.infosociety.gr)

- [www.bmwi.de](http://www.bmwi.de)

<sup>2</sup> An example provided was the UK with the adoption of broadband. According to one interviewee the benchmark produced pressure to lower prices. This was followed by actions in various areas. The UK is now aiming to become the leading EU Member State with respect to access to broadband. Another example provided was Germany with the eGovernment. According to an interviewee the eGovernment 2002 study led to pressure from the Secretary of State on his officials to take measures.

<sup>3</sup> A follow-up conference under the Irish Presidency has been scheduled for May 5-6, 2004 in Cork.

successful practices should provide the Member States and EFTA<sup>1</sup> countries, with a knowledge base on which to build more efficient strategies. Furthermore it should lead to better understanding and should help to design new measures. The best practices methodology can be considered as qualitative benchmarking.

### 3.2.2 *Best practices under PROMISE*

Under PROMISE a number of studies in the area of best practices were conducted, for instance on:

- public procurement;
- public Internet Access points;
- regulatory change and employment in EU telecoms;
- measurement of quality of online public services;
- back-office reorganisation.

The experience of the Commission with the best practice workshops is that policymakers were interested in participating in and to presenting their own example. Internal evaluations by Unit A1 of DG INFSO indicate that *individual* workshops were useful for participants. The feedback from participants was that the exchange of best practice was very effective and that people who participated kept in touch. Yet, what the impact of the workshops in terms of 'sensitisation' of policymakers and triggering of follow-up actions at the policy level is, is difficult to say. It is hard to tell because of all other factors that influence political decisions on the IS.<sup>2</sup> The influence is not linear. One cannot know how much influence a single workshop had.

However, in the case of PROMISE the potential impact of the dissemination of best practices was limited by two factors:

- For the dissemination of best practices to have impact, the Commission needs to organise adequate follow-up. A single workshop will not make a difference.
- The best practices were mainly addressed at policymakers at the *national* level. Yet, the implementation of the IS often happens at the regional and local level. The regions are important actors of the implementation.<sup>3</sup> So this is where good practice examples arise on the one hand, and are needed on the other. The dissemination of best practice should be more focused on *regional* best practice. The best practices were supposed to be extended to the Regions by Member States. However, this was not the case.

The human and financial resources under PROMISE were insufficient in this respect. The emphasis (in terms of the budget) of PROMISE was on benchmarking (in particular in work programme for 2001).

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#### *Recommendation*

**Greater efforts should be made to support exchange of best practices at the regional level.**

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#### *The balance of PROMISE*

Many interviewees (including staff of Unit A1) we asked about best practices also felt that more could have been done with respect to the (dissemination of) best practices. In their view the best practices received less emphasis under PROMISE than they deserve. According to one interviewee:

"[benchmarking] is just scratching the surface. Figures don't tell you why a situation is the way it is, or what to do about it and how to do that. Figures do not improve policymaking." The exchange of best

<sup>1</sup> European Free Trade Association. The EFTA states are Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the impact of the benchmark exercise.

<sup>3</sup> The importance of regions differs per country. The role of the regions is large in e.g. France and Spain.

practice does. Thus with a view to having impact in terms of improved policies in the area of IS in Member States, the importance of the exchange of best practices increases.

*Recommendation*

**The balance should be shifted towards dissemination and exchange of best practices in the MODINIS work programmes.**

*Improving exchange of best practices at the regional level*

The PROMISE budget was too limited to extend the best practice exercise to the regional level. In addition, PROMISE also lacked the know-how. Opportunities were missed in linking up to other organisations. Know-how about regional best practices does exist, for example within the European Regional Information Society Association, eris@. Eris@ was established with the specific aim of supporting regions in exploiting the opportunities of the information society for the purpose of regional growth and development. Eris@ is a vehicle for the exchange of experience, the development and sharing of best practice, and for collaboration in the development of inter-regional applications and services. Yet, there was little co-operation between PROMISE on the one hand, and eris@ and DG REGIO on the other.

*Recommendation*

**In order to support the exchange of best practice at the regional level, co-ordination and co-operation with DG REGIO should be improved.**

### 3.3 The eGovernment and eHealth Ministerial Conferences

#### 3.3.1 Direct versus indirect intervention

Given that resources for direct funding of identification and in particular dissemination of best practices were limited (see last section), PROMISE also funded the dissemination in an indirect way by contributing to the financing of the eGovernment 2001 (November) and 2003 (July) Conferences and the eHealth 2003 (May) Conference.

The conferences were not purely PROMISE activities. They were activities of other units in DG INFSO. The majority of funds to finance the conferences came from other sources of the Commission or in fact from outside the Commission (for the Italian one). The eGovernment Conferences were managed by Unit C6 and the eHealth Conference by Unit C4. These units also contributed most of the human resources to the organisation of the conferences.

According to key persons involved in PROMISE the choice to contribute to the conferences was based on the notion that the conferences offered a structure for the dissemination of best practices with a lot of leverage (explained below). By contributing to the conferences, one could compensate to some extent for the relatively limited resources for the dissemination of best practices under PROMISE.

**Deleted:** Greek and Belgian Presidency and industry

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The funding from PROMISE was merely to co-finance these activities. The contributions of PROMISE were:

- For the eGovernment 2001 Conference – €450,000;
- For the eGovernment 2003 Conference – €450,000;
- For the eHealth 2003 Conference – €350,000.

### 3.3.2 *Quality of the conferences*

The conferences were considered a success by the responsible Commission officials.

- The eGovernment 2001 Conference was co-financed by PROMISE and the Belgian Government. The benchmarking study on eGovernment acted as a trigger for the eGovernment 2001 Conference. According to a responsible Commission official there were approximately 1,000 participants including (mainly) government delegations (national and regional) from Member States as well as candidate countries, industry, specialised operators and university experts. There were 280 applications for exhibitions, 45 of which were selected. Examples of good applications of eGovernment were selected, and explained and disseminated during the conference. Deleted: 1
- The eGovernment 2003 Conference was co-financed by PROMISE and the Italian Presidency. The industry was also acting as sponsor. On the IS website the following information is provided about the conference:<sup>1</sup>
  - Attendance: Commissioner Liikanen and the Italian Minister Stanca (Minister for Innovation and Technologies) invited their colleagues responsible for eGovernment to attend this high-level event. Administrations from the local, regional and national level, with possibly their private sector partners, were key participants. The conference also included representatives from citizens and businesses (user-side) as well as regional and local networks, industry, and international organisations. Participating countries were the EU Member States, the Candidate countries, the EFTA countries, as well as some other countries outside Europe. Participation was by invitation only. The Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi attended the closing of the conference. Overall, 1.500 people participated in the Conference.
  - eGovernment awards: 65 applications representing "the best practices of public administrations in Europe" were selected for exhibition at the conference. During the conference three winners of the eGovernment Awards were selected.
  - Structure: There were policy-oriented plenary sessions which alternated with focused parallel sessions addressing specific areas of eGovernment. Furthermore, a meeting of Ministers of the European Union and Candidate Countries took place in the margins of the conference. Large exhibitions enabled public administrations at all levels and, as appropriate, their private sector partners to demonstrate in a practical way current good practices. Deleted: operational applications in
- The eHealth 2003 Conference was co-financed by PROMISE and the Greek Presidency. According to the responsible Commission official a total of 820 people attended the conference. This included policymakers, industry and decision makers. There were exhibitions of 25 eHealth products, systems and services.

### 3.3.3 *Results from the conferences*

In terms of results from the conferences:

- The eGovernment 2001 Conference issued a Ministerial Declaration and an invitation by Italy to host a follow-up conference under the Italian EU Presidency. This created a chain event.

<sup>1</sup> [http://europa.eu.int/information\\_society/eeurope/egovconf/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/information_society/eeurope/egovconf/index_en.htm)

– The eGovernment 2003 Conference provided the input for a Council Resolution<sup>1</sup> for the December 2003 Telecom Council. As one Commission official explained the Commission is now working on the conclusions. The intention is to start specific actions out of the Council Resolution. Some actions are on a MS level (e.g. the transposition aspects of laws), others involve the Commission. Commission actions are:

- Framework to disseminate good practice. There will be a series of workshops which will have officials from the Commission, policymakers and industry. The aim of the workshops is to explain why certain practices are considered good and to disseminate information.
- ~~a study that shows the link between economic growth and eGovernment and assesses the economic benefits of the overall expenditure on eGovernment for the modernisation of public administrations.~~ The study is a tool to increase investments in eGovernment.
- ~~a study, based on the results of economic analysis, will also propose new approaches and new indicators to benchmarking eGovernment~~
- ~~a study to identify remaining legal, regulatory and organisational barriers to eGovernment at EU level and to make recommendations for possible solutions~~
- ~~a study to advance identity management in eGovernment in the EU~~
- ~~a study of models of interoperability at regional and local level by analysing existing applications.~~

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– The eHealth 2003 Conference led to a mandate from politicians<sup>2</sup>, industry and health professionals for the Commission to continue to play a pro-active and co-ordinating role at European level to drive the future development and implementation of eHealth. According to Unit C4 the follow-up actions below resulted from the conference:

- Governments want to hear about eHealth. Unit C4 has been invited to come and discuss eHealth. The interest stretches beyond merely the EU. Canada wants to know about eHealth in the EU and the World Bank too is interested in implementing eHealth.
- Companies (IBM, Cisco Systems, Philips, etc) acknowledge that eHealth will be a key topic in the future. Some report that they have decided to establish a eHealth department. According to Unit C4 this was not the case previously.
- Commission actions involve continued support for the implementation of eHealth at regional and national level. Unit C4 is currently drafting an integrated (i.e. combining the various activities in DG INFSO and DG SANCO) strategy for a European eHealth Area (EeHA). A follow-up conference under the Irish Presidency has been scheduled for May 5-6, 2004 in Cork. This is one of the instruments to support the implementation of eHealth at regional and national level (see above). The focus of this conference will be on citizens ("Supporting the health of European citizens"). On May 7, 2004 there will be a satellite conference on interoperability and standards for products, systems and services.

The evidence presented above indicates that the eGovernment and eHealth Conferences were successful activities. The conferences attracted a large audience, including politicians, industry and other professionals, and media attention. They also had considerable impact in terms of follow-up actions by industry and national policy-makers. In addition, they triggered follow-up actions by the Commission. We conclude that the choice for the conferences as means to go round – at least to some extent – the relatively limited resources under PROMISE for the dissemination of best practices was effective.

<sup>1</sup> A Ministerial Declaration enlarged by a Communication from the Commission.

<sup>2</sup> The conference issued a Ministerial Declaration expressing commitment to the development of national and regional eHealth implementation plans.

## 3.4 Information services

### 3.4.1 *Background*

The first Commission website was ISPO (Information Society Promotion Office), financed by PROMISE since 1998, but already operational from 1994. The website provided an overview of the various aspects of the Information Society. The Information Society Newsletter was published under the responsibility of ISPO. It reported on how the Commission evaluated the economic, societal and social changes in the Information Society, and the measures it was taking to facilitate the transition from the Industrial Society to the Information Society.

Other DGs and Units set up their own websites in the late nineties, but ISPO remained by far the largest. By the end of 1997 ISPO reached the milestone of one million hits per month. The proliferation of DG and Unit websites ended with their fusion in 2000 into [http://europa.int.eu/information\\_society](http://europa.int.eu/information_society). This is an integrated European public web portal on the IS covering all the information from the Commission on the IS. ISPO continued as the website's IS-section. It is not exactly clear how the funding of a integrated European public web portal on the IS contributes to the goal of PROMISE, i.e. monitoring and benchmarking eEurope. The information services seem to be a mere continuation from the period before the re-focus. ISPO was financed by the PROMISE programme from 1998 onwards, but supplied information covering IS-related subjects Commission-wide, and supplied by INFSO and other DGs.

Since 2000 PROMISE has supplied only part of the finance. The same applies to related activities like the information desk and the (e-mailed) newsletter. The information desk is a two person unit handling telephone calls and letters by directly answering questions, sending standard information or referring to specific Commission officials, depending on the question asked. Sources and type of written and telephone questions are registered by this information desk ([www.ispo.cec.be](http://www.ispo.cec.be) up to 2000, and [europa.eu.int/information\\_society](http://europa.eu.int/information_society) since). PROMISE specific questions are not registered as such. A limited staff is responsible for keeping the IS-section of the Europa-website up-to-date, including the collection of other DGs contributions.

### 3.4.2 *Internet and eEurope Action Plans most visited website sections*

Recent statistics on the IS-section of the Europa-website show a number of hits increasing from 1.3 million in October 2001 to 2.8 million in March 2003. Visitors seem to be especially interested in IS plans for activities to come. Apart from the IS homepage, eEurope has been the most visited section throughout this period. The Internet Action Plan (IAP) has ranked third since November 2002. The eEurope Action Plan ranks five, but with a peak in the summer of 2002: eEuropa-2005 ranks second and the eEurope Action Plan third<sup>1</sup>. Another section usually found in the top-ten per month is *Telecoms*. User information on hits by country from the first quarter of 2003 shows that by far the most were from the United States: 41%. This equals the combined share of the next seven countries on the list (all EU). Japan is number 10 on this list.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See [http://europa.eu.int/information\\_society/services/statistics/index\\_en.htm#Most%20Requested](http://europa.eu.int/information_society/services/statistics/index_en.htm#Most%20Requested)

<sup>2</sup> The number of hits is not necessarily a good measure, pages accessed or number of visits may be better measures, but are not available.

### 3.4.3 *Appropriateness of the information services in view of raising awareness of the IS and triggering follow-up actions in Member States*

We conclude that the appropriateness of the information services with respect to raising awareness and triggering follow-up actions in Member States – and hence their effectiveness in this respect – was rather limited. First, the [http://europa.eu.int/information\\_society/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/information_society/index_en.htm)-website was considered to be complex and not very user-friendly in our interviews. A important reason for this put forward in one of our interviews was the lack of budget. According to the website management, the budget did not evolve in line with the extremely fast increase in size and complexity of the site. To improve the user-friendliness of the website would require an increase in funding.

Second, policy makers and officials of Commission and Member States were the main users. Other users were journalists, universities and schools (in particular downloads of documents), trade associations and firms (in particular high-tech and ICT-related industries) and specific interest groups. An example of the latter: information on a new telecom-directive was hit and downloaded by telecom-operators and other parties involved in telecom all over and outside the EU. An 'elitist' attitude of Commission officials and decision-makers was mentioned: informing the public was not a top priority in the (recent) past. Besides, experts were sceptical about the ability of the information to reach all the way down to the micro-level. For instance, SMEs were said to be unlikely to use the portal to look for information. They were said to need something tangible. Information on the Commission's IS policy is simply too abstract to be of (direct) value for daily business. We suggest to better integrate information for customer groups like SMEs. A portal similar to <http://europa.eu.int/business/> ('Dialogue with business') is an example of a website more effectively addressed at meeting SMEs' need for down-to-earth and directly applicable information.

#### *Recommendation*

**Public dissemination through websites should be re-designed to better meet the needs of SMEs.**

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## 3.5 Information Society Forum

### 3.5.1 *Background*

In section 2.1 of this report we conveyed that the Commission activities to promote the Information Society started in 1994, i.e. after the publication of the so-called Bangemann Report. When the PROMISE programme was adopted in March 1998, these activities were continued under PROMISE.

One of the activities included in PROMISE in this way was the Information Society Forum (ISF). Funding of the Forum by PROMISE continued until 2001.

### 3.5.2 *Mission and role of the Forum*

The ISF was established in 1995 to encourage an open debate on the developments and challenges of the Information Society and to advise the Commission on policies to implement the Information Society. The ISF is composed of all social sectors involved in the development process of the Information Society, for instance citizen organisations, trade organisations, national governments, universities, members of the European Parliament and national parliaments,

At the inaugural meeting of the ISF on 13 July 1995, 128 members were appointed. Half of the Members were selected by Member States. The Commission selected the other members. Members

were appointed for three years and attended on personal title. The procedure for the selection of new members was found to be bureaucratic. This bureaucracy made it difficult to include new members, like representatives from CEEC's (which was in line with the conclusions of the EU/CEEC Ministerial Meeting of 1997).

In 1998 the Forum was organised in six workgroups focusing on the following issues:

- employment & job creation;
- social and democratic values, culture and the future of new services and the media;
- universal access and consumer protection and support;
- sustainability in an Information Society;
- public services : bringing administration closer to citizens;
- lifelong learning.

### 3.5.3 *Impact of the ISF*

The ISF made a number of important contributions. The Forum contributed to increasing the attention for the social aspects and the demand-side of ICT and IS (consumers and citizens). This was new in Europe. The ISF also made contributions with respect to the global dimension. In the past, diplomats within the WTO and World Intellectual Property Organization often forgot the impact of ICT. The ISF helped to change this. In other areas – sustainability and ICT, culture, government and the application of ICT, economy, and the digital divide – the impact of the ISF was modest.

EC Officials as well as members of the ISF agreed that the Forum was quite successful in the first few years. It produced a number of important reports and declarations. After that the creativity of the Forum's contributions declined.

One reason for the decline in creativity was the fact that after a few years the active participation of some groups in the Forum declined. An interviewee indicated that some groups realised that the ISF was not appropriate to try and influence the Commission's decision. For instance nearly all employers' organisations pulled out after one or two years.

The second reason for the decline of creativity put forward in the interviews was that the commitment to the ISF of the Commission declined after a few years. The ISF could not actively seek the discussion with the Commission. The Commission had to seek the Forum's advice. More involvement from the Commission would have triggered the discussions. Yet, this was no longer the case after the first few years.

The decision in 2000 of the Commission to re-focus PROMISE on monitoring and benchmarking progress towards the objectives of the eEurope 2002 Action Plan, had important consequences for the ISF. A member of the PROMISE Committee explained that the Commission was looking for ways to allot more money to eEurope. The contributions of the ISF were discussed in the PROMISE Committee. The opinion in the Committee, according to the member, was that the forum had made a number of interesting contributions but that it was no longer producing innovative ideas, the reason being that the relevant issues were explored. The Committee recommended to cut the forum's budget to an annual €50,000 and to leave it as a virtual forum.<sup>1</sup> All key persons we interviewed agreed that the ISF was never formally ended. Forum members expressed strong feelings about the way in which the forum was closed, without a formal end to its work, and with no thanks to its members.

<sup>1</sup> See also under 2.3 in table 2.6 (section 2.2).

The current state of the ISF is described by one interviewee as 'withering fields: some have produced crop, but the harvesting has come to an end'.

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*Recommendation*

**The ISF needs to be formally closed; the Members should be thanked for their work and informed about the new arrangements under the MODINIS programme.**

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What has been lacking according to one of the interviewees is that the Commission has not limited the term of operation of the ISF in particular spans of time with clear targets. If this had been the case it would have made the activities of the forum accountable for both sides (i.e. the forum and the Commission).

The Council decision on MODINIS provides the legal base for support to the work of social and economic experts and the establishment of an eEurope Steering Group. The aim of the eEurope Steering Group is to assess the appropriate strategic direction of the eEurope 2005 Action Plan. The Steering group will invite stakeholders to express their views on the economic and societal consequences of the IS within its Second Chamber. In this respect the eEurope Steering Group offers a forum to exchange experiences.

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*Recommendation*

**The eEurope Steering Group should have a clear mandate to address certain topics for a certain period of time. This mandate should be regularly reviewed and renewed.**

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### 3.6 Relation with the legal objectives and measures

This section assesses the relation of the re-focused PROMISE with (some of) its original objectives. The objectives were increasing public awareness, optimising the socio-economic benefits and enhancing Europe's role and visibility within the global dimension. In order to obtain these objectives the following categories of actions were distinguished:

#### 1. *Measures to raise awareness in Europe*

- a. adding value where necessary to local, national and cross border initiatives promoting a better understanding of the IS;
- b. gathering and disseminating information on citizens' and users' needs,
- c. enhancing the visibility of real projects;
- d. the monitoring of peoples' awareness of and familiarisation with the Information Society services and applications;
- e. stimulation of the interest of industry, in particular SMEs, in providing services and applications that meet the needs expressed by citizens and users;
- f. demonstrating the potential impact of the Information Society at regional level,
- g. support for the Information Society Forum.

2. *Measures to optimise the socio-economic benefits of the Information Society in Europe*
  - a. the assessment of the opportunities and barriers which disadvantaged social groups and peripheral and less-favoured regions may face;
  - b. the analysis of current initiatives at European and national level;
  - c. the provision of transparency for ongoing policies and programmes at European and national level;
  - d. the contribution, on the basis of identified best programmes and practices, to the European wide take-up of successful examples in Information Society policies, projects and services;
  - e. the promotion of exchange of expertise and experiences between ongoing studies and activities at European and national level;
  - f. the identification and evaluation of the financing mechanisms needed to develop the IS;
  - g. the identification of obstacles to the functioning of the internal market in the area of the Information Society and the consideration of measures to guarantee the full benefit of the area without frontiers for its development, taking into account the linguistic diversity,
  - h. the launching of actions to ascertain the priorities of SMEs and regarding the obstacles hampering the use by SMEs of information and communications technologies (ICT);
  - i. the promotion of electronic literacy in the educational sector through the dissemination of relevant experience gained at national and European level.
  
3. *Measures to enhance Europe's role and visibility within the global dimension of the Information Society*
  - a. the establishment of an inventory of initiatives taken worldwide;
  - b. the exchange of information with third countries;
  - c. the collaboration in the preparation of demonstration actions.

In the re-focus of PROMISE the budgetary means was concentrated on category 2. Some of the activities had a character serving both objectives 1 and 2. The third objective of the PROMISE programme was served indirectly only.

Although some of the measures were not very specific, most of the categories of actions mentioned in the work programmes 2001 and 2002 could be connected with the original objective and measures. This is made visible in table 3.3.

table 3.3 Connecting programme and activities

<i>Type of activity</i>	<i>Programme objective</i>	<i>Programme measure</i>
Benchmarking	1 . Awareness raising	A, B, D
	2. Optimisation	H, I
	3. International	B
Identifying and dissemination of best practices	1 . Awareness raising	A, D
	2. Optimisation	A, B, D, E, G
Conferences	1 . Awareness raising	A, B
	2. Optimisation	B, D, E
Information services	1 . Awareness raising	B
	2. Optimisation	E
Information Society Forum	1 . Awareness raising	G
	2. Optimisation	A
	3. International	B

Source: EIM, 2003.



## 4 Efficiency, organisation and coherence of PROMISE

This chapter addresses the issue of efficiency, organisation and coherence of PROMISE. In section 4.1. we assess the programme management. As part of this subject the following issues will be addressed:

- The decision making process, including the relation between the programme management and the PROMISE Committee;
- The overall responsibility;
- The decision making in connection with the implementation of the benchmark exercise.

Section 4.2 assesses the budget implementation. As part of this subject the following issues will be addressed:

- Was there an underspend?
- Was the budget implementation inefficient?

Section 4.3 assesses the project management and the co-operation with other parts of DG INFSO and the Commission. Section 4.4. addresses the coherence of the programme since the re-focus.

### 4.1 Programme management

The two main parties involved in the management of PROMISE were the Commission, i.e. Unit A1 in DG INFSO, and the PROMISE Committee. The Commission was responsible for drafting of policy (planning of the work programmes, setting of priorities, are amounts justified?) and making sure that the funds were disbursed. The Commission was assisted by a committee composed of representatives of the Member States and chaired by the representative of the Commission. The task of the PROMISE Committee was to assist the Commission in making decisions on:

- the adoption of the work programme including the extent of funding;
- the breakdown of the budgetary expenditure;
- the criteria and content of calls for proposals;
- the assessment of projects where this was equal to or more than € 100,000;
- the measures for programme evaluation;
- participation in any project by legal entities from third countries and international organisations.

The overall budget control was carried out by the budgetary unit in DG INFSO.

Each year the Commission drafted a work programme. This was then sent to the PROMISE Committee. The proposal had to be accepted by a qualified majority of the Committee.

Both the mid-term review and our research with persons involved in the PROMISE Committee indicated that, prior to the re-focus, the influence of the Committee was such that it could shape the work programmes in order to ensure that Member States would receive value for money. The communication and co-operation between the Commission (at that time the Information Society Activity Centre – ISAC) and the PROMISE Committee was good. The Commission circulated the documentation for consideration at the Committee meetings well in advance.

Interviews with members of the Committee in this evaluation suggested that this changed after the re-focus. One Committee member for instance felt that the information from the Commission was poor. From the side of both the Commission and the Committee it was recognised that there is a need to better inform the Committee on the initiatives of the Commission under MODINIS.

The role of the Committee in the design of the benchmark indicators was limited. As one person interviewed formulated it the re-focus of PROMISE was "a high-deal call". Following the endorsement of the eEurope 2002 Action Plan by the Feira Council the Commission was entrusted with the task of monitoring and benchmarking the implementation of the eEurope 2002 Action Plan and on achieving progress in the Plan's objectives. The Internal Market Council of November 2001 decided the list of indicators. The Commission involved experts from the Member States to develop the indicators. According to the PROMISE management this was done because the Commission needed to reach agreement on what should be measured, how, and by what definitions in a uniform way across all fifteen Member States, and there was little time available to accomplish this common, concerted effort.

The Committee was informed about the results. One Committee member stated that some members were unhappy about this procedure, but admitted there was no other way. In his view, the Commission had a job to do ("*real Politik*"), it did produce a set of indicators that policymakers took note of. In that sense the re-focus was effective.

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*Recommendation*

**The Commission should fully engage the Management Committee in the preparation and adoption of the MODINIS work programmes.**

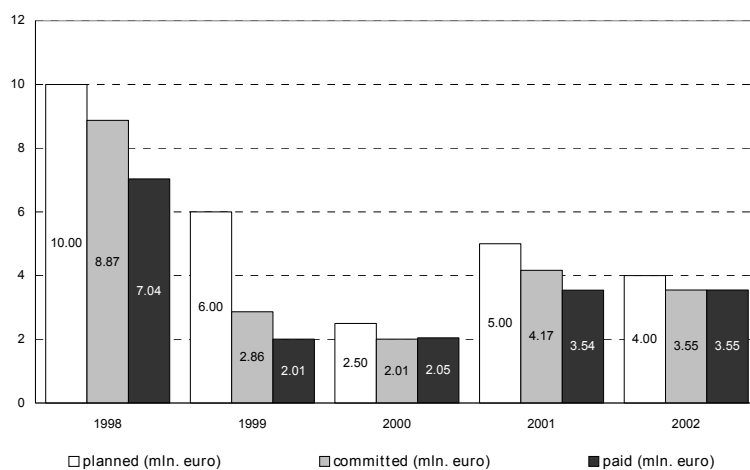
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#### 4.2 The budget implementation

Figure 4.1 shows the total PROMISE budget available, the amount committed, and the amount actually paid. The figure indicates that the budget was (considerably) underspend in 1998 and 1999. In particular in 1999 the amount committed was substantially lower than planned.

figure 4.1 PROMISE budget execution 1998 - 2002

total budget planned, committed and paid (million euro)



Source: EIM, 2003

The PROMISE programme prior to the re-focus seemed to be more sensitive to budget underspend than PROMISE subsequently. We believe the reason for this is the wide variety of projects in the first phase of the programme, and the larger number of projects subject to tender procedures, which were more difficult to manage.

From 2000 onward, the gap between planned and committed budget was considerably less. At least 80% of the planned budget was committed in 2000-2002.

*Do the discrepancies between the budget and the commitments imply inefficiencies in the budget implementation?*

The discrepancies from 2000 onwards were put down to the Commission procedures for budget approval and the *annuality* of the budget cycle. Proposals for work programmes have to be submitted before December 21<sup>st</sup> of the preceding year, including detailed information on the activities planned. Once the work programme has been approved by the budgetary unit, the budget can only be spent on activities that were approved in advance. These inflexible procedures cause problems if the actual cost of the planned activities is less than anticipated. Since it is not possible to launch new activities during the year, the budget may not be committed entirely.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The eHealth Conference provides an illustration of this. The budget from PROMISE was € 350,000. The money was designated for the finance of logistics (sending letters, etc). However, not all € 350,000 was actually used for this purpose. The responsible unit is looking to use the remaining budget to organise further dissemination activities from the conference. Yet, these activities cannot be added afterwards.

The PROMISE management tried to avoid problems of this kind by overbooking the work programmes in 2001 and 2002 in order to have a backlog of activities approved for funding.

Although considerable progress was made in budget utilisation in 2000-2002, there was still room for improvement. A Commission official reported that most of the programmes in DG INFSO achieve over 90% budget utilisation, and he did not believe that the PROMISE implementation was overly constrained by the annual budget allocation. In his view, adequate multi-annual planning and timely public procurement of services can enable high levels of utilisation.

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*Recommendation*

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**Budget utilisation should be further improved by multi-annual planning and timely initiation of public procurement actions, where needed.**

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### 4.3 Project management and co-operation with other parts of DG INFSO and the Commission

#### *Project management*

Until the re-focus in 2000 the Information Society Activity Centre (ISAC) was responsible for implementing the PROMISE programme. ISAC had also drafted the Commission proposal for what was to become the Council Decision adopted in March 1998. ISAC was formally established in 1996. At the reorganisation of January 1999, ISAC was restructured into three units. There were two operating units (IS1 and IS2) plus a horizontal Advisor office.

As the mid-term evaluation concluded ISAC was not organised to deal with all the functions that a proper management and monitoring should imply. In practice, ISPO was doing the job. The Information Society Promotion Office (ISPO) was the main executive agency of the PROMISE programme. ISPO is considered unsuited to the additional task of managing a programme the scope of which is wider than mere promotion and where co-ordination of different services and the Information Society activities of different DGs is a significant feature of its design.

The transfer of PROMISE from ISAC to Unit A1 in 2000 and the high staff turnover within DG INFSO and the programme management since the re-focus resulted in a lack of historical knowledge of the programme. Hardly any staff members were left that were familiar with PROMISE both before and after the re-focus.

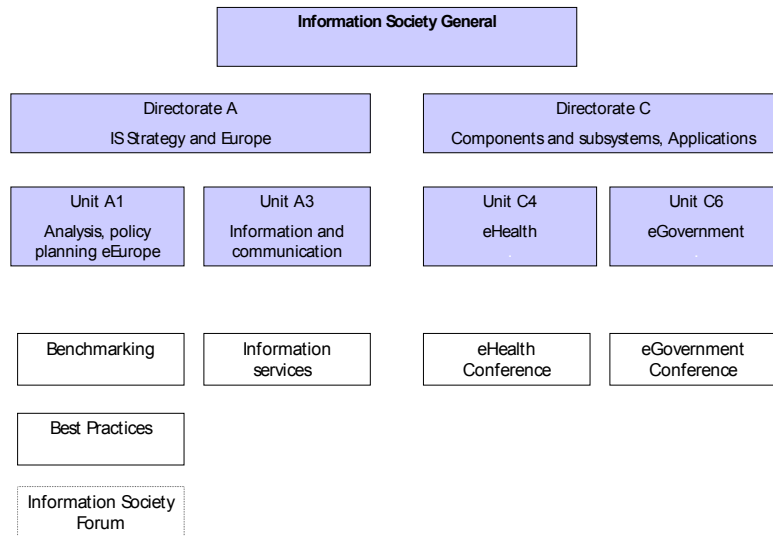
After the re-focus, PROMISE financed different activities within DG INFSO. The management of the activities under PROMISE was given to the responsible units in DG INFSO:

- The benchmark exercise and the best practices were managed by Unit A1;
- The information services were (and in fact still are) managed by Unit A3;
- Unit C4 was responsible for the eHealth Conference;
- Unit C6 was responsible for the eGovernment Conferences;
- The ISF was external to the Commission. It was managed by a secretariat.

The overall responsibility for PROMISE rested in Unit A1 and the budgetary unit.

Figure 4.2 shows the units in DG INFSO that managed activities under PROMISE after the re-focus of the programme. The figure reflects the organisation of DG INFSO since January 2002.

figure 4.2 Management of activities under PROMISE after the re-focus and re-organisation of DG INFSO



Source: Organigram Information Society DG, 2003.

The co-operation between the PROMISE management (Unit A1) and the other units in DG INFSO involved in PROMISE seemed to have functioned well. Our interviews indicated only that it was not always clear to the other units who was in charge of PROMISE. The frequent staff turnover within DG INFSO and the programme management could be the reason for the intransparency.

#### Recommendation

**The Commission should ensure an effective transfer of knowledge about programme implementation as staff are replaced, and a clear allocation of responsibilities between Units for programme and budget implementation.**

#### *Co-operation with other parts of DG INFSO and the Commission*

With respect to the benchmark indicators there was close co-operation between PROMISE and other DGs. This was the case for DG Education and Culture. Unit A1 of DG INFSO and C4 of DG Education and Culture worked closely together on indicators for eLearning. With other DGs, e.g. DG ENTER there was less co-operation. This led to a duplication of benchmark activities in the area of eBusiness. It was noted previously that more or better networking and sharing of information would have been beneficial.

The content of the Europa-website ([http://europa.int.eu/information\\_society](http://europa.int.eu/information_society)) was supplied decentrally. Other DGs and units in DG INFSO supplied information by filling out fiches and roadmaps about their activities and this information was loaded onto the Europa-website by Unit A3.

#### 4.4 Coherence of PROMISE 2000-2002

This section presents our opinion on the coherence of PROMISE. It is based on an assessment of the work programmes.

The mid-term review of PROMISE concluded that the scope of the Council Decision was simply too wide. The main recommendation was to set up a strategic focus.

The Commission's response was to re-focus the activities of PROMISE in support of the eEurope 2002 Action Plan. PROMISE was used to monitor progress towards the objectives of the eEurope 2002 Action Plan by benchmarking Member States' performance in the objective areas. In addition to benchmarking, a number of activities from the first period of PROMISE were continued (although more focused on eEurope). This was most obviously the case with the information services and the ISF. But it also applies to the identification and dissemination of the best practices. The legal base of PROMISE listed the contribution, on the basis of identified best programmes and practices, to the European wide take-up of successful examples in Information Society policies, projects and services as one of the measures to attain the objectives of the programme (in particular to optimise the socio-economic benefits of the IS). The establishment of a European IS Best Practices Gallery in work programmes for 1999 and the original work programme 2000 was consistent with this. The establishment of a European IS Best Practices Gallery was cancelled in the revised work programme for 2000, but work programmes 2001 and 2002 included the identification and dissemination of best practices.

The implementation of the new programme was rather ad hoc. The programme did not define the role and tasks of the activities under PROMISE in relation to clear objectives. The programme lacked a clear strategic vision. As mentioned above, PROMISE was re-focused in support of the eEurope 2002 Action Plan. However, there was no translation of this goal to more operational objectives for PROMISE.

As a result of the lack of a clear strategic goal, the various activities were not 'embedded'. Therefore the coherence of the programme was not entirely clear in our view. The fact that some were managed by different units within DG INFSO, did not add to programme's coherence either.

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#### *Recommendations*

**The work programmes for MODINIS should have a clear strategic plan, but should also leave flexibility to adapt to political, technological and economic opportunities as they arise.**

**The Commission should develop clear performance indicators for measuring the contribution of the programme's activities to the programme's objectives.**

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## 5 Utility of PROMISE

In this part of the evaluation we address the utility of PROMISE. First, we will assess the impact of the re-focus on the utility of PROMISE. Second, we assess the relation of PROMISE to the IS activities existing elsewhere in the Commission.

### 5.1 Impact of the re-focus on the utility of PROMISE

PROMISE 2000-2002 was part of the EU policy aimed at preparing the transition of Europe to a competitive, dynamic and knowledge-based economy. Preparing the transition to a competitive, dynamic and knowledge-based economy was one of the pillars of the overall Lisbon strategy to make the EU the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy with improved employment and social cohesion by 2010. The Lisbon European Council recognised an urgent need to exploit the opportunities presented by the new knowledge-based economy.

Did PROMISE have utility with a view to preparing the transition of Europe to a competitive, dynamic and knowledge-based economy? For this question we need to look at the overall impact of PROMISE in terms of follow-up actions in Member States as the role of PROMISE was not to support the transition of Europe to a competitive, dynamic and knowledge-based economy directly, but to act as a flywheel by raising awareness of the IS and trigger follow-up actions, in particular at the (national) policy level, in Member States.

Referring back to the results in Chapter 3, we conclude that the utility of PROMISE sat mainly in the contribution to the financing of the eGovernment and eHealth Conferences. The conferences were successful activities with considerable impact in terms of follow-up actions by industry and national policy-makers. They also triggered follow-up actions by the Commission. As far as the other activities under PROMISE are concerned, the impact was limited (information services and the ISF) or hard to establish (benchmarking).

It should be understood though that establishing a competitive, dynamic and knowledge-based economy is a complex phenomenon. A single programme is unlikely to have a very big impact *a priori*.

### 5.2 Relation of PROMISE with other IS activities in the Commission

We also compared PROMISE to a number of other activities (programmes) of the Commission in the area of the IS.<sup>1</sup> The re-focused programme had value-added compared to other programmes. First of all there was reasonably good case for a programme to help Member States co-ordinate their actions (by way of an open method of co-ordination). Second, there was no more (unnecessary) overlap with other programmes. For instance in the first period PROMISE also financed projects aimed at implementing (pieces) of the IS. In this sense it overlapped with e.g. IST. As a result of the re-focus of PROMISE this overlap was eliminated.

<sup>1</sup> The activities are described in more detail in Appendix I.

## Annex I Other IS activities in the Commission

### *Information Society Technologies (IST)*

A key area in the Fifth Framework Programme is the Information Society Technologies (IST) which provides a single and integrated programme that reflects the convergence of information processing, communications and media technologies. IST brings together and extends the ACTS, Esprit and Telematics Applications Programme of the Fourth Framework Programme (1994-1998). IST is a priority in the Sixth Framework Programme (2002-2006). The strategic objective of IST is to realise the benefits of the Information Society for Europe, both by accelerating its emergence and by ensuring that the needs of individuals and enterprises are met.

### *Government demonstration and development projects*

Three key areas of IST focus on applications and services:

- systems and services for the citizen, which aims at meeting the needs and expectations of European citizens for high-quality, affordable services of general interest, such as health care, transport and tourism;
- new methods of work and electronic commerce, which aims to enable individuals and organisations to innovate and be more effective and efficient in their work and business and also improve the quality of the individual's working life; and
- multimedia content and tools, which seeks to provide the tools for creating content and for the education and training needed to develop the skills central to the information society.

### *R&D programmes*

Essential technologies and infrastructures, the fourth key area of IST, addresses the technologies and infrastructure that are the building blocks of the information society (such as microelectronics, information processing, fixed and mobile communications, micro-systems and interfaces) and aims at driving their development, enhancing their applicability and accelerating their take-up in Europe. In addition, the work on future and emerging technologies concerns longer-term research and that on research networking addresses the interconnection of national research networks and the provision of experimental test beds.

### *eContent*

eContent is a market oriented programme which aims to support the production, use and distribution of European digital content and to promote linguistic and cultural diversity on the global networks. The programme supports:

- innovative and viable content projects involving multinational and cross-sector partnerships;
- accompanying measures addressing best practice, concertation, awareness and dissemination;
- market studies for visions, insight, challenges and opportunities.

Target groups are digital content players in Europe of all sizes, i.e. Content creators and owners in private and public sectors; Packagers and designers; Language and customisation players; Publishers and distributors; Net services companies; Rights trading actors; Capital market players; Experts and market enablers.

### *eTEN*

eTEN is designed to help the deployment of telecommunication networks based services (e-services) with a trans-European dimension. It promotes public interest services which give every citizen, enterprise and administration full opportunity to gain from the e-Society, bridging the digital divide which threatens to create an information underclass.

What distinguishes eTEN from other Information Society actions is its "preparation for a roll-out" approach. eTEN helps partners overcome their project's initial investment and launch difficulties. This reduces the commercial risk during the project's early stages, and supports the transnational implementation costs. It also helps with any organizational problems related to public/private partnerships. eTEN emphasizes public-private partnerships, which can broaden access to, and use of information and communication technologies.

#### *IDA*

IDA from DG ENTER deals with the electronic interchange of data between administrations. IDA's actions and measures aim to provide standard solutions for recurring requirements in the exchange of data between European public administrations.

Categories of actions:

- Technology Solutions provide a specific IT-related functionality, from communications to defined standards. Entries in the related sub-section of the work programme can be used as components in information systems;
- Business Applications are turn-key applications for standard business needs of public administrations. They are ready for use;
- The third category of actions are in support of the Spread of Good Practice in the application of information technologies to public administrations;
- Finally, to support Programme Management a number of activities for monitoring and improving effectiveness and efficiency are proposed.

These actions address the different elements of IDA, namely:

- the requirement to provide generic services and common tools and techniques;
- address information content interoperability and define reference legal and security practices;
- assure and control quality and promote interoperability.

## Annex II Council Decision

### **The Council of the European Union: Decisions of 30 March 1998 adopting a multi annual Community programme to stimulate the establishment of the Information Society in Europe**

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community, and in particular Article 235 thereof,

Having regard to the Commission proposal (),

Having regard to the Opinion of the European Parliament (),

- (1) Whereas the establishment of the Information Society can, by introducing new forms of economic, political and social relations, help the Community to cope with the challenges of the next century, in particular the creation of new jobs, as indicated in the White Paper on "Growth, competitiveness and employment — the challenges and ways forward into the 21<sup>st</sup> century";
- (2) Whereas the European Council in Corfu on 24 and 25 June 1994 took note of the Recommendations of the High Level Group on the Information Society as presented in the report "Europe and the Global Information Society" and the Commission established an Action Plan consisting of concrete measures at both Community and Member States level;
- (3) Whereas the European Council in Florence on 21 and 22 June 1996 underlined the potential of the Information Society for education and training, for the organization of work and for employment creation;
- (4) Whereas the pace of progress in the development of the Information Society depends on a large extent on the awareness, understanding and support by citizens and public and private organizations, of the possibilities of applications of new information and communication technologies to service people's and business' needs;
- (5) Whereas the establishment of the Information Society will require availability, for each citizen, company or public organization, in every part of the Community, of information of any nature they need;
- (6) Whereas the establishment of the Information Society will gradually reorganize the nature and content of human activity in all areas, and have important cross-sectoral effects in areas of activity hitherto independent;
- (7) Whereas the measures necessary for the implementation of the Information Society have to take into account the economic and social cohesion of the Community as well as continuity in the functioning of the Internal Market;
- (8) Whereas the definition of these measures requires preparatory analyses, aimed at improving understanding of the various fields that may be affected by Community actions related to the Information Society;

(9) Whereas the first interim report of the High Level Expert Group on the Social and Societal Aspects of the Information Society of January 1996 contained a set of first reflections in view of the preparation of a final report;

(10) Whereas the first annual report of the Information Society Forum to the Commission of June 1996 recommended that the Commission should launch Union-wide awareness raising initiatives, promote actions best suited for the promotion of best practices, promote the use of new technologies, give extra attention to explore the economic and social implications of the Information Society, and to ensure that people with disabilities have equal access to the Information Society;

(11) Whereas the Commission on 24 July 1996 adopted a Green Paper on "Living and Working in the Information Society: People First", which is intended to deepen the political, social and civil dialogue on the most important social and societal aspects of the Information Society; in the light of the reactions received, the Commission will present action proposals in 1997;

(12) Whereas the measures necessary for the implementation of the Information Society have to take into account the global dimension of the Information Society;

(13) Whereas the G7 Ministerial Conference on Information Society and Development in Midrand, South Africa from 13 to 15 May 1996 recognized that the "Information Society model" should be pursued for the benefit of the developing countries, to solve their unique needs and challenges, to support their sustainable growth and to ensure their effective participation in the emerging global "wired" economy;

(14) Whereas the Rome Conference on 30 and 31 May 1996 recognized that one of the elements of the political dialogue between the Community and the twelve countries involved in the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, started in November 1995 with the Barcelona Conference, is indeed the construction of a truly open Information Society in the Mediterranean region which will benefit in terms of growth, competitiveness and employment to users, industries and service providers of information and communication technologies;

(15) Whereas the second European Union/Central and Eastern European Countries Forum on the Information Society in Prague on 12 and 13 September 1996 confirmed that the issues involved in the development of the Information Society are particularly important to European countries that are reforming their economy and underlined the need to provide platforms for information exchange and discussion;

(16) Whereas existing possibilities for actions, for example in the fields of research and development, trans-European networks, information content, social policy, and standardization, should not be duplicated;

(17) Whereas progress of this programme should be continuously and systematically monitored; whereas at the end of this programme there should be a final assessment of results obtained compared with the objectives set out in this Decision;

(18) Whereas it is necessary to fix the duration of the programme;

(19) Whereas a financial reference amount, within the meaning of point 2 of the Declaration by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission of 6 March 1995, is included in this Decision for the entire duration of the programme, without thereby affecting the powers of the Budgetary Authority as they are defined by the Treaty;

(20) Whereas the Treaty does not provide, for the adoption of this Decision, powers other than those defined in Article 235,

HAS ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

#### Article 1

A programme (Information Society) is hereby adopted with the following objectives:

- increasing public awareness and understanding of the potential impact of the Information Society and its new applications throughout Europe, stimulating people's motivation and ability to participate in the change to the Information Society;
- optimising the socio-economic benefits of the Information Society in Europe, by analysing its technical, economic, social and regulatory aspects, by appraising the challenges raised by the transition to the Information Society, *inter alia* as regards employment, and by promoting synergy and co-operation between European and national levels;
- enhancing Europe's role and visibility within the global dimension of the Information Society.

The activities set out in this programme are actions of a cross-sectoral nature, complementing Community actions in other fields. None of these shall duplicate the work being carried out in these fields under other Community programmes. In order to avoid overlap, to complement other initiatives, and to bring complementary expertise into this programme, the relevant Community programmes shall be associated with the development of activities.

The programme should also provide a common framework for complementary and synergetic interaction at European level of the various national/regional/local initiatives for the establishment of the Information Society, in particular, through assistance of the committee provided for in Article 5(1), so as to make use of available facilities and enhance transparency and co-operation at European level, while fully applying subsidiarity.

#### Article 2

In order to attain the objectives referred to in Article 1, the following categories of actions shall be undertaken:

(a) measures to raise awareness in Europe:

- adding value where necessary to local, national and cross border initiatives promoting a better understanding, for instance through the dissemination of information, of the opportunities, benefits and possible risks of the Information Society, whether aimed at the general public or at specific target groups,
- gathering and dissemination of information on citizens' and users' needs with respect to Information Society services and applications,
- enhancement of the visibility to the general public and other interested parties of real projects being implemented to service their needs,
- the monitoring of peoples' awareness of and familiarization with the Information Society services and applications, in particular through the fostering of regular surveys and the integration of national surveys into a European picture,
- stimulation of the interest of industry, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), in providing services and applications that meet the needs expressed by citizens and users, for instance, through presentations of Information Society activities, networks, applications and concrete opportunities to be exploited,
- demonstration of the potential impact of the Information Society at regional level, including within its cross border dimension, the promotion of exchange of relevant information between cities and regions,

- support for the Information Society Forum consisting of experts representing a broad range of interests from industry, academia, media, trade unions, consumer and user groups, advising the Commission on the challenges to overcome for the development of the Information Society,
- (b) measures to optimise the socio-economic benefits of the Information Society in Europe:
- the assessment of the opportunities and barriers which disadvantaged social groups and peripheral and less-favoured regions may face in accessing and using Information Society products and services; the identification of appropriate measures to overcome these obstacles and to grasp the related benefits,
  - the analysis of current initiatives at European and national level regarding the provision of applications, based in particular on a permanent inventory of projects which facilitate the deployment of the Information Society,
  - the provision of transparency, based in particular on a permanent inventory, concerning ongoing policies and programmes at European and national level,
  - the contribution, on the basis of identified best programmes and practices, to the European wide take-up of successful examples in Information Society policies, projects and services,
  - the promotion of exchange of expertise and experiences between ongoing studies and activities at European and national level,
  - the identification and evaluation of the financing mechanisms needed to develop the Information Society, in particular those able to help stimulate public/private partnerships for the deployment of applications of public interest,
  - the identification of obstacles to the functioning of the Internal Market in the area of the Information Society and the consideration of measures to guarantee the full benefit of the area without frontiers for its development, taking into account the linguistic diversity,
  - the launching of actions to ascertain the priorities of SMEs and regarding the obstacles hampering the use by SMEs of information and communications technologies (ICT), in close co-ordination with Commission efforts to mobilize different groups of ICT users,
  - the promotion of electronic literacy in the educational sector through the dissemination of relevant experience gained at national and European level,

(c) measures to enhance Europe's role and visibility within the global dimension of the Information Society:

- the establishment of an inventory of initiatives taken worldwide,
- the exchange of information with third countries, in particular with a view to encouraging their access to the potential of the Information Society,
- the collaboration in the preparation of demonstration actions, either bilaterally or in collaboration with international organizations.

For the various categories of actions above, the work programmes to be defined each year should define the priority work areas and concrete actions, seeking to maximize added value at European level.

### Article 3

In carrying out the objectives outlined in Article 1 and the actions defined in Article 2, the Commission may use the appropriate and relevant means, and in particular:

- the award of contracts for the execution of tasks relating to analyses, exploratory studies, detailed studies of specific fields, demonstration actions of limited size, as well as the coordination, evaluation and co-financing of actions;
- the organization of, the participation in and the granting of support for meetings of experts, conferences, seminars, consultations of persons or of groups having common interests, in particular with a view to encouraging the access of third countries to the potential of the Information Society;

- the publication and the dissemination of information.

#### Article 4

1. The programme shall cover a period from 1 January 1998 to 31 December 2002.
2. The financial reference amount for the implementation of this programme for the above mentioned programme will be ECU 25 million. An indicative break down of expenditure is given in the Annex.
3. The Budgetary Authority shall authorize the appropriations within the framework of the annual budgetary procedure and in compliance with the financial perspective.

#### Article 5

1. The Commission shall be responsible for the implementation of the programme and its coordination with other Community programmes.

The Commission shall be assisted by a committee composed of representatives of the Member States and chaired by the representative of the Commission.

2. The procedure laid down in Article 6 shall apply to:
  - the adoption of the work programme including the extent of funding,
  - the breakdown of the budgetary expenditure,
  - the criteria and content of calls for proposals,
  - the assessment of the projects proposed under calls for proposals for Community funding and the estimated amount of the Community contribution for each project where this is equal to or more than ECU 100 000,
  - the measures for programme evaluation,
  - participation in any project by legal entities from third countries and international organizations.
3. Where, pursuant to the fourth indent of paragraph 2, the amount of the Community contribution is less than ECU 100 000, the Commission shall inform the Committee of the projects and of the outcome of their assessment.
4. The Commission shall regularly inform the Committee of progress with the implementation of the programme as a whole.

#### Article 6

The representative of the Commission shall submit to the committee a draft of the measures to be taken. The committee shall deliver its opinion on the draft within a time limit which the chairman may lay down according to the urgency of the matter. The opinion shall be delivered by the majority laid down in Article 148(2) of the Treaty in the case of decisions which the Council is required to adopt on a proposal from the Commission. The votes of the representatives of the Member States within the Committee shall be weighted in the manner set out in that Article. The Chairman shall not vote.

The Commission shall adopt the measures envisaged if they are in accordance with the opinion of the Committee.

If the measures envisaged are not in accordance with the opinion of the Committee, or if no opinion is delivered, the Commission shall without delay submit to the Council a proposal relating to the measures to be taken. The Council shall act by a qualified majority.

If, on expiry of a period of three months from the date of referral to the Council, the Council has not acted, the proposed measures shall be adopted by the Commission.

#### Article 7

The Information Society Forum referred to in Article 2(a), final indent, may be called upon by the Committee to offer advice or guidance.

#### Article 8

1. In order to ensure that Community aid is used efficiently, the Commission shall ensure that actions under this Decision are subject to effective prior appraisal, monitoring and subsequent evaluation.
2. During implementation of actions and after their completion the Commission shall evaluate the manner in which they have been carried out and the impact of their implementation in order to assess whether the original objectives have been achieved.
3. The selected beneficiaries shall submit an annual report to the Commission or a final report for projects of short duration.
4. At the end of two years and at the end of the programme, the Commission shall submit to the European Parliament, Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, once the Committee referred to in Article 5.1 has examined it, an evaluation report on the best results obtained in implementing the actions referred to in Article 2. The Commission may present, on the basis of those results, proposals for adjusting the orientation of the programme.

#### Article 9

Participation in this programme may be open, in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article 6 without financial support by the Community from this programme, to legal entities established in third countries and to international organizations, where such participation contributes effectively to the implementation of the programme and taking into account the principle of mutual benefit.

#### Article 10

This Decision is addressed to the Member States.

Table II.1: Indicative breakdown of expenditure, 1998-2002

Percentages of total budget by category and year						
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	Total 1998-2002
Awareness	9%	7%	6%	5%	3%	30% maximum
Optimisation	11%	11%	11%	12%	12%	57%
International	2%	2%	3%	3%	3%	13% maximum
Percentage of total	22%	20%	20%	20%	18%	100%

source: Council Decision 30 March 1998

## Annex III Research methodology

The following research activities were undertaken to compile this evaluation:

- 1 Desk research. Studying the relevant information from published sources and documentation provided by the Commission;
- 2 Preparation and planning of interviews;
- 3 Activity related interviews;
- 4 Programme related interviews;
- 5 Analysis;
- 6 Synthesis of results and conclusions;
- 7 Report and lessons to be learnt.

Table III.1 shows how the information for the various assessments was gathered.

table III.1 activities for the various assessments in this evaluation

assessments in the evaluation	activities
mini-evaluations	desk research and activity related interviews
evaluation of the programme as a whole:	
- effectiveness	programme related interviews
- efficiency and cost effectiveness	desk research and programme related interviews
- utility	desk research and programme related interviews
- analysis	bringing together the analysis from assessment the results of the mini-evaluations and the various opinions about the effectiveness and efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the programme as a whole
synthesis, report and lessons for the future	based on the final analysis lessons will be learnt and challenges will be formulated for the future

Source: EIM, 2003.

In the paragraphs below we elaborate on the desk research and the interviews.

### *Desk research*

The desk research was based on the following categories of documentation:

- 1 PROMISE work programmes;
- 2 Documentation on the activities of PROMISE, i.e. copies of reports and studies, and documentation on eHealth and eGovernment Conferences;
- 3 Results of evaluation of information services by Unit;
- 4 PROMISE Management – e.g. management reports, financial reports, minutes, etc.;
- 5 PROMISE Committee – minutes;
- 6 Information Society Forum – annual reports;
- 7 Information on information services – website, newsletter, help desk;

The documentation on the benchmarking activities of PROMISE is, in part, available on the internet.<sup>1</sup> The information available includes the results of the Eurobarometer surveys and the specific surveys or studies on key elements of the eEurope Action Plan. The mid-term evaluation of PROMISE is a valuable source of information about the activities of PROMISE in the period 1998-(early) 2000. The

<sup>1</sup> [http://europa.eu.int/information\\_society/eeurope/benchmarking](http://europa.eu.int/information_society/eeurope/benchmarking)

desk research increased our understanding of the programme and gave us the right “analytical baggage” to start the interviewing.

### *Interviews*

Conforming to the terms of reference the interviews were conducted with:

- Commission officials such as those responsible for the implementation of the programme, officials of other Commission departments, and PROMISE committee members.
  - Relevant staff within Unit A1, responsible for PROMISE, for instance:
  - Relevant staff in other DG Information Society Directorates, for instance:
  - Information Society Forum
  - Relevant staff from other DGs and services
  - PROMISE Committee members
- Market actors and beneficiaries who were aware of PROMISE or who had been involved in the activities and projects, e.g. policymakers on a national level, industry organisations and citizen organisations.
- Opinion leaders such as members of the European Parliament, Information Society promoters in the Member States' public and private sectors:
  - European Parliament
  - Information Society Promoters in Member States in public as well as private sectors.

A layered interview approach was taken. For information about the users of the output of PROMISE we were dependent on the relevant Commission staff responsible for the implementation of PROMISE (i.e. relevant staff in Unit A1 and other directorates in DG INFSO) and the PROMISE programme committee. Therefore we interviewed these two groups first. In addition to being a source of information for assessing the effectiveness, efficiency and organisational aspects, and the utility of PROMISE, the interviews with the people responsible for the implementation of PROMISE and members of the programme committee was supposed to provide information on specific users of the output of PROMISE. This entails the programme management having some record of e.g. visitors to the website (hits and downloads), help desk contacts, persons and/or organisations ordering reports (benchmarking and best practice), newsletter subscribers, conference attendants, etc. The information gathered about users proved to be quite limited. EIM was able to obtain records of numbers of visitors of the website, but names of persons and/or organisations ordering reports, newsletter subscribers and conference attendants could not be identified in this way.

The Internet was a good source to identify possible users (policymakers, users from industry, and the general public). Apart from the EU Information Society website, websites from national governments, IS promoters in public and private sectors, trade organisations and citizens organisations were checked.

In the second step, the users (policymakers, users from industry, and the general public) were contacted, that were identified in our interviews with the people responsible for the implementation of PROMISE and members of the programme committee. The users were also interviewed about the effectiveness and utility of PROMISE. Of particular interest in the interviews with users were the follow-up actions that they took or are planning to take on the basis of the actions of PROMISE.

The interviews were conducted on the basis of structured checklists consisting of questions to assess the effectiveness, organisational aspects and the utility of PROMISE. We used separate checklists for different groups of interviewees:

- People responsible for the implementation of PROMISE. We include in this category relevant staff in Unit A1 and in other directorates in DG INFSO. In table III.2 we specify the evaluation questions linked to the relevant categories of INFSO staff.

- Members of the programme committee. The checklist used for interviewing the programme committee members is identical to the checklist used to interview the relevant staff in Unit A1 and in other directorates in DG INFSO. This is represented in table III.2 by also listing members of programme committee under groups of interviewees.
- Commission officials in other Commission departments. This checklist is primarily focused on assessing the utility of PROMISE. The checklist is given in table III.3
- Users of the output of PROMISE, i.e. policymakers at the national level, industry, citizens, etc. The questions focus on effectiveness and utility. This checklist is given in table III.4.

table III.2 Checklist for interviews with relevant staff in Unit A1 and other directorates in DG INFSO, and members of the programme committee

<i>Assessment of effectiveness</i>		
<i>element of PROMISE</i>	<i>evaluation questions</i>	<i>Group of interviewees</i>
1. Benchmarking	How are benchmark indicators measured? What is their quality? Are all indicators being measured? Are all indicators being measured regularly? Can the progress towards the targets of eEurope be monitored effectively? How big an audience do they reach (physical, digital)? Who are the users (policy makers, industry, general public)? Do they generate follow-up actions by users?	Staff responsible for implementation of PROMISE, Programme Committee Members
2. Best practice	Is information easy to find/construct? What is the quality of the sources? How are best practices disseminated (reports (physical, digital), conferences, ...) How big an audience do they reach? Who are the users (policy makers, industry, general public)? Do they generate follow-up actions by users?	Staff responsible for implementation of PROMISE, Programme Committee Members
3. Conferences/ workshops	How big an audience do they reach? What is the quality and utility? Do they generate follow-up actions by users?	Staff responsible for implementation of PROMISE (A1 an/or other directorates in INFSO), Programme Committee Members
4. Information services	Quality and utility of content Is the information up to date? Is the site user friendly?	Staff responsible for implementation of PROMISE (A1 an/or other directorates in INFSO), Programme Committee Members

<i>Assessment of effectiveness</i>		
<i>element of PROMISE</i>	<i>evaluation questions</i>	<i>Group of interviewees</i>
5. Information Society Forum	<p>The number of meetings (plenary and working groups</p> <p>Are the meetings well attended?</p> <p>What is the outcome of the meetings (reports, minutes, ...)?</p> <p>Have the recommendations from the mid-term evaluation concerning a more restricted membership been implemented?</p> <p>If not, why not? If so, has this proven to be more effective?</p> <p>What is the impact of the ISF as an advisory body (reach and impact of reach)?</p> <p>Is there a follow-up from ISF activities?</p>	<p>ISF members,</p> <p>Staff responsible for implementation of PROMISE (A1 an/or other directorates in INFISO),</p> <p>Programme Committee Members</p>
Meta-level questions	<p>Are activities appropriate in view of raising awareness and triggering follow-up actions in Member States?</p> <p>Did PROMISE do what it was supposed to do?</p>	<p>Staff responsible for implementation of PROMISE (A1 an/or other directorates in INFISO),</p> <p>Programme Committee Members</p>

<i>Assessment of organisational aspects</i>	
<i>evaluation questions</i>	<i>Group of interviewees</i>
<p>Was the balance appropriate</p> <p>How are decisions made</p> <p>Where lies the overall responsibility</p> <p>How was (project) management arranged</p> <p>How was the co-operation between Programme management and the PROMISE Committee</p> <p>Was the programme managed pro-actively (vision) or reactively (trying to engage the budget too late)</p> <p>Is the budget appropriate? How much budget do you need?</p> <p>Was the budget implementation efficient?</p> <p>Is the way in which programme was made (Council decision on indicators) appropriate? How should decision to make programme be ideally made?</p>	<p>Relevant staff within Unit A1 and relevant staff in Unit R2</p> <p>Programme Committee</p>
<p>How was the co-operation with other programmes (such as IST)</p>	<p>Relevant staff within Unit A1 and relevant staff in Unit R2</p> <p>Programme Committee</p>

<i>Assessment of Utility</i>	
<i>evaluation questions</i>	<i>Group of interviewees</i>
<p>the extent of co-ordination with other Information Society activities at Member State level and by the Commission</p> <p>the extent of co-operation with other departments in the Commission and with the Member States</p> <p>the extent to which PROMISE engages in network building and exchange of information with other departments in the Commission and with the Member States</p>	<p>Relevant staff within Unit A1, Programme Committee,</p> <p>Relevant staff in other DGs</p>

table III.3 Checklist for interviews with Commission officials in other Commission departments

<i>Assessment of organisational aspects</i>	
<i>evaluation questions</i>	<i>Group of interviewees</i>
How was the co-operation with other programmes (such as IST, eContent, IDA)	Commission officials in other Commission departments
<i>Assessment of Utility</i>	
<i>evaluation questions</i>	<i>Group of interviewees</i>
the extent of co-ordination with other Information Society activities at Member State level and by the Commission	Commission officials in other Commission departments
the extent of co-operation with other departments in the Commission and with the Member States	
the extent in which PROMISE engages in network building and exchange of information with other departments in the Commission and with the Member States	

table III.4 Checklist for interviews with users of output from PROMISE

<i>Assessment of effectiveness</i>		
<i>element of PROMISE</i>	<i>evaluation questions</i>	<i>Group of interviewees</i>
1. Benchmarking	What is their quality? Can the progress towards the targets of eEurope be monitored effectively? Do they generate follow-up actions by users?	User groups (policy makers, industry, citizens, etc...)
2. Best practice	What is the quality of the sources? Do they generate follow-up actions by users?	User groups (policy makers, industry, citizens, etc...)
3. Conferences/ workshops	What is the quality and utility? Do they generate follow-up actions by users?	User groups (policy makers, industry, citizens, etc...)
4. Information services	Quality and utility of content Is the information up to date? Is the site user friendly?	User groups (policy makers, industry, citizens, etc...)
5. Information Society Forum	Is there a follow-up of ISF activities?	User groups (policy makers, industry, citizens, etc...)
Meta-level questions	Are activities appropriate in view of raising awareness and triggering follow-up actions in Member States?	User groups (policy makers, industry, citizens, etc...)
<i>Assessment of Utility</i>		
<i>evaluation questions</i>	<i>Group of interviewees</i>	
the extent of co-ordination with other Information Society activities at Member State level and by the Commission	User groups (policy makers, industry, citizens, etc...)	
the extent of co-operation with other departments in the Commission and with the Member States		
the extent to which PROMISE engages in network building and exchange of information with other departments in the Commission and with the Member States		

## Annex IV Interviews conducted by evaluators

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table IV.1. List of persons interviewed

<i>Name</i>	<i>Organisation</i>
Anne Bucher	DG INFSO, Unit A1
Constantin Livas	DG INFSO, Unit A1
Frank Mather	DG INFSO, Unit A1
Jose Pato	DG INFSO, Unit A3
Jean Claude Healy	DG INFSO, Unit C4
Diane Whitehouse	DG INFSO, Unit C4
Giuseppe Zilioli	DG INFSO, Unit C6
Yvo Volman	DG INFSO, Unit C6
Walter Schwarzenbrunner	DG INFSO, Unit R2
Reinhard Büscher	DG ENTER, Unit D4
Franck Noel	DG ENTER, Unit D4
Jean-Bernard Benhaïem	DG REGIO, Unit B3
Maruja Gutiérrez Díaz	DG Education and Culture, Unit C4
Douglas Koszerek	Eurostat
Paul de Graaf	VNO-NCW
Jan van Dijk	Twente University
Alun German	Department of Trade and Industry
Jorgen Samuelsson	Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications
Bernd-Wolfgang Weismann	Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour
Richard Bartelot	Department of Trade and Industry
T. Karounos	Ministry of Economy and Finance
Carmel Madden	Department of the Taoiseach
Per Langeland Christensen	Danish Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation
Patrick Schouler	Ministry Finance and Industry
Claudio Carrelli	Eurescom and chairman of the Information Society Forum
Patrick Slaets	Agoria
D. Zeegers	EUPHA/NIVEL
Vincent Halère	Eurocommerce
Dominique Forest	Beuc
Franz Greil	Austrian Federal Chamber of Labour, Brussels Office
Elly Plooi - van Gorsel	European Parliament – Committee on Industry, External Trade, Research and Energy
Teresa Zabell	European Parliament – Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport
Inge Holckmann Olsen	The Danish Centre for Information Technology
Satu Ahonen	eris@
Sandra Lotti	Regione Emilia Romagna
Matthias Müller	Freistaat Sachsen
Thomas Brimmer	Land of Bremen
Oliver Richter	Land of Bremen
Peter Koudstaal	Syntens Rotterdam
Maria Farrell	International Chamber of Commerce
David Coleman	UNICE
Aatto J. Repo	TIEKE - Finnish Information Society Development Centre
Alain Deleener	IWT-Vlaanderen
Karel Goossen	IWT-Vlaanderen

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### Background

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