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## Connecting Europe at high speed: Commission takes stock of national broadband strategies

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The number of people and businesses accessing the Internet at high speed has grown by more than 80% in the year to January 2004, says a new European Commission report. Broadband take-up is now faster in the EU than in the US with several Member States among the best performers around the globe. The EU15 Member States all have national broadband strategies in place and the new Member States will table theirs before the end of 2004. All Member States agree that progress should be market driven. Growth has been fastest in those countries where competition particularly from alternative networks has allowed a choice of providers and driven down prices. However, there remains a role for public authorities whenever markets do not deliver the necessary investment. National broadband strategies therefore aim at increasing coverage of under-served areas and steps to stimulate demand. The Report concludes that national approaches must be kept under review and updated during 2005, both to take account of new ways of delivering high speed access and to learn from good practice in other countries.

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