



EUROPEISKA GEMENSKAPERNAS KOMMISSION

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ARBETSDOKUMENT AV KOMMISSIONENS PERSONAL

**Uppföljning av rekommendationerna från arbetsgruppen
för IKT-branschens konkurrenskraft och användningen av IKT**

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1. INLEDNING

Syftet med detta dokument är att beskriva vad kommissionen gör med anledning av de huvudsakliga rekommendationerna från arbetsgruppen för IKT-branschens konkurrenskraft och användningen av IKT (informations- och kommunikationsteknik) samt att sammanfatta övrig relevant EU-verksamhet på området. I den tekniska bilagan ges en utförlig redogörelse för var och en av arbetsgruppens rekommendationer.

Arbetsgruppen för IKT bildades i juni 2006 och utgjorde ett av flera branschspecifika initiativ som hade aviserats i meddelandet om industripolitik från 2005¹, vars syfte var att skapa ett mer gynnsamt klimat för näringslivet i EU. Arbetsgruppen komplementerar i2010² (EU:s strategi för informationssamhället för tillväxt och sysselsättning) som lanserades i juni 2005 och som har utformats för att stärka den digitala ekonomin genom ett samspel mellan forskning, lagstiftning och politiska initiativ. Arbetsgruppens uppdrag var att kartlägga större hinder för branschens konkurrenskraft och användningen av IKT, att hjälpa till att mobilisera branschen samt att rekommendera möjliga politiska lösningar. Bland medlemmarna³ fanns företrädare för IKT-branschen och det civila samhället på hög nivå. Branschföreträdarna kom från hela IKT-sektorn och omfattade både gamla och nya aktörer och stora och medelstora företag. Medlemmarna utanför branschen var företrädare för fackföreningar, små och medelstora företag, handelskamrar, konsumenter, investerare och den akademiska världen.

Arbetsgruppen lämnade en rapport⁴ i november förra året, där det tydligt framgår vart insatserna för att stärka IKT-branschens konkurrenskraft bör riktas⁵. På det hela taget bekräftar rekommendationerna i rapporten att kommissionens IKT-strategi är på rätt spår. Enligt rekommendationerna pågår det redan ett positivt arbete för att främja användning av IKT och entreprenörskap, stärka den inre marknaden och skapa en enhetlig lagstiftning, understödja innovationer, förbättra tillgången till finansiering, anpassa standardiseringspolitiken efter branschens aktuella förutsättningar samt för att ta fram en långsiktig strategi för e-kompetens.

Halvtidsöversynen av kommissionens industripolitik senare under året kommer att ge tillfälle till ytterligare en uppföljning av IKT-arbetsgruppens slutsatser.

¹ KOM(2005) 474, 5.10.2005.

² För fullständig information om i2010, se http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/eeurope/i2010/index_en.htm

³ Medlemmarna i arbetsgruppen: <http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/ict/policy/doc/icttfm.pdf>

⁴ För arbetsgruppens fullständiga rapport, en lista över medlemmarna samt uppgifter om arbetsfördelningen, se <http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/ict/taskforce.htm>

⁵ Kommissionens europeiska konkurrenskraftsrapport för 2006, KOM(2006) 697, innehåller ett avsnitt med en analys av IKT-branschens konkurrenskraft.

2. HUVUDSAKLIGA REKOMMENDATIONER OCH UPPFÖLJNING

2.1. Användning av IKT

Arbetsgruppens huvudsakliga rekommendationer: Genomför strukturreformer för mer flexibla produkt- och arbetsmarknader; skapa ett investeringsvänligt klimat i nästa generations nät, tjänster och offentliga nättjänster; ta fram en stadga för konsumenträttigheter i den digitala miljön.

Den reviderade Lissabonstrategin för tillväxt och sysselsättning innehåller ett heltäckande program för ekonomiska reformer, och den mikroekonomiska pelaren i detta program är inriktad på att skapa ett företagsvänligt klimat. I februari 2007 lade kommissionen fram ett omfattande paket med åtgärder⁶ för att få den **inre marknaden för varor** att fungera smidigare. Dessa åtgärder kommer att göra det lättare för företag, i synnerhet små och medelstora, att saluföra produkter i EU utan att göra avkall på kvalitet och säkerhet.

Tjänstedirektivet⁷, som antogs i december 2006 och som ska genomföras i medlemsstaterna, kommer att undanröja diskriminerande och oberättigade hinder, minska byråkratin samt modernisera och förenkla den rättsliga och administrativa ramen, framför allt genom kravet att elektroniska förfaranden för formaliteter och procedurer för tillträde till och utövande av tjänsteverksamhet ska vara på plats 2009. Det kommer också att förbättra det administrativa samarbetet mellan medlemsstaterna, och ett informationssystem för den inre marknaden (IMI) kommer att byggas upp för detta ändamål. Tjänstedirektivet ska vara genomfört i medlemsstaterna innan utgången av 2009, och kommissionen kommer att stödja dem i denna process. Direktivet utgör ett komplement till regelverket för den inre marknaden om tjänster i informationssamhället, som fastställdes genom direktivet om e-handel⁸. Under 2005 slutfördes lagstiftningsfasen för en handlingsplan⁹ inriktad på att utveckla en verkligt EU-täckande marknad för **finansiella tjänster**. Mot bakgrund av detta genomför kommissionen nu en ny strategi¹⁰ för att fördjupa den ekonomiska integrationen och skapa nya fördelar för såväl branschen som konsumenterna.

Stöd till politikområden för utveckling av nästa generations nät och tjänster sker främst genom **den pågående översynen av regelverket för elektronisk kommunikation**¹¹, liksom genom andra åtgärder i **den första pelaren i i2010**¹². Syftet med i2010 är att skapa ett

⁶ Se pressmeddelande IP/07/181, 14.2.2007. Paketet innehåller bland annat "Förslag till en förordning om förfaranden för tillämpning av vissa nationella tekniska föreskrifter på produkter som lagligen saluförts i en annan medlemsstat", KOM(2007) 36, 14.2.2007.

⁷ Europaparlamentets och rådets direktiv 2006/123/EG av den 12 december 2006 om tjänster på den inre marknaden, EUT L 376, 27.12.2006, s. 36–68.

⁸ Europaparlamentets och rådets direktiv 2000/31/EG av den 8 juni 2000 om vissa rättsliga aspekter på informationssamhällets tjänster, särskilt elektronisk handel, på den inre marknaden.

⁹ Handlingsplanen för finansiella tjänster,
http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/finances/actionplan/index_en.htm

¹⁰ Politiken på området finansiella tjänster 2005–2010 (vitboken), KOM(2005) 629, 5.12.2005.

¹¹ Se http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/policy/ecommm/tomorrow/index_en.htm.
Lagförslag kommer att läggas fram i slutet av 2007.

¹² http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/eeurope/i2010/single_infor_space/index_en.htm

gemensamt europeiskt informationsområde, genom en kombination av lagstiftning och andra verktyg som kommissionen har till sitt förfogande, för att ta fram ett modernt, marknadsorienterat regelverk för den digitala ekonomin. Att göra offentliga nättjänster mer tillgängliga har varit ett prioriterat område. Detta har särskilt skett genom **Handlingsplanen för e-förvaltning**¹³ och genom utvecklandet av systemet Interoperabilitet för alleuropeiska e-förvaltningstjänster¹⁴.

I december 2006 åtog sig rådet dessutom att inom ramen för Lissabonstrategin **granska utmaningarna som nästa generations Internet och nät står inför och själva orsakar** vid rådets vårmöte 2008. **Kommande tendenser inom nät och Internet** liksom förutsebara hinder för utvecklingen kommer också att tas upp under diskussionerna under 2007, vilket kommer att bana väg för en halvtidsöversyn av i2010 år 2008.

I mars 2007 antog kommissionen en konsumentpolitikstrategi för 2007–2013¹⁵. I denna betonar man att bristande förtroende från konsumenternas sida tillsammans med rättsliga hinder fortfarande hämmar en fullt utvecklad inre marknad. Avsikten med strategin är att bemöta utmaningarna inom den digitala miljön så att konsumenterna ska kunna handla överallt i EU – från den lokala butiken till Internet – med visshet om att de har ett lika effektivt skydd överallt. **Ett omfattande samråd om konsumentreglerna i EU** inleddes tidigt under 2007, i och med att kommissionen antog en grönbok¹⁶ där man ser över gällande lagstiftning. Ett av syftena med initiativet är att anpassa existerande konsumentregler till den digitala världen. Utifrån återkopplingen från grönboken vill kommissionen stärka konsumenternas förtroende för den gemensamma marknaden genom att ta fram en enkel och enhetlig uppsättning regler, så att konsumenterna lätt ska kunna ta reda på sina rättigheter, göra välavvägda val och få adekvat hjälp om något går snett. Förslag till enskilda initiativ – såväl rättsliga som andra – för att komma till rätta med förekommande problem och brister kommer att läggas fram efter remissrundan. Dessutom kommer de positiva effekter på den inre marknaden som direktivet om e-handel medför att förstärkas när de nuvarande bestämmelserna om minimiharmonisering på området tas bort.

Samhällsomfattande tjänster är ett viktigt inslag i regelverket för elektronisk kommunikation med syfte att förse alla med tjänster av hög kvalitet till rimligt pris, oavsett geografiskt läge, och har gett alla möjlighet att skaffa en telefon- eller Internetuppkoppling till ett skäligt pris. På så sätt gynnas användningen av IKT. Det finns ett behov att se över principerna och räckvidden för de samhällsomfattande tjänsterna för elektronisk kommunikation på 2000-talet, och kommissionen kommer att publicera en grönbok om denna fråga i slutet av 2007 och inleda en bred diskussion.

¹³ Handlingsplan för e-förvaltning inom ramen för i2010: ett snabbare införande av e-förvaltning i Europa till nytta för alla, KOM(2006) 173, 25.4.2006.

¹⁴ Se <http://ec.europa.eu/idabc/en/document/2319/5644>

¹⁵ "EU:s strategi för konsumentpolitiken 2007–2013", KOM(2007) 99, tillgänglig på: http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/overview/cons_policy/index_en.htm

¹⁶ Grönbok om översynen av konsumentregelverket, KOM(2006) 744, 8.2.2007.

2.2 Små och medelstora företag och entreprenörskap

Arbetsgruppens huvudsakliga rekommendationer: Mer utbildning i företagande; öka företagens medvetenhet om fördelarna med IKT.

Att främja företagande och kompetens är ett av de fem särskilda handlingsområdena i kommissionens strategi för små och medelstora företag¹⁷. Kommissionen inser att utbildning i företagande spelar en allt viktigare roll, och i synnerhet att skolor och universitet har en nyckelroll för att främja företagandet. Dessutom bad Europeiska rådet medlemsstaterna under vårmötet 2006 att uppmuntra entreprenörskap, bland annat genom utbildning i företagande. Meddelandet "Främja entreprenörstänkande genom utbildning och lärande"¹⁸ har bidragit till att utforma **mer systematiska strategier för entreprenörskapsutbildning** och till att stärka utbildningens roll för att skapa ett mer företagervänligt klimat i Europa. Det ger exempel på god praxis, är inriktat på politiska stödåtgärder och innehåller förslag till rekommendationer för åtgärder på nationell eller regional nivå.

Många åtgärder för informationssamhället får stöd från strukturfonderna, som innehåller delområden för e-handel och små och medelstora företag.

eBSN (European eBusiness Support Network for SMEs – det europeiska stödnätverket för e-handel)¹⁹ innehåller en plattform för samordning av nationella och regionala politiska initiativ för att befrämja små och medelstora företags bruk av e-handel. Denna plattform underlättar utbyte av information och fallstudier om e-handelsrelaterade frågor. Inom eBSN har man följt nationella informationskampanjer och observerat ett trendbrott i samtliga medlemsstaters politik: från att ta ansvaret för och samfinansiera investeringar i IKT och Internetanslutningar till att stödja företagen att göra innovationer med hjälp av IKT. På senare tid har man lagt märke till ytterligare en förändring mot en mer branschspecifik politik²⁰, nämligen stödstrategier för att få företagen att börja använda IKT som tar hänsyn till deras särskilda affärsmiljö (affärspartner, leverantörer, kunder osv.). Genom eBSN kommer företrädare från medlemsstaterna att fortsätta att mötas för att lära och inspireras av varandra och försöka hitta mer effektiva metoder för att öka företagets medvetande.

2.3 Enhetligt regelverk

Arbetsgruppens huvudsakliga rekommendationer: Skapa ett regelverk som underlättar enhetlighet och ett informationssamhälle för alla; främja skapandet av en inre marknad för kunskapsintensiva tjänster; se över upphovsrättsliga ersättningar.

Enhetlighet är ett av de tre prioriterade områdena i i2010-initiativet "Skapa ett informationsområde". I i2010 förordas en anpassning av lagstiftningen genom att regelverket

¹⁷ Anges i "Genomförande av gemenskapens Lissabonprogram: Tillväxt och sysselsättning genom en modern politik för små och medelstora företag", KOM(2005) 551, 10.11.2005.

¹⁸ KOM(2006) 33, 13.2.2006.

¹⁹ Se eBSN:s webbportal: http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/e-bsn/index_en.html

²⁰ Observationer från eBSN:s senaste workshops samt databasen över nationella projekt.

för elektronisk kommunikation ses över och att direktivet om audiovisuella medietjänster antas. Det innehåller också ett antal initiativ för att uppmuntra nya audiovisuella tjänster, till exempel initiativet om film på nätet ("Film Online Charter") samt kommande meddelanden om material på Internet och mobil sändning. Konvergensen bjuder på andra utmaningar inom området immaterialrätt, säkerhet och konsumentskydd²¹. Dessa frågor kommer att tas upp under diskussionerna som föregår halvtidsöversynen av i2010-strategin 2008.

Halvtidsöversynen av i2010 ska vara slutförd 2008 och kommer att beröra den inre marknaden för IKT-tjänster, inklusive kunskapsintensiva sådana, och sammanfaller med **den samlade översynen av strategin för den inre marknaden**²². Denna översyn kommer att resultera i **en rapport om den inre marknaden under 2000-talet**, med konkreta förslag på framtida åtgärder, som ska överlämnas av kommissionen till rådet **2007**.

Vad gäller **upphovsrättsliga ersättningar** beslutade kommissionen i december 2006, efter omfattande samråd²³ med de berörda parterna och medlemsstaterna, att det behövs mer eftertanke kring denna komplicerade fråga.

2.4 Immaterialrätt

Arbetsgruppens huvudsakliga rekommendationer: Med tanke på hur många immaterialrättsliga strategier det finns inom IKT-branschen bör ett brett samråd äga rum innan EU-lagstiftningen ändras. Kriminalisering av överträdelser av immaterialrättigheterna bör också begränsas till uppsåtlig varumärkesförfalskning, intrång i upphovsrätten och piratkopiering. Understöd antagandet av Londonprotokollet och minska patentkostnaderna.

Kommissionen har lagt fram ett förslag till ett direktiv²⁴ om straffrättsliga åtgärder till skydd för immateriella rättigheter. Detta förslag är inte begränsat till varumärken, upphovsrätt och formskydd. Europaparlamentet och rådet diskuterar för närvarande kommissionens förslag.

Efter slutsatserna från rådets möte i december 2006 och det omfattande samrådet med de berörda parterna under 2006 gav kommissionen i april 2007 ut ett meddelande om att **förbättra patentsystemet i Europa**²⁵. Även om minskade patentkostnader är ett av huvudmålen ska man komma ihåg att det är upp till medlemsstaterna att ratificera Londonprotokollet. Dessutom har kommissionen för avsikt att lägga fram en omfattande strategi för immaterialrätt under 2008 för att förse EU med ett lämpligt system för att uppmuntra och skydda innovationer.

²¹ http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/eeurope/i2010/docs/i2010_high_level_group/i2010_hlg_convergence_paper_final.pdf

²² Se webbportalen http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/strategy/index_en.htm

²³ Tillgängliga via http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/copyright/levy_reform/index_en.htm

²⁴ Ändrat förslag till europaparlamentets och rådets direktiv om straffrättsliga åtgärder till skydd för immateriella rättigheter, KOM(2006) 168, 26.4.2006.

²⁵ KOM(2007) 165, 3.4.2007.

2.5 Innovationer, forskning, investeringar och finansiering

Arbetsgruppens huvudsakliga rekommendationer: Utbyt bra metoder för innovationer; stimulera forskningen med hjälp av skattelättnader; stöd forskningsarbeten via de europeiska teknikplattformarna och de gemensamma teknikinitiativen; stöd utvecklingen av pionjärmarknader genom offentlig upphandling; garantera lika villkor för den europeiska halvledarindustrin; skapa ett gynnsamt klimat för riskkapital; fortsatt att reformera politiken för statligt stöd.

Medlemsstaterna har öronmärkt 9,1 miljarder euro för att finansiera forskning om IKT inom det sjunde ramprogrammet. Det blir därmed det största forskningsprojektet inom samarbetsprogrammet, som i sig själv är det största enskilda programmet inom det sjunde ramprogrammet. Inom alla de 31 **europeiska teknikplattformarna**²⁶ har man nu gett ut en visionsbeskrivning, och de flesta är färdiga med eller har ett långt framskridet utkast till en strategisk forskningsagenda. Nu förbereder man sig för att gå över till genomförandefasen. Kommissionen har beaktat resultatet av arbetet inom plattformarna när den har utarbetat sin forskningsstrategi, särskilt vid uppbyggnaden av sjunde ramprogrammet. Detta har varit ett värdefullt sätt att förvissa sig om att de är relevanta för branschen. En analys visar att 15 strategiska forskningsagendor kommer att täckas av ett enda forskningsprogram i sjunde ramprogrammet (vilket visar det nära samarbetet när sjunde ramprogrammet utformades) och att de återstående 16 strategiska forskningsagendorna kommer att beröra flera forskningsprogram. Det första **gemensamma teknikinitiativet**, ARTEMIS²⁷, som omfattar forskning och utveckling i inbyggda datasystem, förväntas komma igång under första halvan av 2007, följt av ENIAC²⁸ (europeiska rådgivande kommittén för nanoelektronik).

Kommissionen har nyligen lanserat **PRO INNO Europe**²⁹, där över 200 politiskt ansvariga för innovationer och intressenter från 33 länder, inklusive medlemsstaterna, möter varandra. De analyserar och jämför resultat från nationell och regional innovationspolitik, ger stöd till samarbete mellan nationella och regionala innovationsprogram samt stimulerar gemensamma åtgärder från utvecklingsorgan och intressenter på innovationsområdet, till exempel gränsöverskridande samarbete för att utveckla klusterpolitiken³⁰.

I meddelandet "I riktning mot en effektivare användning av skattelättnader till förmån för forskning och utveckling"³¹ beskriver kommissionen den nuvarande rättsliga ramen (med särskild tyngdpunkt på förenligheten med de grundläggande friheterna och de nyligen ändrade **reglerna för statligt stöd till forskning, utveckling och innovation**³²) och uppmanar medlemsstaterna att förbättra användningen och samordningen av skattelättnader för

²⁶ För en lista över de europeiska teknikplattformarna, se http://cordis.europa.eu/technology-platforms/individual_en.html

²⁷ För ytterligare upplysningar om ARTEMIS, se http://cordis.europa.eu/technology-platforms/individual_en.html

²⁸ För ytterligare upplysningar om ENIAC, se <http://cordis.europa.eu/ist/eniac/home.html>

²⁹ Se <http://www.proinno-europe.eu>

³⁰ För ytterligare upplysningar, se <http://www.proinno-europe.eu/eca.html>

³¹ KOM(2006) 728, 22.11.2006.

³² EUT C 323, 30.12.2006, s. 1–26.

forskning och utveckling. I meddelandet ges också råd om beskattning, bland annat när det gäller stora gränsöverskridande forskningsprojekt; om tillväxt av nystartade innovativa företag, om forskares rörlighet över gränserna, om hantering av moms och skatt på forskning i den enhetliga konsoliderade bolagsskattebasen samt om finansiering från icke vinstdrivande organisationer. Kommissionen kommer att följa läget.

Kommissionen genomför tillsammans med intressenter en utförlig undersökning, som omfattar samråd med experter från de europeiska teknikplattformarna och från innovationspanelerna inom Europe INNOVA³³, för att kartlägga eventuella områden där en kombination av åtgärder på tillgångs- och efterfrågesidan skulle kunna **hjälpa fram pionjärmarknader**. Detta ligger i linje med den brett upplagda innovationsstrategin som presenterades 2006³⁴. Med utgångspunkt från resultatet kommer kommissionen att förbereda ett strategidokument under andra halvåret 2007.

Halvledarindustrin har en uppenbar strategisk betydelse för EU. Liksom för alla grenar i den europeiska industrin är det övergripande målet lika konkurrensvillkor över hela världen. **Att förbättra regelverket för att stimulera fler investeringar inom forskning och utveckling samt att stärka den högre kompetensen är också av stor vikt.**

I de nyligen antagna **Gemenskapens rambestämmelser för statligt stöd till forskning, utveckling och innovation**³⁵ anges flera kategorier av stöd till grundforskning, industriforskning och experimentell utveckling. Den högsta tillåtna stödnivån för industriforskning är 50 %.

I kommissionens meddelande från juni 2006 "Finansiering av tillväxten i små och medelstora företag – Att skapa europeiskt mervärde"³⁶ presenteras ett antal initiativ för att **ge små och medelstora företag bättre tillgång till finansiering för start och tillväxt**. Det är bland annat åtgärder för att generera fler riskkapitalinvesteringar, utveckla bankfinansieringen av innovationer samt att göra dagens finansieringssystem bättre lämpade för små och medelstora företag. Som en uppföljning har kommissionen inrättat grupper med experter på **såddfinansiering, god praxis i riskkapitalinvestering på en regional nivå** samt på att **undanröja hinder för gränsöverskridande investering från riskkapitalfonder**³⁷. Det nya **ramprogrammet för konkurrenskraft och innovation**³⁸ kommer ytterligare att stimulera privata kapitalinvestorer att investera i företag med tillväxtpotential. Europeiska investeringsfonden (EIF) kommer för kommissionens räkning att driva eller bistå vid driften av **flera finansieringsverktyg för små och medelstora företag**: instrumentet för innovativa små och medelstora företag med hög tillväxt (GIF), garantiinstrumentet för små och

³³ Paneler med innovationsexperter från branschen, som lämnar förslag till prioriterade områden för sektorsspecifika åtgärder och formulerar frågor och problem som behöver lösas, är en central del av Europe INNOVA-initiativet.

³⁴ KOM(2006) 502, Kunskap i praktiken: en brett upplagd innovationsstrategi för EU.

³⁵ EUT C 323, 30.12.2006, s. 1–26.

³⁶ KOM(2006) 349, 29.6.2006.

³⁷ Den främsta uppgiften för denna grupp är att ta reda på vilka regler som påverkar inhemska och utländska riskkapitalfonder i varje deltagande land samt att, i fall där reglerna hindrar riskkapitalfondernas aktivitet över gränserna, finna sätt att övervinna dessa hinder. Se <http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/library/enterprise-europe/news-updates/2006/2006-11-29.htm>

³⁸ Ramprogrammet för konkurrenskraft och innovation: http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/enterprise_policy/cip/index_en.htm

medelstora företag (SMEG) samt systemet för kapacitetsuppbyggnad (CBS). I samarbete med Europeiska investeringsbanken (EIB) kommer kommissionen att lansera **en finansieringsfacilitet med riskdelning**³⁹ som ska ge stöd åt högriskinvesteringar i FoTU-projekt genom lån och garantier, där EU bidrar med upp till en miljard euro från sjunde ramprogrammet och EIB med lika mycket.

2.6 Standarder och kompatibilitet

Arbetsgruppens huvudsakliga rekommendationer: Eftersom branschen själv primärt är ansvarig för den tekniska driftskompatibiliteten: fortsatt att stödja arbetet med den rättsliga och semantiska kompatibiliteten; främja effektiva system för överensstämmelse; utveckla upphandlingssätt som underlättar kompatibiliteten.

De europeiska standardiseringsorganen har tagit fram och vidareutvecklar **riktlinjer för att se till att hänsyn tas till kompatibiliteten när standarder förbereds**. Vissa standarder uppdateras för närvarande för att stärka dem i kompatibilitetshänseende. Vad gäller **prioriteringarna** står kompatibiliteten redan i centrum för standardiseringsmålen och betraktas som en kritisk fråga som noga bör övervakas under den kommande **översynen av standardiseringspolitiken för IKT**. Ett antal specifika standardiseringsinsatser är riktade mot kompatibilitetsfrågor på enskilda områden som e-hälsovård⁴⁰, det gemensamma europeiska betalningsområdet (GEBO), elektronisk fakturering osv. Dessutom påbörjade kommissionen under 2006 en **studie**⁴¹ för att förbereda rekommendationer med målet att EU:s standardiseringspolitik för IKT-branschen ska klara de förändringar som liberalisering, globalisering och konvergens innebär.

IKT-temat i sjunde ramprogrammet omfattar **standardförberedande forskning och forskning i samband med standardisering i syfte att förbättra kompatibiliteten av och kvaliteten på standarderna samt genomförandet av dem**. Branschen står för största delen av den standardförberedande forskningen. Arbetsprogrammet för IKT inom sjunde ramprogrammet omfattar redan åtgärder för att förbättra samarbetet under utvecklandet av standarder och kompatibla lösningar.

De europeiska standardiseringsorganens olika arbetsprogram är inriktade på **teknisk driftskompatibilitet**, särskilt inom ETSI (Europeiska institutet för telekommunikationsstandarder), medan den **semantiska kompatibiliteten** har inlemmats i arbetsprogrammen för branschvisa standardiseringsgrupper, som e-hälsovård⁴² och e-BIF (forumet om e-företag och driftskompatibilitet)⁴³. Andra aspekter av kompatibilitet – till exempel rättsliga sådana – tillhör inte deras uppdrag, trots att en del av dessa frågor behandlas av arbetsprogrammet för IKT inom sjunde ramprogrammet. Som en utgångspunkt för att ta reda på **grundförutsättningarna för kompatibilitet** ingår det i arbetsprogrammen inom de

³⁹ Se <http://www.eib.org/site/index.asp?designation=rfff>

⁴⁰ Undergruppen för e-hälsovård inom i2010 håller för närvarande på att diskutera en rekommendation från kommissionen som tar upp riktlinjer och god praxis inom området kompatibilitet för elektroniska patientjournaler och sjukförsäkringskort.

⁴¹ "EU study on the specific policy needs for ICT standardisation", <http://www.ictstandardisation.eu>

⁴² CEN/TC 251.

⁴³ CEN:s forum om e-företag och driftskompatibilitet.

europiska standardiseringsorganen åtgärder för att få kunskap om problem och behov. Den allmänna ramen för IKT-kompatibilitet kommer att undersökas under rubriken ”inre marknad” i halvtidsöversynen av i2010. Erfarenheten när det gäller att genomföra lagstiftning om den fria rörligheten för varor visar att det finns en viss risk för att konkurrensen snedvrids, eftersom det råder stora skillnader mellan olika nationella myndigheters praxis för att utse och ackreditera **organ och system för bedömning av överensstämelsen**. Därför har kommissionen nyligen antagit ett förslag till en förordning⁴⁴ om skärpta regler för marknadsövervakning, som en del av kommissionens förslag till ett nytt åtgärds paket för varor på den inre marknaden⁴⁵.

Handlingsplanen för elektronisk offentlig upphandling⁴⁶ har kompatibilitet som ett väsentligt krav, och **handlingsplanen för e-förvaltning**⁴⁷ har uttryckliga mål på detta område. Det pågår undersökningar och samråd inför granskningen av **Interoperabilitet för alleuropeiska e-förvaltningstjänster**⁴⁸, och förslag till en revidering kommer att läggas fram i god tid.

2.7 Kompetens och anställbarhet

Arbetsgruppens huvudsakliga rekommendationer: Eftersom växande brister i e-kompetens begränsar innovationer och användningen av IKT: öka investeringarna i fortbildning av lärare och i stödmekanismer; utöka samarbetet mellan branschen, regeringar, arbetsgivare och utbildningsinstitutioner; fortsatt arbetet med att införliva entreprenörskap i kursplanerna.

Utbildnings- och stödåtgärder är huvudsakligen medlemsstaternas ansvar. Kommissionen kommer att stödja sådana initiativ genom att anordna undersökningar, arrangemang, samarbetsprojekt och utbyte av bra metoder genom existerande EU-program, särskilt genom det nya **programmet för livslångt lärande**⁴⁹. Stödet kommer att omfatta många olika kompetenser för anställbarhet, från e-kompetens och entreprenörskap⁵⁰ till kommunikationsförmåga och färdigheter för lagarbete och problemlösning.

Dessutom kommer kommissionen att beakta rekommendationerna från IKT-arbetsgruppen och deklARATIONEN från den nyligen hållna konferensen om e-kompetens i Europa⁵¹ när den

⁴⁴ Förslag till Europaparlamentets och rådets förordning om krav för ackreditering och marknadsövervakning i samband med saluföring av produkter, KOM(2007) 37, 14.2.2007.

⁴⁵ För mer upplysningar, se http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/regulation/internal_market_package/index_en.htm

⁴⁶ Handlingsplan för genomförandet av den rättsliga ramen för elektronisk offentlig upphandling, KOM(2004) 841, 13.12.2004.

⁴⁷ KOM(2006) 173, 25.4.2006.

⁴⁸ Se <http://ec.europa.eu/idabc/en/document/2319/5644>

⁴⁹ Se http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/newprog/index_en.html

⁵⁰ Kommissionen har nyligen presenterat ”Osloagendan för utbildning i entreprenörskap i Europa” som en del av insatsen för att främja företagandets i samhället. Se: http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/entrepreneurship/support_measures/training_education/index.htm

⁵¹ För deklARATIONEN från konferensen, se http://eskills.cedefop.europa.eu/conference2006/Thessaloniki_Declaration_2006.pdf

förbereder sitt **meddelande om en långsiktig strategi för e-kompetens, som planeras antas under 2007.**

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Task Force grouped its recommendations¹ under the headings of ICT uptake, SMEs and entrepreneurship, single regulatory environment, intellectual property, innovation, investment and finance, standards, and skills and employability. Each recommendation is reproduced below and is followed by a brief description of what the Commission is doing in terms of actions underway, planned or already undertaken.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS AND FOLLOW-UP

2.1. ICT Uptake

Task Force Recommendation 1: Ensure a more flexible production environment by: implementing a package of reform measures including liberalisation of product, service and financial markets; fostering entrepreneurship and experimentation with low barriers to entry and exit enabling firms to experiment and test new business models; and promoting greater adaptability of firms and improve adaptability of the workforce through strategies to secure access to education and lifelong learning, in particular e-skills training and workforce development while adapting overly strict employment legislation that impacts firms' abilities to respond quickly to changing market conditions.

The revised Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs provides an all-encompassing economic reform agenda, and its micro-economic pillar focuses on creating a business-friendly environment. In February 2007, the Commission proposed a broad package of measures² to help ensure a smoother functioning of the **internal market for goods**. This will make it easier for companies, particularly for SMEs, to market products in the EU, while assuring high levels of quality and safety. For industrial goods already subject to EU legislation, it is suggested to establish a system of market surveillance that builds on the existing system for consumer products. Furthermore, cooperation between national accreditation bodies should be reinforced, and new rules to enhance confidence and trust in the CE mark are proposed.

The transposition by the Member States of the **Services Directive**³, adopted in December 2006, will remove discriminatory and unjustified barriers, cut red tape, and modernise and simplify the legal and administrative framework. The Directive aims to eliminate obstacles to trade in services and thus allow the development of cross-border operations, and is intended to improve the competitiveness not just of service enterprises, but also of European industry as a whole. An essential element of the administrative simplification is the obligation for Member

¹ For the full report of the Task-Force, a list of members and details of working arrangements, see <http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/ict/taskforce.htm>

² See press-release IP/07/181 of 14.02.2007. The package notably includes "Proposal for a Regulation laying down procedures relating to the application of certain national technical rules to products lawfully marketed in another Member State", COM(2007) 36, 14.02.2007

³ Directive 2006/123/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2006 on services in the internal market, OJ L 376, 27.12.2006, p. 36–68

States to allow service providers to complete all formalities and procedures relating to the access to and exercise of a service activity at a distance and by electronic means. The Directive also improves administrative cooperation between Member States and provides for a tool (the IMI, or Internal Market Information system) for fast, secure data exchange between European authorities, allowing effective communication despite barriers due to different languages and administrative structures. The Services Directive will have to be transposed by Member States by the end of 2009, and the Commission will support and assist them in the implementation process. The Directive complements the Internal Market regulatory framework for information society services that was established by the eCommerce Directive⁴.

Based on the completion in 2005 of the legislative phase of an action plan⁵ aimed at developing a true European-wide market in **financial services**, the Commission is now implementing a new strategy⁶ to deepen financial integration and deliver further benefits to industry and consumers alike. A more developed Single Market in financial services will not only provide consumers with a wider choice of financial products, but also make it easier and cheaper for companies to borrow money, bringing down the cost of capital, goods and services.

The **European Network of Living Labs**⁷, with 20 members from 15 EU countries, launched in November 2006, provides a platform where firms, public authorities and citizens can work together on developing and testing new technologies, business models and services in real-life contexts. Such research infrastructure will support the involvement of users and citizens in innovation processes throughout Europe.

Also in November 2006, the Commission launched a broad **public debate on reviewing labour law and its adaptation to the modern world of work**. A green paper⁸ asks Member States, social partners and other stakeholders how labour law at EU and national level can help the job market become more flexible while maximising security for workers (the "flexicurity" approach). The consultation will run over a period of four months and its contributions will feed into in the upcoming Commission Communication on flexicurity later this year.

Projects on e-skills training will be supported by the EU's Lifelong Learning (LLL), Competitiveness & Innovation (CIP) and Framework (FP7) programmes, which were launched at the beginning of 2007.

⁴ Directive 2000/31/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 8 June 2000 on certain legal aspects of information society services, in particular electronic commerce, in the Internal Market.

⁵ The Financial Services Action Plan (FSAP),
http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/finances/actionplan/index_en.htm

⁶ Financial Services Policy 2005-2010 (White Paper), COM(2005) 629, 05.12.2005

⁷ <http://www.cdt.ltu.se/~zcorelabs>

⁸ Modernising labour law to meet the challenges of the 21st century (Green Paper), COM(2006) 708, 22.11.2006

Task Force Recommendation 2: Closely follow and support the development of next generation networks and services at the highest policy level. The conditions to achieve the objectives will continue to be discussed in the context of the review of the EU regulatory framework for eCommunications services. Investment in the roll-out of new broadband infrastructure and networks must remain market driven. The use of public funds to bridge the digital gap should be limited to those cases where private investment is not economically viable and under clear conditions to avoid distortion of competition.

Policy support for the development of next-generation networks and services is primarily assured through the **ongoing review of the regulatory framework for electronic communications**⁹, as well as through other measures in the **first pillar of the i2010 initiative**¹⁰, which aims to create a Single European Information Space by combining regulatory and other instruments at the Commission's disposal to create a modern, market-oriented regulatory framework for the digital economy.

In addition, the December 2006 European Council pledged to **review the challenges facing and posed by the next generation of the Internet and networks** within the framework of the Lisbon Strategy at the 2008 Spring European Council. **Future trends in networks and the Internet**, as well as foreseeable obstacles to their development, will also be addressed in 2007 in the reflection process paving the way for a mid-term review of i2010 in 2008.

Regarding investment, the Commission encourages the deployment of broadband in remote and rural areas¹¹. Public funding can be used if compliant with **State aid rules**. Guidelines on the use of Structural Funds in respect of competition rules are available¹². A Commission-sponsored conference¹³ in May 2007 will follow up this issue, amongst others (see follow-up to Recommendation 3, below).

Task Force Recommendation 3: Consumer demand and skills should be increased by: encouraging public administrations to make eGovernment services widely available in order to stimulate citizens and businesses to embrace broadband and to commit themselves to specify a date by when all relations with citizens could be carried out by electronic means; organising campaigns to raise awareness among end users of the benefits that broadband can bring to their everyday life; making ICT more affordable and accessible to all people including those with low incomes or special needs; implementing programmes (such as tax incentives) to promote the purchase of broadband enabled PCs and training packages; setting an objective of 100% European schools connected to broadband Internet.

⁹ See http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/policy/ecommm/tomorrow/index_en.htm.
Legislative proposals will be tabled by the end of 2007.

¹⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/eeurope/i2010/single_infor_space/index_en.htm

¹¹ http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/eeurope/i2010/docs/digital_divide/communication/com_bridging_bb_gap_2006_en.pdf

¹² Guidelines on criteria and modalities of implementation of structural funds in support of electronic communications, SEC(2003) 895, 28.07.2003

¹³ See http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/events/broadband_gap_2007/index_en.htm

Widening the availability of eGovernment services has been a key priority under the two eEurope Action Plans and is also one of i2010's, in particular through the eGovernment Action Plan (see below) and discussions with Member States in the i2010 High-Level Group. Furthermore, the Commission has been measuring the availability, efficiency and user-centeredness of eGovernment services in an annual survey since 2001, and has determined that there has been steady, constant growth in the availability and sophistication of the services offered online¹⁴. Eurostat also measures the take-up of eGovernment services by households and businesses in its EU surveys of ICT usage¹⁵. In April 2006, the Commission adopted an **eGovernment Action Plan**¹⁶, which sets ambitious targets for the development of electronic procurement, electronic identity management and electronic documents in order to facilitate the provision of many more government services online.

The Commission's 2006 Communication¹⁷ "Bridging the broadband gap" aimed to **raise awareness of the potential benefits of broadband**. As a follow-up, in May 2007, Commissioners Reding, Fischer Boel, Hübner and Kroes will launch a major conference and exhibition on "Bridging the broadband gap" to investigate how the strategic use of ICT can support regional and local development, ease infrastructure and geographical handicaps and make these areas more attractive to business and individuals alike¹⁸.

Regarding the **affordability and accessibility of ICT**, in 2006¹⁹ the Member States, together with other European countries, set targets and committed themselves to address the needs of older people, reduce geographical digital divides, enhance accessibility to electronic government and other online services, improve digital literacy, and promote cultural diversity. A Commission Communication on eAccessibility in 2005²⁰ had previously defined a set of actions at EU level and opened the debate on the need to legislate in this area. A major initiative on eInclusion is planned for 2008.

Establishing incentive schemes for **purchasing broadband-enabled PCs and ICT training packages** is the prerogative of the Member States, and many national broadband strategies and Lisbon National Reform Programmes for Growth and Jobs make reference to such measures.

¹⁴ See, for example, the 2006 e-Government Benchmarking Report:

http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/eeurope/i2010/docs/benchmarking/online_availability_2006.pdf

¹⁵ Accessible via the EUROSTAT portal <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>. eGovernment indicators are linked from the data navigation tree reached from the "Science and technology" theme and then under "Long-term indicators / Information society".

¹⁶ i2010 eGovernment Action Plan: accelerating eGovernment in Europe for the benefit of all, COM(2006) 173, 25.04.2006

¹⁷ COM(2006) 129, 20.03.2006

¹⁸ See http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/events/broadband_gap_2007/index_en.htm

¹⁹ Riga Ministerial Declaration, 11 June 2006

²⁰ eAccessibility, COM(2005) 425, 13.09.2005

The issue of **connecting schools to the internet** has been widely addressed by national broadband strategies. Statistics refer to 2006 and confirm²¹ the wide and rising availability of broadband connections in schools, with the exception of a small number of Member States.

Task Force Recommendation 4: Adopt a European public procurement policy in key areas such as health, mobility, and security. A significant amount of European public procurement should be dedicated to innovative products and services and to underpinning R&D in the ICT domain while fully incorporating SMEs in government procurement programmes. The ability to specify and purchase these innovations requires “intelligent customers” with technical capability and a shared forward vision with their suppliers.

The Commission has previously highlighted the great potential of public procurement for stimulating demand for new technologies²². In February 2007 the Commission services organised a multistakeholder workshop on facilitating SMEs' access to public procurement²³ and published a guide on promoting innovation through public procurement²⁴. **A Communication promoting pre-commercial procurement is planned during 2007.** It will outline the opportunities for pre-commercial procurement in Europe available under existing legislation but currently under-exploited. It will also develop the concept, drawing on the experience of other regions, and propose ways of implementing pre-commercial procurement at EU level.

Task Force Recommendation 5: Public authorities should take a simple and direct measure in the short-term by working with stakeholders on possible measures that could readily facilitate that new housing and new business sites in Europe have access to innovative broadband technologies, applications, and services.

The Commission encourages public authorities to take appropriate measures in line with State aid rules (see follow-up to Recommendation 2 in section 2.1, ICT uptake, above).

Task Force Recommendation 6: Foster consumer confidence by developing a charter of consumer rights in the digital environment including the development of labelling schemes designed to inform consumers about playability features in Digital Rights Management (DRM) protected content.

In March 2007, the Commission adopted a consumer policy strategy for the years 2007-2013²⁵. It stresses that a lack of consumer confidence, together with regulatory obstacles, are

²¹ *Benchmarking Access and Use of ICT in European Schools 2006*, European Commission: http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/eeurope/i2010/docs/studies/final_report_3.pdf

²² For example, in "Putting knowledge into practice: A broad-based innovation strategy for the EU", COM(2006) 502, 13.09.2006

²³ A "compendium of good practices", based on workshop contributions and a survey carried out in 2006 / 2007, will be issued during 2007.

²⁴ "Guide on dealing with innovative solutions in public procurement: 10 elements of good practice", SEC(2007) 280, http://www.proinno-europe.eu/doc/procurement_manuscript.pdf

²⁵ "EU Consumer Policy Strategy 2007-2013", COM(2007) 99, available via: http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/overview/cons_policy/index_en.htm

still hampering a fully fledged internal market, and aims at tackling the challenges of the digital environment in order to ensure that consumers are able to shop from anywhere in the EU, from corner-shop to website, confident that they are equally effectively protected. A **major consultation exercise on EU consumer rules** was launched early in 2007 with the adoption of a Commission Green Paper²⁶ reviewing existing legislation. One of the purposes of this initiative is to adapt the existing consumer rules to the digital world. With the help of the feedback from the Green Paper, the Commission aims to boost consumer confidence in the Single Market by developing a single, simple set of rules that will enable consumers to know their rights, make sound choices and enjoy adequate protection if things go wrong. Proposals for specific initiatives — regulatory or otherwise — to remedy existing problems and shortcomings will be brought forward after the consultation. Furthermore, by eliminating the current minimal harmonisation clauses in this field, the positive effects on the internal market of the eCommerce Directive will be consolidated²⁷.

Universal Service is an important element of the e-communications regulatory framework. It aims to grant an affordable and high-quality service to everyone, regardless of their geographical location. So far, it has provided the possibility for everyone to get a phone or Internet connection at an affordable price. In this sense, it may also be seen as an enabler of ICT usage. There is a need to review the principle and the scope of Universal Service for electronic communication in the 21st century. For this reason, the Commission will publish a Green Paper on this issue at the end of 2007, which will in turn launch a wide-ranging debate.

2.2 SMEs and entrepreneurship

Task Force Recommendation 1: Entrepreneurship should be encouraged throughout the EU by ensuring that training on entrepreneurial skills are taught to students in the technical and scientific fields and that training in entrepreneurship skills is provided to start-up ICT SMEs. Business Angels type of financing should be supported by tax incentives as it helps “would-be entrepreneurs” with the support of experienced entrepreneurs.

Promoting entrepreneurship and skills is one of the five specific action lines of the Commission' SME policy²⁸. The Commission recognises the increasingly important role of entrepreneurship education and, more specifically, the key role of schools and universities in fostering an entrepreneurial mindset. Furthermore, the Spring European Summit in March 2006 invited Member States to encourage entrepreneurship, including through entrepreneurship education and training. The Communication "Fostering entrepreneurial mindsets through education and learning"²⁹ has contributed towards formulating **more systematic approaches to entrepreneurship education** and enhancing the role of education and training in creating a more entrepreneurial culture in Europe. It brings together examples

²⁶ Green Paper on the review of the consumer *acquis*, COM(2007) 744, 08.02.2007

²⁷ The Directive was obliged to have a derogation to its "Internal Market" clause due to the presence of minimal harmonisation clauses in the current consumer protection legislation.

²⁸ Laid down in "Implementing the Community Lisbon Programme: Modern SME Policy for Growth and Employment", COM (2005), 10.11.2005

²⁹ COM(2006) 33, 13.02.2006

of good practice, focuses on supportive policy measures, and proposes a set of recommendations for action that could be taken at national or regional level. The Commission has recently presented an "Oslo Agenda for Entrepreneurship Education in Europe" as part of its drive to promote entrepreneurial mindsets in society.

In addition, the Commission launched the "**Mini-companies in secondary education initiative**"³⁰, which was developed with the Member States. The new EU **Lifelong Learning Programme**³¹ will support integrating an entrepreneurial mindset into education programmes across Europe.

A more entrepreneurial attitude to financing and financing mechanisms is clearly needed, and the Commission encourages Member States to develop **tax incentive schemes** that support the role of business angels and are compatible with the Community framework for State aid for research, development and innovation. For more on **tax incentives**, see the follow-up to recommendation 2 in section 2.5, Innovation, below.

Task Force Recommendation 2: SMEs should be encouraged to take-up and use ICTs, for example, through awareness raising programmes, conducted by Member State government bodies as well as the European institutions in collaboration with chambers of commerce, industry, and trade associations. Further steps can include the provision of financial incentives like consultancy vouchers, and the creation of one-stop shops to provide information on the benefits of ICT usage and case studies.

The **eBSN (European eBusiness Support Network)**³² provides a policy coordination platform for national and regional initiatives promoting the uptake of eBusiness practices by SMEs and fosters the exchange of information and case-studies on eBusiness-related issues. The eBSN has surveyed national awareness-raising campaigns and confirmed a policy shift in all Member States away from sponsoring and co-financing ICT investment and internet connectivity and towards coaching SMEs to innovate through using ICTs. More recently, the eBSN has observed a further shift towards sector-specific policies³³, i.e., policies supporting SMEs in adopting ICTs taking into account their particular business environment (business partners, suppliers, customers, etc.). The eBSN will continue to bring Member State representatives together in order to learn and gain inspiration from each and help stimulate a more dynamic approach to awareness-raising.

The Commission encourages appropriate **financial incentives** that are compatible with the Community framework for State aid for research and development and innovation (see the follow-up to recommendation 2 in section 2.5, Innovation, below). Many information society actions are supported by the structural funds, which include components on e-business and SMEs.

³⁰ See http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/entrepreneurship/support_measures/training_education/minicomp.htm

³¹ See http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/newprog/index_en.html

³² See the eBSN portal: http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/e-bsn/index_en.html

³³ Observations drawn from recent eBSN workshops and the eBSN database of national projects.

Regarding a **one-stop shop**, the Commission recently issued a call for proposals³⁴ that aims to implement a single network providing integrated services in support of business and innovation in Europe. Building on the strengths and achievements of the current Euro Info Centres and Innovation Relay Centres, the objective of the new network will be to enhance the competitiveness and innovation capacity of European companies, in particular SMEs.

Task Force Recommendation 3: Member State governments should encourage European ICT SMEs by simplifying public procurement requirements and by making payment and selection procedures more efficient. Some preference should be given to ICT SMEs in public procurement.

The **public procurement Directives**³⁵ adopted in 2004 aim at increasing procurement opportunities and transparency, reducing red tape, bringing transaction costs down and reducing entry barriers to the market, as well as ensuring that contracting authorities and bidders can save time and money by using new technology to manage the tendering process. **If transposed correctly and effectively by the Member States**, a number of measures enshrined in the new Directives, such as the possibility to use framework agreements or the introduction of e-procurement, could contribute to ensuring SMEs obtain easier and simpler access to public procurement contracts. With this legislative framework in place, **the Commission is concentrating its efforts on the implementation stage**. It strives to encourage Member States to work together, share their experiences and best practices and learn from each other.

The majority of firms awarded a contract where the value is above the procurement thresholds are SMEs. This highlights the fact that **SMEs are well placed to compete by themselves**, and for obvious reasons, SME participation is believed to be even higher with regard to smaller contracts below the thresholds, which constitute the bulk of public contracts. In 2006 the Commission published **guidance on how public authorities should award such smaller contracts fairly**. Although they are not covered by the Directives on public procurement, it is well established that their award should nevertheless comply with the internal market principles of transparency and non-discrimination. The Commission's guidance, which is in the form of an "Interpretative Communication"³⁶, contains suggestions on how public authorities should comply with these principles, together with examples of innovative ways to award contracts in a modern, transparent and cost-efficient manner. The guidance also applies to certain services not fully covered by the Directives. SMEs, in particular, should benefit from this initiative.

There are many things that Member States could do to encourage ICT and other SMEs to increase their participation in public contracts. It would be helpful, for example, to issue guidance to assist SMEs in drawing up tenders; encourage wider use of prior

³⁴ Call for Proposals ENT/CIP/07/0001, Services in support of business and innovation:
http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/funding/grants/themes_2006/eic_irc/calls_prop_2006_eic_irc_d2.htm

³⁵ The legislative framework is described on
http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/publicprocurement/legislation_en.htm

³⁶ C(2006) 3158, 24.07.2006

information notices to give more time to SMEs to prepare tenders; to use multi-supplier procurement techniques such as dynamic purchasing systems and framework agreements; and to divide contracts into lots appropriate for SMEs.

See also the follow-up to Recommendation 4 in section 2.1, ICT take-up, above, and to Recommendation 5 in section 2.6, below.

Task Force Recommendation 4: The framework for fostering the development of Europe-wide electronic signatures and e-Identity should be improved to facilitate more electronic transactions and build confidence in ICT services.

In 2006 the Commission adopted a report³⁷ on the electronic signatures Directive³⁸ that identified applications in public services as likely drivers of the market for electronic signatures. A study³⁹ under the IDABC Programme aims to analyse the interoperability issues involved in the mutual recognition of electronic signatures for eGovernment applications. In parallel, a **study to analyse the standardisation aspects of e-signatures** is underway, with results expected during 2007. Furthermore, a number of initiatives have been launched in the field of eProcurement and identity management under the i2010 eGovernment Action Plan, with roadmaps agreed with the Member States for addressing interoperability requirements by 2010.

2.3 Single regulatory environment

Task Force Recommendation 1: Deliver a regulatory environment in order to benefit from ICT development and digital convergence, which facilitates convergence, improves the European knowledge base, and builds conditions for an inclusive information society in an increasingly competitive global environment.

Convergence is one of the three priorities of the i2010 initiative "Creating an Information Space". This initiative foresees an adjustment in legislation involving the review of the electronic communications regulatory framework and the adoption of the Directive on Audiovisual and Media Services, and involves a number of initiatives to encourage the emergence of new audiovisual services, such as the Charter on Film Online, and forthcoming communications on online content and mobile broadcasting. Convergence involves other challenges in the area of IPR, security and consumer protection⁴⁰. These issues will be addressed in the reflection process leading to the mid-term review of the i2010 strategy in 2008.

³⁷ Report on the operation of Directive 1999/93/EC on a Community framework for electronic signatures, COM(2006) 120, 15.03.2006

³⁸ A Community framework for electronic signatures, Directive 1999/93/EC, 13.12.1999

³⁹ See <http://ec.europa.eu/idabc/en/document/6485/5938>

⁴⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/eeurope/i2010/docs/i2010_high_level_group/i2010_hlg_convergence_paper_final.pdf

Task Force Recommendation 2: In the context of the 2007 Reviews of the Copyright and Consumer Acquis, take the opportunity to review the balance between the interests of the public and that of right holders, and strengthen and clarify consumer rights in the digital environment.

The issue of **balancing the interests of the public and rights-holders** is part of the convergence debate, and the challenges involved have been identified as part of the reflection process referred to in the follow-up to Recommendation 1 above. A Commission Communication on online content⁴¹, foreseen during 2007, will address this issue.

Regarding **consumer rights in the digital environment**, see the follow-up to Recommendation 6 in section 2.1, ICT uptake, above.

Task Force Recommendation 3: Regulatory authorities should ensure competition in ICT markets ensuring consumer welfare and encouraging investments.

The regulatory framework for electronic communications markets is currently under review⁴², and the European Commission is closely cooperating with the European Regulators Group for Electronic Communications Networks and Services (ERG⁴³) in completing Europe's internal market for electronic communications in regulatory terms. For recent developments in competition policy with a bearing on investment (such as the new State aid framework for R&D and innovation, new principles and guidance for the design of tax incentives for R&D, and new financial instruments for providing risk capital), see the follow-ups to Recommendations 1 and 2 in section 2.5, Innovation, below. Regarding consumer welfare, see the follow-up to Recommendation 6 in section 2.1, ICT uptake, above.

Task Force Recommendation 4: Foster the creation of an Internal Market for knowledge-intensive services beyond the provisions currently discussed in the Services Directive.

The i2010 mid-term review, due in 2008, will address the internal market dimension of ICT services, including knowledge-intensive ones, and is synchronised with the **overall review of the Single Market strategy**⁴⁴. This latter review will result in a **report on the Single Market in the 21st century**, including concrete proposals for future action, to be presented by the Commission to the European Council in 2007.

Task Force Recommendation 5: The establishment of the European Forum on Services in the Internal Market (EFOSIM) is welcomed and the ICT Task Force encourages Directorate-

⁴¹ For the state of play, see http://ec.europa.eu/comm/avpolicy/other_actions/content_online/index_en.htm

⁴² See http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/policy/ecommm/tomorrow/index_en.htm

⁴³ The ERG brings together the heads of the national regulators for electronic communications from all 27 Member States. The regulators from the accession countries and EFTA states attend as observers. The ERG was established by a decision of the European Commission (2002/627/EC, 29.07.2002).

⁴⁴ See the portal on http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/strategy/index_en.htm

General Internal Market to continue this effort as a sounding board and forward-looking "think-tank" on the service economy in Europe.

The European Forum on Services in the Internal Market (EFOSIM), which held its first meeting in March 2006, replaced the European Forum on Business-Related Services (EFBRS). Its four working groups are developing reflection papers covering service standards, economic analysis, services statistics and service sector performance.

Task Force Recommendation 6: Lift regulatory barriers to the delivery of quality digital content through new online distribution channels in order to benefit fully from the potential offered by electronic business.

A Commission Communication on online content⁴⁵, foreseen during 2007, will address this issue.

Task Force Recommendation 7: Create a tax environment to support the service sector. Where appropriate, an R&D tax credit that includes R&D in services and business processes should be implemented. The EU must ensure that tax laws do not hinder the development of an efficient domestic service sector or discourage service exports.

See follow-ups to Recommendations 2 and 6 in section 2.5, Innovation, below.

Task Force Recommendation 8: Secure an ambitious outcome in the WTO Doha Round, including significant market-opening commitments in services from as many countries as possible.

During 2007, a key goal of the Commission is to overcome the obstacles to an agreement in the Doha Development Round. On services, the main objective is to consolidate existing levels of liberalisation and create a degree of new market access in a number of key sectors.

Task Force Recommendation 9: Support the European Commission in its initiative to reform the copyright levies system in the EU and issue additional guidance for Member States on the determination and application of fair compensation for private copying in the digital environment to address the ICT uptake barrier they create, particularly given the fact that levies can create significant trade distortions and obstruct the free flow of goods within the Community. While the Community has established rules in this area in recent copyright legislation (Directive 2001/29/EC), these mandates have not been implemented at a national level and further guidance is needed.

In December 2006, after extensive consultations⁴⁶ involving stakeholders and the Member States, the Commission decided that more reflection is required on this complex issue.

⁴⁵ For the state of play, see http://ec.europa.eu/comm/avpolicy/other_actions/content_online/index_en.htm

⁴⁶ Accessible via http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/copyright/levy_reform/index_en.htm

2.4 Intellectual property

Task Force Recommendation 1: Criminalization of Patent Infringements – IPR Directive. Ensure that the scope of any Directive on criminal sanctions for IPR infringements should be limited to wilful trademark counterfeiting, copyright, or design piracy.

The Commission has proposed a directive⁴⁷ on criminal measures to ensure the enforcement of IPRs. This proposal does not contain a limitation to only trademarks, copyrights and designs. The proposal is currently under discussion by the European Parliament and the Council.

Task Force Recommendation 2: EU Patent Reform: Enable enhanced access – for all players – to the European patent system by the accelerated implementation of the London protocol and careful progress on the European patent litigation agreement. Create a new, specialised European Court system for patent validity and patent infringement cases, which would develop a uniform interpretation of patent issues and replace the diverging national case laws, and especially by making some careful progress on the European patent litigation agreement. The costs of patents, and in particular the translation costs, should be reduced substantially by promoting the adoption of the London protocol and the quality of the patent system should be improved.

Following the conclusions of the December 2006 European Council and the broad consultation of interested parties carried out in 2006, the Commission adopted, in April 2007, a Communication on **enhancing the patent system in Europe**⁴⁸. While reducing patent costs is one of the main objectives, it should be borne in mind that the ratification of the London Agreement is in the hands of the Member States. The Communication also addresses patent quality issues. Regarding jurisdictional arrangements, the Communication favours the creation of a unified and specialised patent judiciary with litigation on European patents and future Community patents. Such a judicial system could be inspired by the EPLA model but could also allow for harmonised integration in the Community jurisdiction. Furthermore, in 2008 the Commission intends to present a comprehensive IPR strategy in order to provide the EU with an appropriate legal framework for encouraging and protecting innovation.

Task Force Recommendation 3: Fighting counterfeiting and raising awareness on the value of IPR. Continue to improve and extend enforcement of existing customs and border rules while ensuring that public authorities have adequate resources and are fully committed to fighting piracy and counterfeiting. In doing so, work toward a meaningful implementation of EU and international enforcement obligations, develop collaboration with industry to tackle specific cases of counterfeiting and piracy, and continue efforts to address piracy and counterfeiting problems in third countries. Raise public awareness for the value of IP and the scope and impact of piracy and counterfeiting, in particular for SMEs, the media and policy

⁴⁷ Amended proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on criminal measures aimed at ensuring the enforcement of intellectual property rights, COM(2006) 168, 26.04.2006

⁴⁸ COM(2007) 165, 03.04.2007

makers, by encouraging the creation of an ICT industry platform that supports and pursues the above objectives.

The Commission continues to work to ensure that third countries back the commitments undertaken, at both multilateral and bilateral level, to protect and enforce IPR, by a willingness to tackle the problem at their borders, in their courts and in their streets. The Commission's objective is to guarantee that EU rights-holders are protected against the misappropriation of their property and that EU citizens in general are protected against the dangers of piracy and counterfeiting.

The results of the **IPR Enforcement Survey**⁴⁹, delivered in October 2006, constitute a valuable tool for businesses, particularly SMEs, by making them aware of the solutions available to protect their intellectual property outside the EU and of the risks they face when dealing with certain third countries. In addition, this detailed assessment by the parties most concerned by the problem was a key element for the Commission in defining a **list of priority countries and regions**⁵⁰ on which to focus its activities and resources.

2007 will see further **close cooperation between the EU and the US** in implementing the **Action Strategy to combat piracy and counterfeiting in third countries**⁵¹ launched in 2006, and the Commission services will hold seminars and establish a helpline / helpdesk to support EU companies regarding issues of **registration and the enforcement of IPR in China**.

Reflections are underway on possible initiatives to **raise the awareness of the general public**.

2.5 Innovation

Task Force Recommendation 1: The EC must play a key federating role in fostering better exchanges of “innovation best practices” between Member States and regions. This includes: Any Member State that wishes to replicate innovation best practices in other European regions should be encouraged to do so. In the long term, the EC could consider a “light” and flexible European Innovation Agency, which would have the main objective of making regional best practices known, and federating stronger links between regions, with the overall objective of pushing large-scale European projects with global leadership ambitions in key ICT sectors (eHealth, eMedia, Mobile TV...). The EU should push existing funding mechanisms (cohesion and structural funds, state aid, tax incentives, EIB loans) across European regions for innovation initiatives.

⁴⁹ For the results of the survey, see http://ec.europa.eu/trade/issues/sectoral/intell_property/survey2006_en.htm

⁵⁰ See list at http://ec.europa.eu/trade/issues/sectoral/intell_property/ipr_epc_countries_en.htm

⁵¹ See Commission press-release IP/07/123, 01.02.2007

The Commission has recently launched **PRO INNO Europe**⁵², which brings together over 200 innovation policy-makers and stakeholders from 33 countries, including the Member States. It combines analysis and benchmarking of national and regional innovation policy performance with support for cooperation between national and regional innovation programmes and incentives for joint actions involving innovation agencies and innovation stakeholders. PRO-INNO complements the sectoral focus of **Europe INNOVA**⁵³, which is forging links between financing networks and between industrial clusters, including six in the ICT sector. eBSN, the **eBusiness Support Network for SMEs**⁵⁴, promotes the uptake of innovative e-business solutions by SMEs (for details, see follow-up to Recommendation 2 in section 2.2, SMEs and entrepreneurship, above).

Regarding an **Agency**, the Commission has taken note of this idea.

On the **regional** front, the recent Communication "Putting knowledge into practice: A broad-based innovation strategy for the EU"⁵⁵ covers a number of relevant issues. The EU's **cohesion policy** for 2007-2013⁵⁶ will be mobilised in support of regional innovation, with the Commission calling on Member States to earmark a significant proportion of the available €308 billion funds for investment in knowledge and innovation. Regarding **structural funds**, the Commission, European Investment Bank (EIB) and European Investment Fund (EIF) have launched JEREMIE (Joint European Resources for Micro- to-Medium-Sized Enterprises)⁵⁷, an initiative to develop financial instruments for providing risk capital for SMEs. The €1.1 billion reserved for the financial instruments of the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP)⁵⁸ will provide increased venture capital investments and loan guarantees for innovative SMEs across the Union. For **tax incentives**, see the follow-up to Recommendation 2 in this section, below. The recently adopted **Community guidelines on State aid to promote risk capital investments in SMEs**⁵⁹ and **Community framework for State aid for research and development and innovation**⁶⁰ together indicate to Member States how, in conformity with State aid rules, they can provide aid for industrial property rights costs for SMEs, young innovative enterprises, process and organisational innovation in services, innovation advisory services, innovation support services, the loan of highly qualified personnel for SMEs, and innovation clusters. In cooperation with the EIB, the Commission will launch a **Risk-Sharing Finance Facility (RSFF)**⁶¹ to support investment in high-risk RTD projects through loans and guarantees, with the EU contributing up to €1 billion from the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) and a matching allocation from EIB.

⁵² See <http://www.proinno-europe.eu>

⁵³ See <http://www.europe-innova.org>

⁵⁴ See <http://www.e-bsn.org>

⁵⁵ COM(2006) 502

⁵⁶ Described on http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/2007/osc/index_en.htm

⁵⁷ See <http://www.eif.europa.eu/jeremie/>

⁵⁸ On the CIP, see http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/enterprise_policy/cip/index_en.htm

⁵⁹ OJ C 194, 18.08.2006, pp. 2-21

⁶⁰ OJ C 323, 30.12.2006, pp. 1-26

⁶¹ See <http://www.eib.org/site/index.asp?designation=rsff>

Task Force Recommendation 2: Ensure that innovation in R&D is rewarded through appropriate means such as tax credit schemes for R&D and support for technology clusters as global poles of competitiveness.

In its recent Communication "Towards a more effective use of tax incentives in favour of R&D"⁶², the Commission sets out **basic principles and good practices for the design of tax incentives for R&D**, and encourages Member States to improve the use and coordination of tax incentives with respect to R&D activities. The Communication also provides guidance on tax treatment, notably with respect to large-scale transnational R&D projects, the growth of young innovative enterprises, cross-border mobility of researchers, and philanthropic funding. The Commission underlines that tax incentive schemes for R&D must be compatible with the **Community framework for State aid for research and development and innovation**⁶³, adopted in parallel. The Commission will keep the situation under review: currently 15 of the 27 Member States have tax incentives for business research and development in place: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Czech Republic, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and UK.

Cluster policy has become an important element of Member States' innovation policies, as reflected in their National Reform Programmes (NRPs). Cluster policies are supported by many Community instruments, and the new generation of European regional policy programmes for 2007-2013 promote an approach based on regional clusters in both urban and rural regions. Four INNO-Net cluster projects funded under PRO INNO Europe⁶⁴ together form the **European Cluster Alliance (ECA)**⁶⁵, which aims to further promote transnational cooperation in cluster policy development. ECA is supported by the newly established **High-Level Advisory Group on Clusters**⁶⁶, which met for the first time in January 2007. The Group has a mandate to steer the preparation of a **European Cluster Memorandum** that will be signed at the **European Cluster Conference** in January 2008, organised by the Swedish government. The Memorandum will define the key objectives for cluster policies in Europe and set out a roadmap for future transnational cooperation.

Task Force Recommendation 3: Prioritize and support effective collaborative R&D partnerships by strengthening European Technology Platforms (eMobility, NEM, NESSI...) that are currently being developed and new Joint Technology Initiatives (Artemis and ENIAC) and ensuring the funding for projects in the upcoming EC Seventh Framework Programme for R&D.

The Member States have earmarked €1 billion for funding ICT research during the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7), making it the largest research theme in the Cooperation Programme, which is itself the largest specific programme of FP7.

⁶² COM(2006) 728, 22.11.2006

⁶³ OJ C 323, 30.12.2006, pp. 1-26

⁶⁴ See <http://www.proinno-europe.eu>

⁶⁵ For details of the ECA and component projects, see <http://www.proinno-europe.eu/eca.html>

⁶⁶ The Group comprises 20 representatives from politics, business and administration, and is chaired by the French Senator Pierre Laffite, the founder of Sophia-Antipolis.

All 31 **European Technology Platforms**⁶⁷ have now published a "Vision" document, and the majority have also completed or developed an advanced draft of their Strategic Research Agenda (SRA). These platforms are now preparing to move to the implementation stage. The Commission has taken account of the outputs of their work when developing its research policy, notably when drawing up the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7). This has been a valuable way of ensuring their industrial relevance. Analysis shows that 15 SRAs will be covered under a single FP7 research theme (demonstrating the close cooperation with the formulation of FP7), and that the remaining 16 SRAs will address several research themes. The first **Joint Technology Initiative**, ARTEMIS⁶⁸, covering R&D in embedded computing systems, is expected to start during the first half of 2007, with ENIAC⁶⁹ (European Nanoelectronics Advisory Council) following after.

Task Force Recommendation 4: Prioritize leading edge markets and a European public procurement policy. With Europe's current enormous social and economic challenges (ageing population, rural isolation, transportation, environment, security...), public authorities must play a leading role by launching innovative markets with important growth potential. Current initiatives are fragmented across Europe and need to be leveraged on a pan-European scale in order to respond to increased European large-scale private investment and citizens' demand for these services.

The Commission is conducting a detailed analysis of stakeholders, including consultations of the European Technology Platforms and the Europe Innova Innovation Panels⁷⁰, to identify possible areas where a combination of supply and demand measures could help the **emergence of lead markets**. This is consistent with the broad-based innovation strategy outlined in 2006⁷¹. Based on the outcome, the Commission will prepare a policy paper in the second half of 2007. This policy paper will cover relevant procurement issues. In addition, the Commission has prepared a handbook on the possibilities that the public procurement Directives⁷² offer for innovation-oriented tendering. The Commission will also support networks of clusters with the aim of developing lead markets through market-pull activities derived from analyses of users' needs.

Task Force Recommendation 5: The semiconductor industry is a key industry in Europe for the entire ICT innovation cycle, with a major enabling role and specific R&D, manufacturing situation. Specific measures are needed to securing a global level playing field with other industrialized regions in the world, to ensure stronger support for manufacturing and strengthen ICT clustering potentials.

⁶⁷ For a list of European Technology Platforms, see http://cordis.europa.eu/technology-platforms/individual_en.html

⁶⁸ For more details on ARTEMIS, see http://cordis.europa.eu/technology-platforms/individual_en.html

⁶⁹ For more details on ENIAC, see <http://cordis.europa.eu/ist/eniac/home.html>

⁷⁰ Sector-based panels of innovation experts, which suggest sector-specific priorities for action and formulate questions and issues to be tackled, are a central part the Europe INNOVA initiative

⁷¹ COM(2006) 502, Putting knowledge into practice: A broad-based innovation strategy for the EU.

⁷² The legislative framework is described on http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/publicprocurement/legislation_en.htm

The semiconductor industry is clearly of strategic importance for the EU. Although the industry is currently in a strong position, two indicators give cause for concern: Europe has become a net importer of semiconductors, and the proportion (some 10%) of global capital expenditure on semiconductor manufacturing facilities in Europe is low. As for all branches of European industry, the establishment of a level playing-field worldwide remains the overall objective. **Improving framework conditions in order to stimulate more investment in R&D and develop high-level skills are further issues of key importance:** the former point is developed the follow-ups to Recommendations 1 and 2 in this section, above, and the latter in section 2.8, skills and employability, below. On **clustering**, see the follow-up to Recommendation 2 above.

Task Force Recommendation 6: Launch a specific action to develop ICT services for innovation in Europe. This includes providing research funding for innovation in services at all levels (European and Member State), create an academic discipline and research area aimed at improving the teaching of services innovation, create measures to promote entrepreneurship and learn from best practices in other Member States.

In the Council Conclusions on "A broad-based innovation strategy: strategic priorities for innovation action at EU level", of 4 December 2006, the Council invites the Commission "to prepare by April 2007 an overall assessment on innovation in services evaluating e.g. the related needs for policy adjustments, where appropriate. The Commission is also invited to take into account the various forms of non-technological innovation." To respond to the request of the Council, the Commission will prepare by May 2007 a staff working paper setting out the first elements of a policy framework aiming at **better support for innovation in services**. This paper will take into account the work and recommendations of an **expert group**⁷³ set up as part of its preparation. In addition, a call for proposals will be published in April 2007 to establish one or more **European Innovation Platforms** bringing together skills and know-how in knowledge transfer, incubation and finance and aiming to foster innovative companies in knowledge-intensive services, including ICT services. This action will be implemented under Europe INNOVA⁷⁴ with a budget of €5 million. On **measures to promote entrepreneurship**, see the follow-up to Recommendation 1 in section 2.2, SMEs and entrepreneurship, above.

Task Force Recommendation 7: Focus on the Human Dimension of ICT by developing a shared vision with all stakeholders regarding the human factor impact on the innovation process. This includes promoting schemes for lifelong education and training, establishing IT councils between industry and higher education institutes, and creating specific education initiatives aimed at attracting postdoctoral experts in Europe.

See follow-ups in section 2.8, skills and employability, below. Schemes to **attract postdoctoral scholars to Europe** are active under the Tempus⁷⁵ and Erasmus Mundus⁷⁶

⁷³ For the report of the group, "Fostering Innovation in Services", see <http://www.europe-innova.org/servlet/Doc?cid=7550&lg=EN>

⁷⁴ See <http://www.europe-innova.org>

⁷⁵ Tempus: http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/tempus/index_en.html

programmes, the EU-Canada⁷⁷ and EU-US⁷⁸ Cooperation programmes, and the Marie Curie Fellowships⁷⁹ initiative.

Task Force Recommendation 8: Firms and universities should be encouraged to form longer-term R&D partnerships, which reduce the transaction costs of negotiating individual collaborative projects and foster the building up of mutual trust. These should seek to ensure academic freedom and creativity and provide a more professional interface from universities to industry that respects agreed goals and deadlines.

The Communication "**Delivering on the Modernisation Agenda for Universities**"⁸⁰ already pointed to a number of important steps that could enable European universities to make a greater and more efficient contribution to the innovation process. Key to this is granting universities sufficient autonomy to develop their own strategies. In addition, **structured, strategic partnerships between business and universities need to be strengthened.** This requires more possibilities for exchanging of staff, the encouragement of entrepreneurship within universities, and the establishment of science parks in their vicinity together with making adequate finance available to support research spin-offs. This will help bridge the cultural gap that so often separates university research from business needs. Development of links between universities and local civil society would also be conducive to a better uptake of innovation at local and regional levels.

In November last year, the Commission put forward a proposal⁸¹ to establish a **European Institute of Technology (EIT)** as a partnership between science, business and education. The EIT will bring the best European students and researchers to work together with business in developing and exploiting knowledge and research and enhancing research and innovation management skills. Businesses will be fully integrated in the EIT, from membership of its governing board to involvement in all aspects of research and education, and from the definition and implementation of training measures to active participation in research. At the operational level, the EIT will function through long-term joint ventures of universities, research organisations, public or private companies, financial institutions, and regional or local authorities — so-called Knowledge and Innovation Communities — established for between 7 and 15 years.

The many forms of knowledge transfer between industry and universities — contract research, collaborative and cooperative research, licensing, publications and exchanges of skilled researchers between the public and private sectors — all need to be further developed and better managed. Drawing on recent consultations⁸², the Commission has recently adopted

⁷⁶ Erasmus Mundus: http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/mundus/index_en.html

⁷⁷ EU-Canada Cooperation: http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/eu-canada/index_en.html

⁷⁸ EU-US: http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/eu-usa/index_en.html

⁷⁹ Marie Curie Fellowships: <http://cordis.europa.eu/improving/fellowships/home.htm>

⁸⁰ COM(2006) 208, 10.5.2006

⁸¹ COM(2006) 604, 13.11.2006

⁸² Draft report on the outcomes of the public consultation on transnational research cooperation and knowledge transfer between public research organisations and industry, 01.09.2006, http://ec.europa.eu/invest-in-research/pdf/download_en/consult_report.pdf

a Communication on knowledge transfer⁸³ accompanied by voluntary **guidelines**⁸⁴ **on collaboration between industry and public research organisations** (PROs) covering how public authorities can address the main barriers to knowledge transfer, and how the ownership and exploitation of R&D results and associated intellectual property rights can best be combined with PROs' missions.

2.6 Investment and finance

Task Force Recommendation 1: Reform EU state aid policy to create a global level playing field. A single category “industrial R&D” with allowable aid intensity of at least 50% should be created. This category should speed up the innovation process to face global competition and should include the development of commercially usable prototypes, pilot projects, experimental production, and product testing.

The recently adopted **Community framework for State aid for research and development and innovation**⁸⁵ defines several categories of aid for fundamental research, industrial research and experimental development. The allowable aid intensity for industrial research is a maximum 50%.

Task Force Recommendation 2: Use trade associations, chambers of commerce and local banks by making them prime actors in the dissemination of information on finance to all companies whether small or large.

The Commission's focus is on streamlining its **business support and information networks**, and it recently issued a call for proposals⁸⁶ that aims to implement a single network that builds on the strengths and achievements of the current Euro Info Centres and Innovation Relay Centres. In addition, the Commission disseminates information about access to finance to intermediaries such as **trade associations, chambers of commerce and regional or local banks** via workshops and conferences, the distribution of studies, reports, guides and newsletters, and through its EUROPA and CORDIS websites.

Task Force Recommendation 3: Promote investment in broadband infrastructure and services throughout the EU, in rural and urban areas: competing fixed and wireless access networks and services to ensure availability, capacity, and choice for European citizens and businesses.

⁸³ Improving knowledge transfer between research institutions and industry across Europe: embracing open innovation, COM(2007) 182, 04.04.2007

⁸⁴ Voluntary guidelines for universities and other research institutions to improve their links with industry across Europe, SEC(2007) 449, 04.04.2007

⁸⁵ OJ C 323, 30.12.2006, pp. 1-26

⁸⁶ Call for Proposals ENT/CIP/07/0001, Services in support of business and innovation:
http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/funding/grants/themes_2006/eic_irc/calls_prop_2006_eic_irc_d2.htm

The Commission's 2006 Communication⁸⁷ "Bridging the broadband gap" aimed to **raise awareness of the potential benefits of broadband**. As a follow-up, in May 2007, Commissioners Reding, Fischer Boel, Hübner and Kroes will launch a major conference and exhibition on "Bridging the broadband gap" to investigate how the strategic use of ICT can support regional and local development, ease infrastructure and geographical handicaps and make these areas more attractive to business and individuals alike⁸⁸.

Task Force Recommendation 4: Ensure a global level playing field for ICT investments, including R&D and manufacturing investments, in particular in the case of the semiconductor industry by creating a specific Sectoral Framework for the Industry. This should implement policies that facilitate access to, and availability of, short and long-term risk capital able to attract new and ongoing investments in strategic electronic manufacturing and counterbalance advantages that other world regions provide.

See the follow-up to Recommendation 5 in section 2.5, Innovation, above.

Task Force Recommendation 5: Create a venture capital friendly environment to support the entry and growth of new entrepreneurial firms. The Aho Group Report suggests the creation of a "Single Fund" structure.

In its June 2006 Communication "Financing SME Growth — Adding European Value"⁸⁹, the Commission unveiled a set of initiatives to **help SMEs get easier access to finance for start-ups and growth**. It includes measures to generate more risk capital investments, develop bank finance for innovation, and make existing financing systems more SME friendly. As a follow-up, the Commission has established expert groups on **removing obstacles to cross-border investment by venture capital funds**⁹⁰, on **seed finance**, and on **good practices in risk capital investment at regional level**. The new **Competitiveness and Innovation framework Programme (CIP)**⁹¹ will provide further incentives for private equity investors to invest in firms with growth potential, with the European Investment Fund (EIF) operating or helping to operate **several financial instruments for SMEs** on behalf of the Commission: the High-Growth and Innovative SME facility (GIF), the SME Guarantee facility (SMEG), and the Capacity-Building Scheme (CBS).

Task Force Recommendation 6: Encourage the larger ICT corporations willing to act as partners with VC to boost ICT/SMEs.

⁸⁷ COM(2006) 129, 20.03.2006

⁸⁸ See http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/events/broadband_gap_2007/index_en.htm

⁸⁹ COM(2006) 349, 29.06.2006

⁹⁰ The main aim of this group is to identify, for each participating country, the regulatory framework affecting domiciled and non-domiciled venture capital funds, and in cases where existing regulations hinder cross-border activities of venture capital funds, to find ways to overcome these obstacles. See <http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/library/enterprise-europe/news-updates/2006/2006-11-29.htm>

⁹¹ CIP: http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/enterprise_policy/cip/index_en.htm

The Commission encourages larger ICT firms to take advantage of the improving venture capital environment (see follow-up to Recommendation 5, above).

2.7 Standards and interoperability

Task Force Recommendation 1: Ensure that any policy effort relating to technical interoperability should encourage broad stakeholder cooperation and voluntary market-oriented solutions to achieve the goal of interoperability rather than implement legislation defining the specific means to achieve it. In support of industry-led efforts, the EU and the Member States should maintain a policy priority for interoperability along with other key objectives such as innovation and security, support industry-led standardisation, and promote the widespread adoption of standards in products and service implementations.

The European Standardisation Organisations (ESOs) have developed and continue to develop **guidelines to help ensure that interoperability is taken into account when preparing standards**. The guidelines include various practical interoperability verification points with feedback to the standards maintenance process. Some standards are currently being updated in order to increase their interoperability features. ETSI, in particular, provides services supporting interoperability testing between different standards implemented in the market.

In terms of **policy priorities**, interoperability is already at the centre of standardisation objectives, and is considered as a critical issue to be closely monitored under the forthcoming **review of ICT standardisation policy**. Various specific standardisation actions are addressing interoperability issues in specific domains such as eHealth, the Single European Payments Area (SEPA), e-invoicing, etc. In addition, in 2006 the Commission launched a **study**⁹² to prepare recommendations to help ensure the EU's standardisation policy for the ICT sector matches the changes to the sector brought about by liberalisation, globalisation and convergence.

The ICT theme in the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) includes **pre-normative and co-normative research relevant to improving interoperability and the quality of standards and their implementation**. The FP7 ICT work-programme already includes actions aiming at improving cooperation in the development of standards and interoperable solutions.

Regarding **industry**, current EU standardisation policy is built on a privileged relationship with the ESOs, which are obliged to ensure access by all stakeholders to the standardisation process. The standardisation work performed is, in general, proposed and executed as an industry-led activity. The Commission has welcomed and encouraged the further opening of the ICT Standards Board, ICTSB⁹³, to industry⁹⁴. In the EU's research programmes, **industry is already leading most of the pre-normative research activities**.

⁹² "EU study on the specific policy needs for ICT standardisation", <http://www.ictstandardisation.eu>

⁹³ An initiative of the standards bodies CEN, CENELEC and ETSI.

⁹⁴ For current list of members, see <http://www.ictsb.org/members.htm>

On **services**, the 2007 ICT standardisation work-programme has identified service-related standardisation as a priority for Commission funding.

Task Force Recommendation 2: Give greater priority to the current efforts underway in the Commission to address technical, legal, semantic, and organisational interoperability issues. This should include work to understand the requirements of interoperability. In order to support industry efforts towards interoperability, regulators should commission projects to identify the key enablers of interoperability in the converging networked marketplace, set targets in dialogue with service providers and ICT and software industry, and measure the achievement of interoperability in services and devices for those enablers over time, across delivery channels, service and device types and national borders.

The work-programmes of the European Standards Organisations (ESOs) focus on **technical interoperability**, especially within ETSI, while **semantic interoperability** has been integrated in the work-programmes of sectoral standardisation groups such as eHealth⁹⁵ and eBIF⁹⁶. Other aspects of interoperability — legal aspects, for example — are not within their remit, though some of those are covered in FP7's ICT theme work-programme. As a starting point for identifying the **key enablers of interoperability**, the ESOs' work-programmes include activities on identifying problems and requirements. The overall ICT interoperability framework will be examined under the "internal market" heading of the i2010 mid-term review.

Task Force Recommendation 3: Promote effective conformance systems, including an option for a Supplier's Declaration of Conformity, that account for and leverage existing best practices and take into account an understanding of the perspectives of the regional and global marketplace. In this respect, national regulators are encouraged to seek alignment of principles for product approvals and implement adequate market surveillance activities as a complementary tool to the Supplier's Declaration of Conformity instead of considering enforcement of certification schemes.

Experience in implementing the legislation governing the free movement of goods has shown that some risk of distortion to competition exists because practices in designating and accrediting conformity assessment bodies and systems by national authorities vary widely. For this reason, and as part of the Commission's proposal for a new internal market package for goods⁹⁷, the Commission recently adopted a proposal for a **Regulation⁹⁸ introducing strengthened rules on market surveillance**. The objective is also to enhance confidence in conformity assessments of products by strengthening the role of accreditation for conformity assessment bodies. Within this context, **the Supplier's Declaration of Conformity continues**

⁹⁵ CEN's TC 251

⁹⁶ CEN's e-Business Interoperability Forum.

⁹⁷ For details, see http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/regulation/internal_market_package/index_en.htm

⁹⁸ Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council setting out the requirements for accreditation and market surveillance relating to the marketing of products, COM(2007) 37, 14.02.2007

to be an option, and in some cases is sufficient to demonstrate conformity with the relevant standards.

Task Force Recommendation 4: Support current efforts by the European Commission to stimulate a wide and harmonized application of eGovernment, as outlined in the European Commission's April 2006 Communication on an action plan for eGovernment for i2010, in particular by undertaking the announced revision of the European interoperability framework for pan-European eGovernment services including its proposed definition of open standards to contribute to the development of a technical framework that guarantees interoperability for eGovernment applications and permits the development of heterogeneous computing environments in which commercial and open source software based solutions have a role to play.

During 2007 the Commission will follow up the **i2010 eGovernment Action Plan**⁹⁹, which seeks to accelerate the implementation of eGovernment and hence enable innovation in and the modernisation of the EU's public administrations. Regarding the revision of the **European interoperability framework for pan-European eGovernment services (EIF)**¹⁰⁰, studies and consultations are underway, and proposals for a revision will be made in due course.

Task Force Recommendation 5: Develop procurement policies that promote interoperability through purchasing solutions, focus on interoperability of IT systems, provide a variety of interoperable technology choices in eGovernment applications, and evaluate open source solutions on an equal footing with commercial software solutions in public sector procurement.

Regarding **procurement policies**, see the follow-up to Recommendation 4 in section 2.5, Innovation, above. The **eProcurement Action Plan**¹⁰¹ has interoperability as an essential requirement, and the **eGovernment Action Plan**¹⁰² has explicit targets in this respect.

2.8 Skills and employability

Task Force Recommendation 1: The ICT Task Force calls upon the European Commission to present a policy communication in the near future addressed to EU Member States and designing a long-term e-skills strategy, and a corresponding e-skills action plan proposing targeted actions for the years ahead.

⁹⁹ COM(2006) 173, 25.04.2006

¹⁰⁰ Adopted in November 2004, the EIF provides recommendations and defines generic standards for the organisational, semantic and technical aspects of interoperability, offering a comprehensive set of principles for European cooperation in eGovernment. See <http://ec.europa.eu/idabc/en/document/2319/5644>

¹⁰¹ Action plan for the implementation of the legal framework for electronic public procurement, COM(2004) 841, 13.12.2004

¹⁰² COM(2006) 173, 25.04.2006

The Commission will take the recommendations of the Task Force and the declaration of the recent European e-Skills Conference¹⁰³ into account when preparing the **Communication on a long-term e-skills strategy planned for adoption in 2007**.

Task Force Recommendation 2: Encourage the ICT industry to create an Industry Leadership Group to facilitate e-skills information and co-operation and pool resources and establish closer collaboration between all stakeholders to develop reliable statistics and forecasting scenarios regarding e-skills requirements at the EU level and the impact of global sourcing to provide a reliable basis for policy decisions and to help labour market participants to take informed career decisions.

Earlier this year, the ICT industry took the initiative to establish an **e-Skills Industry Leadership Board** and has organised several preparatory meetings, with a formal launch planned for June 2007. The focus will be on the follow-up and implementation of the Task Force's recommendations, promoting multi-stakeholder partnerships, and on long-term e-skills strategy. The Commission services are in close liaison with the industry actors involved.

Task Force Recommendation 3: Increase investment in the professional development of teachers and ongoing teacher support mechanisms. Member States and industry should work together to improve career advice in and around schools and provide better and more frequent training of career consultants. The content of consultations should be based on a more realistic understanding of future opportunities based on robust statistics and foresight scenarios and up-to-date job profiles and career paths. The transparency regarding different qualifications and ICT career paths should be increased by establishing and maintaining an e-skills and career portal to set out European job profiles, map industry-based ICT training and certifications to specific job roles, and integrate existing national ICT career portals.

These actions are mainly the responsibility of the Member States. The Commission will support such initiatives by organising studies, events, cooperation projects and exchanges of best practice, notably under the new **Lifelong Learning Programme**¹⁰⁴. Regarding a **web portal**, during 2007 the Commission will launch a feasibility study followed by a workshop with stakeholders to discuss findings, conclusions and follow-up.

Task Force Recommendation 4: Increase collaboration between industry, governments, employers, and education institutions via multi-stakeholder partnerships to address e-skills issues and with a view to reconciling the "parallel universes" between formal and non-formal education channels. Consider how to develop enhanced e-skills curricula, including via the integration of industry ICT curricula and certifications into formal education. Initiate further research and evaluate good practice in order to promote the development of European quality criteria for e-skills training and certificates in close co-operation with relevant stakeholders. CEN-ISSS should accelerate work towards the EU-wide eCompetence framework and

¹⁰³ For the Conference Declaration, see http://eskills.cedefop.europa.eu/conference2006/Thessaloniki_Declaration_2006.pdf

¹⁰⁴ See http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/newprog/index_en.html

maintain close cooperation with industry (user industries and certification providers) with a view to ensuring eventual compatibility of the framework with formal and non-formal ICT practitioner education and certifications, and to foster increased workforce mobility by facilitating Europe-wide recognition of qualifications. Establish multi-stakeholder partnerships to train the workforce, especially disadvantaged groups (e.g. young underemployed and unemployed workers, older at-risk workers, and people with disabilities) and to help connect trainees to new jobs. These partnerships should also promote access for training participants to internships and work experience in local SMEs and larger businesses. Review how existing EU programmes might be used to fund and support actions related to skills and employability.

These aspects will be fully addressed in the forthcoming Communication on a long-term e-skills strategy.

Task Force Recommendation 5: Continue the efforts already started in incorporating entrepreneurship in educational curricula at all levels. Document best practices on multi-stakeholder partnerships that deliver entrepreneurial skills to individuals and SMEs. Together, governments, industry, and universities must enable the creation of a new academic discipline on Services sciences, Management and Engineering to bring together ongoing work in computer science, operations research, industrial engineering, business strategy, management sciences, social and cognitive sciences, and legal sciences to develop the skills required in a services-led economy. Schools should also be involved in this process.

Further pilots and exchanges of good practices will be supported via existing EU programmes, and notably under the new **Lifelong Learning Programme**¹⁰⁵. Support will cover a broad range of skills for employability, ranging from e-skills and entrepreneurship¹⁰⁶ to communication skills and teamwork and problem-solving skills. See also the follow-up to Recommendation 1 in section 2.2, SMEs and entrepreneurship, above. Regarding "**services sciences**", the Commission services will explore the concept further with the ICT industry.

Task Force Recommendation 6: To reduce the e-skills gap between larger organisations and SMEs, notably the smaller SMEs and the less IT-oriented SMEs, and prepare them for increasing use of eLearning, provide the resources to educate and coach SMEs in partnership with IT-SMEs and local support centres, and reinforce European best practice exchange on this.

These aspects will be fully addressed in the forthcoming Communication on a long-term e-skills strategy.

¹⁰⁵ See http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/newprog/index_en.html

¹⁰⁶ The Commission has recently presented an "Oslo Agenda for Entrepreneurship Education in Europe" as part of its drive to promote entrepreneurial mindsets in society. See: http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/entrepreneurship/support_measures/training_education/index.htm