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Subject : i2010 - A European Information Society for growth and employment

- Policy Debate and Council Conclusions on i2010 Strategy
  - Council Conclusions on eAccessibility
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**i2010**

1. On 3 June 2005 the Commission transmitted to the Council its Communication on the new i2010 strategy. The first exchange of views was held at the Council on 27 June 2005 and welcomed the general principles of the proposal.

This proposal for a new i2010 strategy aims to answer the challenge posed by the reviewed Lisbon strategy, taking into account that the current eEurope 2005 Action Plan will expire at the end of the year. It also aims to exploit the opportunity for economic growth and jobs in Europe by promoting an open and competitive digital economy. A key element in the renewed Lisbon strategy, i2010 aims to offer a comprehensive strategy for the ICTs and proposes three priorities:

- the completion of a single European Information Space promoting an open, competitive and content-rich internal market for electronic communications, media and content;
  - strengthening innovation and investment in ICTs to promote growth and jobs;
  - achieving an inclusive European Information Society prioritising better public services and quality of life.
2. After the more detailed examination of the i2010 strategy Communication, the Council is now ready for a policy debate on the subject and, to support this political guidance for the future prioritisation and implementation of the strategy, will adopt Council Conclusions in the matter.
  3. On 9 November 2005, the Permanent Representatives Committee examined the draft conclusions proposed by the Presidency and have found an agreement in principle on the text set out in Annex I to the present document. Only a parliamentary scrutiny reserve from DK and a general linguistic reserve remain on the text. The Commission is expected to present a declaration to the Council in the framework of the Conclusions.

### **eAccessibility**

4. As part of its contribution to the i2010 Strategy priority on achieving an Inclusive European Information Society, the Commission has adopted a Communication on eAccessibility on 13 September 2005 (doc. 12269/05). This recognises the need to improve the availability of accessible ICT products and services, both because of its beneficial impact for people with disabilities and older persons, and also because of its wider economic and social benefits.

The main objective of this Communication is to promote a consistent approach to eAccessibility initiatives in the Member States on a voluntary basis, as well as to foster industry self-regulation. It stresses that ongoing activities at EU level, such as accessibility requirements and standards, Design for All (DFA), web accessibility, benchmarking - monitoring and research, will be strengthened and continued. The Commission will foster the use of three approaches not yet widely used in Europe: (i) accessibility requirements in public procurement, (ii) accessibility certification, and (iii) better use of existing legislation. Two years after the publication of this Communication, the Commission will evaluate the outcome of the proposed approaches, following the principle of Better Regulation and, subject to full impact assessment, it may consider additional measures, including new legislation if deemed necessary. This eAccessibility work will in turn contribute to the already announced 2008 European Initiative on eInclusion.

5. On 9 November 2005, the Permanent Representatives Committee examined the draft conclusions proposed by the Presidency and have found an agreement in principle on the text set out in Annex II to the present document. Only a parliamentary scrutiny reserve from DK and a general linguistic reserve remain on the text.

**Council Conclusions on  
“i2010 – A European Information Society for growth and employment”**

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

1. WELCOMES

- The Commission Communication “i2010 – A European Information Society for Growth and Employment”;
- The Commission Communication on eAccessibility;
- The Commission Communications "A forward-looking radio spectrum policy for the European Union: Second annual report" and "A market-based approach to spectrum management in the European Union".

2. RECALLS

- The Presidency Conclusions of the Lisbon European Council of March 2000;
- The Presidency Conclusions of the European Council of March 2005;
- The Council Resolution of 9 December 2004 on Looking into the future of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs).

3. STRESSES

- That more focused, effective and integrated ICT policies at both European and national levels are essential to achieving the Lisbon goals of economic growth and productivity;

- That the i2010 Strategy is a shared responsibility between Member States, the European institutions and stakeholders. In this regard it is important that the Member States have the necessary flexibility to address national circumstances and that there is an effective dialogue with all stakeholders;
- That an open, competitive and innovative market for electronic communication services and a strong and competitive European ICT sector are key ingredients in enhanced ICT exploitation, as is the coordination of policy approaches, where appropriate, for the efficient and flexible use of radio spectrum in the EU.

#### 4. WELCOMES THE COMMISSION'S INTENTION

- To review the functioning of the regulatory framework for electronic communications, including spectrum management issues within Community competence, and audiovisual legislation and related policies in areas affected by convergence in the light of market and technological developments and taking into account general interest objectives, and propose appropriate measures, based on an impact assessment;
- In implementing the i2010 initiative to:
  - Ensure effective development of the i2010 Strategy, by establishing a High Level Group of Member States' representatives;
  - Report annually to the European Parliament and the Council on progress in achieving the i2010 policy priorities in an European Information Society Report, against relevant indicators identified by the Commission and Member States, recommending, where needed, appropriate policy adjustments based on recent developments and statistical analysis to ensure that i2010 remains relevant and forward looking;
  - Assess progress achieved in a mid-term report in 2008 with a view to ensuring the i2010 strategy delivers the Lisbon objectives.

## 5. INVITES THE COMMISSION TO

- Ensure full implementation of the 2002 Regulatory Framework including the completion of market reviews by National Regulatory Authorities;
- Review the impact of digital convergence on the creation, circulation and distribution of European content, and if appropriate, bring forward proposals to promote a rich and diverse digital content market, increased use of broadband and the development of Next Generation Networks (NGNs);
- Encourage investment in ICT Research and Development (R&D) and wider ICT take-up in the public and private sector, notably through existing and future EU R&D Framework and Competitiveness and Innovation Programmes, including by promoting Small and Medium Enterprises' (SME) participation and ensuring that the results of these programmes are widely disseminated;
- Launch early in 2006, an effective strategy for developing a secure and safe European Information Space, with the support of the European Network and Information Security Agency, based on reliable networks, which fosters greater trust and confidence, addresses identification and authentication issues, and recognizes the important roles to be played by suppliers, business users, citizens and governments, and which includes a timetable for implementation;
- Encourage the efficient use of ICTs in public services, such as eGovernment and eHealth, through the exchange of experience and the development of common approaches on key issues such as interoperability and effective use of open standards;
- take account, in its Communication on eGovernment, of the Ministerial Declaration on eGovernment;
- Prepare a European initiative on e-Inclusion in 2008 addressing issues relating to eAccessibility, equal opportunities, digital literacy and regional divides;

- Promote education and training policies so that Europe has the skills it needs to research, innovate and use ICT;
- Promote interoperability and open standards in the European Information Space by ensuring that European standardisation policy addresses the needs of the ICT sector.

## 6. INVITES THE MEMBER STATES TO

- Identify information society priorities within their National Reform Programmes, so that the potential contribution of ICT to the Lisbon agenda and the action needed to implement it is fully reflected in national policies;
- Ensure rapid and complete implementation of the EU electronic communications regulatory framework, including completion of the market reviews;
- Ensure a more efficient and flexible use of spectrum through the coordination of policy approaches, where appropriate, according to Community competence and without prejudice to general interest objectives, in order to foster innovation, competitiveness, interoperability and convergence as well as a dynamic single market for innovative wireless equipment and services;
- Promote the roll-out of advanced seamless networks through the rapid implementation of national strategies, aimed at increasing broadband coverage and multiplatform access, and stimulating take-up, making use, where appropriate, of EU structural funds, in line with the Commission Guidelines;
- Encourage effective use of ICTs by public services and businesses (especially SMEs), by promoting the necessary skills needed for their deployment, promoting interoperability and open standards, and effective on-line public services through the introduction of organisational change;

- Encourage the effective use of ICTs to build a fully inclusive information society by 2010, bridging existing and avoiding the emergence of new digital divides, through national policy instruments;
- Strengthen support of research and innovation by encouraging private investments and cooperation between research and innovation programmes.

7. INVITES ALL STAKEHOLDERS TO

- Continue to participate fully in an open and constructive dialogue with Member States and the Commission, including at high-level events, in order to identify the actions that need to be taken to achieve a globally competitive, innovative and inclusive information society;
- Identify new business models, innovative technological solutions and effective self-regulation , which will promote competition, strengthen consumer trust and confidence in ICT products and services, and foster a safer, global internet environment;
- Intensify the integration of ICT into business processes, through innovative and interoperable ICT applications, standardisation, organisational change and better skills, in order to realise the full benefits of ICT.

8. DECIDES to transmit these conclusions for the attention of the European Council.

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**Council Conclusions on  
eAccessibility**

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

1. WELCOMES

- the Communication on eAccessibility adopted by the Commission on 13 September.

2. RECALLS

- the eEurope 2002 action plan adopted in the Feira European Council of 19 and 20 June 2000 with the objective of achieving participation for all in the knowledge-based economy;
- the Council conclusions of 1st and 2nd of December 2003 on the follow up of the European Year of People with Disabilities and the promotion of Equal Opportunities for People with Disabilities;
- the Ministerial Declaration on eInclusion from 2003;
- the i2010 Communication and in particular the third priority achieving an Inclusive European Information Society including policy guidance on eAccessibility.

3. RECOGNISES

- that access to ICT has a beneficial impact on the employment prospects and quality of life of people with disabilities and older persons;
- that the creation of an inclusive information society will be instrumental to the achievement of the economic and social objectives of the Lisbon agenda.

#### 4. WELCOMES THE COMMISSION'S INTENTION TO

- evaluate the effectiveness of eAccessibility policies after two years and, if necessary, to propose additional measures;
- gather data to measure progress on eAccessibility and to include in the Commission's Annual Information Society Progress Report on the i2010 initiative reporting on actions undertaken to improve eAccessibility.

#### 5. INVITES THE COMMISSION TO

- liaise with Member States on initiatives and policy approaches to improve eAccessibility;
- investigate the role that certification can play to increase eAccessibility while considering the interest of all relevant stakeholders;
- work with european and national standardisation bodies to promote and, where necessary, develop european eAccessibility standards;
- continue to consider the needs of people with disabilities and older persons in the process of the revision of the Electronic Communication regulatory framework;
- work with Member States to develop eAccessibility requirements in the public procurement domain and promote their use in public tenders;
- facilitate a dialogue between the key actors in the field, by providing, in cooperation with Member States, adequate fora for users and industry to meet with policy makers.

#### 6. INVITES THE MEMBER STATES TO

- promote access to ICT and accessibility to mainstream technologies for people with disabilities and older persons, aiming at interoperable solutions across Member States;
- continue to implement the Web Accessibility guidelines in their public web sites and to support the work of the European Design for All and eAccessibility Network, avoiding market fragmentation while responding to the evolution of web technologies;
- include in their regular reporting within the i2010 framework their progress in eAccessibility;
- use all instruments at their disposal to improve eAccessibility, for example by including in their public procurements eAccessibility requirements.

## 7. ENCOURAGES ALL STAKEHOLDERS TO

- develop, participate in and support EU and national eAccessibility initiatives improving the availability of accessible ICT products and services and their compatibility with assistive technologies;
  - address the needs of persons with disabilities and older persons with regard to ICT products and services and to involve them and their organisations in the process of development of such products and services.
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