

European information society for growth and employment, i2010

2005/2167(INI) - 01/06/2005 - Document attached to the procedure

COMMISSION'S IMPACT ASSESSMENT

For further information concerning the background to this issue, please refer to the summary of the Commission's communication of 1 June 2005 on the initiative "i2010: European Information Society 2010" to foster growth and jobs in the information society and media industries. - COM(2005)0229.

1- POLICY OPTIONS AND IMPACTS

Three broad options for the new initiative beyond 2005 were examined in this impact assessment:

1.1- Option 1 - No further Action Plan and a return to separate but parallel IS policy strands.

1.2- Option 2 - A continuation of the eEurope Action Plan as in 2000-2005.

1.3-Option 3 - A new and more flexible policy framework, an umbrella approach covering Research, Regulatory, Deployment and Policy.

IMPACTS

Option 1. This bottom-up approach would allow the different policy fields to develop at their own pace. There would be the danger of the dissociation of the information society and media from the competitiveness focus of other policies, as well as of focusing on too many different policy issues and losing sight of the requirement of a comprehensive strategy. There would be more limited European initiatives opportunities.

From a convergence point of view, there is a serious risk of regulations hindering the overall development of ICT and media markets. The EU policy will miss the convergence challenge.

Not all security issues will be covered. National strategies will create fragmented solutions and inconsistencies in a very strategic domain.

In terms of innovation and research, there would be no link between research and deployment.

With regard to e-skills, there would be no coordination between actions at EU level and the risk of not covering all the issues concerned.

Regarding e-Inclusion, this option would fail to address the key pillar of any IS policy. It would not benefit from the feedback from Member States and stakeholders.

From the public services perspective, this option is in line with subsidiarity and the spirit of better regulation. However, it dispenses with long preparatory work and consensus built with or under eEurope. It runs counter to EU and Member State administrations' call for closer EU cooperation in the context of societal challenges.

Option 2 would have the advantage of offering continuity with the existing programme which is well-known to the outside world. However, its ultimate focus is to feed into the Lisbon strategy and the communications dimension is not sufficiently addressed. It would be difficult to keep the policy agenda in line with technological and market developments.

Specific actions related to the convergence issue would be offered.

However, there would not be sufficient coherence between all the security issues, such as networks integrity, data protection, malware and eSignature.

As under Option 1, there would be no link between research and deployment. However, it would address innovation through eBusiness.

In terms of eSkills, there would be coordination between actions at EU level but there would be the risk of not covering all the issues concerned.

On eInclusion, there would be no coordination of EU actions, a fragmented approach and possible overlaps. EU competence would be limited.

Regarding public services, there would be more coordination and the fruits of long preparatory work and consensus building could be reaped. There would be efficiency and quality gains through economies of scale (by sharing experience and common solutions).

Option 3 addresses the Lisbon dimension in a consistent way in the development of the priority areas. There would be consensus on broad objectives and adjustment of policy initiatives to concrete progress and needs. It corresponds to the recommendations both of the Kok report and to the expectations of the Member States. However, it will require a significant level of coordination between policies, and with the Member States, and a forward-looking approach to all the underpinning policy fields.

The convergence challenge requires a cross-sectoral and flexible approach with expanded coordination across Commission services and Member States, in particular for regulation and legislation.

In terms of security, it would trigger a new set of policy and research actions brought together under a coherent policy umbrella.

Regarding innovation and research, there would be better coordination between policy, innovation and research and the entire innovation system would be covered. There would be a better leverage effect from cooperation between financial support programmes.

The ICT skills issue requires a flexible, cross-sectoral approach covering work environments, social inclusion, etc. which would be met under Option 1.3.

In terms of eInclusion, the overall view and strategic line is a key IS policy pillar, although EU competence in this area is limited.

From a public services perspective, Option 3 can better contribute to the new Lisbon goals on growth and jobs through a common EU strategy than the other two options.

CONCLUSION: On the basis of this impact assessment, the Commission selected Option 3 as being the one with greatest potential in this important domain. **Without such an action plan, policy responses to the challenges linked to the wider adoption of ICT might remain fragmented, eventually inconsistent**

2- FOLLOW-UP Monitoring and evaluation are designed at two levels:

- At the 'meta' level, through regular evaluation of the overall performance in relation to objectives, impacts, relevance, utility and lessons learned: Regular evaluation of the whole initiative is an essential component of its effective delivery. To that effect, it is proposed to draw up regular progress reports that may be supported by benchmarking to measure progress and to identify new priority areas for the following period. The current Action Plan will close at the end of 2005 and an evaluation would be launched in 2005. This would need to be in line with the new Lisbon governance cycle, so as to avoid overlap and duplication. The final evaluation of the new initiative, at the end of 2010, would also provide an occasion for contributing to the overall impact assessment of the Information Society and Media policies.
- at the priority/action level, through measuring performance in relation to benchmarking and exchange of best practices, and supported by a range of statistical surveys, studies and other empirical analyses.