


Procedure file

Basic information		
COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic)	1996/2169(COS)	Procedure completed
The information society and the Union policies, preparation of the new stages		
Subject 3.30.25 International information networks and society, internet		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	ECON Economic and Monetary Affairs, Industrial Policy		21/11/1996
		ELDR BOOGERD-QUAAK Johanna L.A.	
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	ENER Research, Technological Development and Energy		26/02/1997
		ELDR HAARDER Bertel	
	JURI Legal Affairs, Citizens' Rights		19/12/1996
		PSE BERGER Maria	
Council of the European Union	Council configuration	Meeting	Date
	Industry	1953	08/10/1996

Key events			
24/07/1996	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(1996)0395	Summary
08/10/1996	Debate in Council	1953	
23/10/1996	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
09/06/1997	Vote in committee		Summary
09/06/1997	Committee report tabled for plenary	A4-0208/1997	
25/06/1997	Debate in Parliament		
26/06/1997	Decision by Parliament	T4-0353/1997	Summary
26/06/1997	End of procedure in Parliament		
21/07/1997	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information

Procedure reference	1996/2169(COS)
Procedure type	COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic)
Procedure subtype	Commission strategy paper
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 142
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	ECON/4/08166

Documentation gateway

Non-legislative basic document	COM(1996)0395	24/07/1996	EC	Summary
Committee of the Regions: opinion	CDR0337/1996 OJ C 042 10.02.1997, p. 0031	13/11/1996	CofR	
Document attached to the procedure	COM(1996)0607	27/11/1996	EC	Summary
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading	A4-0208/1997 OJ C 222 21.07.1997, p. 0003	09/06/1997	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading	T4-0353/1997 OJ C 222 21.07.1997, p. 0014-0041	26/06/1997	EP	Summary
Economic and Social Committee: opinion, report	CES0768/1997 OJ C 296 29.09.1997, p. 0013	09/07/1997	ESC	Summary

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OBJECTIVE: The Commission Communication seeks to set out the main priority guidelines which would give a further boost to the Information Society. **SUBSTANCE:** The Action Plan entitled 'Europe's Way to the Information Society', launched by the Commission in 1994, needs to be updated to take account of a whole series of aspects which, at that time, were not part of Community strategy. Learning the lessons from the experience acquired, the Commission has identified four main policy lines as priorities of equal importance: 1. Improving the business environment. Businesses require a favourable business environment if they are to benefit from the enormous opportunities of the Information Society. This means in particular that full telecommunication liberalization must be effectively implemented throughout the European Union by 1 January 1998. It also means that increased transparency and consistency of national regulations related to information society services is needed to ensure fair competition in the internal market. Finally, more attention needs to be given to the speedy take-up of information and communication technologies by the various sectors of the economy, including SMUs. 2. Investing in the future. The information society means a knowledge-based society where knowledge plays a primary role. With that in mind, the Fifth Framework Programme of R&D should give a key role to research activities connected with the information society. Furthermore, the Commission will elaborate appropriate measures to devise rapidly an action plan on the initiative 'Learning in the Information Society'. 3. People at the centre. This means putting people at the centre of the information society policy by responding better to their expectations and concerns on issues such as access to a wide range of services and content. In practice, the Commission intends to advance towards a closer integration of the Structural Funds and the information society policies to address social questions, to protect consumer interests better and to improve the quality of public sector services. 4. Meeting the global challenge. Increasing globalization means emphasis should be put on defining global rules. The Commission attaches great importance to the completion of the WTO negotiations.?

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OBJECTIVE: The objective of the rolling action plan is to draw up a list of all the important measures, particularly in the legal sphere, that are required in order to continue implementation of the Information Society. It essentially seeks to highlight and encourage the implementation of different measures to be taken by the Member States. **CONTENT:** The rolling action plan follows the Commission communication entitled 'The implications of the Information Society for European Union policies'. It is the result of a wide-ranging discussion on the Information Society which has led to the definition of four new priority areas: 1) Improving the business environment through: - the implementation of telecommunications liberalisation and strict application of the principles of the Internal Market in the context of the Information Society; - measures to encourage the introduction of new technologies in the current activities of undertakings (particularly SMEs) and to promote satellite personal communication services in Europe; - the launch of a strategic initiative to identify and eliminate barriers to the development of electronic commerce (copyright, encryption and digital signature). 2) Investing in the future: it is necessary, recognising that the Information Society begins from school, to implement the Action Plan on the 'Learning in the Information Society' initiative. At the same time, emphasis must be placed on continuing education, which must allow Europeans on the labour market to adapt to the conditions of the Information Society. Lastly, it is important to undertake an action directed at young people with a view to ensuring the best opportunities for access and acceptance of the Information Society by the population. 3) Putting people at the centre of the Information Society: the Commission will formulate a series of actions relating to the key problems identified in the Green Paper on 'Living and Working in the Information Society: Citizens first'. The procedures for the use of the benefits of the Information Society in the context of regional policy will also be addressed. Another important element is the protection of rights and fundamental freedoms, such as the right to privacy. Lastly, account should be taken

of the large number of new employment opportunities that will result from developments in the services and multimedia content sectors. 4) Drawing up global rules on a worldwide scale: these rules concern market access, intellectual property rights, the detrimental and unlawful nature of on-line content, fiscal matters, information security, frequencies, interoperability and standards. The positive outcome of the multilateral negotiations on telecommunication services in the context of the WTO is of primary importance for the establishment of these fundamental rules. It is therefore necessary to increase the powers of the Commission to strengthen its negotiating position in the international arena. Presenting a full and up-to-date table of the principal Community measures connected with the Information Society, the running action plan fulfils four major functions: - it serves as a guidance instrument for Member States and other European institutions; - it is an aid for investment decisions for undertakings and, in particular, private investors; - it enables comments and proposals to be made in due course, whilst initiating a constructive dialogue between the Commission and the interested parties; - it provides the Commission with an internal management tool. ?

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The committee unanimously adopted the proposal for a resolution on the Commission plans (and the updating of these plans) in the communication in question on the development of the information society from Corfu to Dublin. While welcoming the Commission's continuing efforts to coordinate action on information and communications technologies (ICT), the rapporteur, Mrs Boogerd-Quaak (ELDR, NL), stated that the open-ended action plan under examination had given Parliament the opportunity to encourage the Council and the Commission to continue in their efforts to implement a global approach to put the plans and ideas formulated into practice. The text adopted reiterated the backwardness of European technology (only two of the top twenty companies in the software sector are European) and called on the Union to take an active interest in second generation satellites in order to retain a position of strength vis-à-vis international competitors and follow the example of the United States in stimulating an environment which was conducive to innovative enterprises; the open-ended plan had already encouraged this in the field of telecommunications by promoting spatial applications. It would then be up to the Council, which had so far contributed little to the synergy of ICT programmes, to continue the process and speed up the transition to the information society with new initiatives to support the plan in question. Parliament, on the other hand, the rapporteur added, would use its role as a catalyst for ideas via parliamentary debate and should also set an example by applying ICT. Society also had to become more flexible in order to cope with the increasing speed of technological development and the proposal therefore stressed the need for educational programmes geared to young people and employees and based on lifelong training (readaptation) and learning. Teachers and the Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) had an essential role to play in this respect, but it was also vital to safeguard the cultural diversity within the Union by promoting art and culture online. The text adopted also addressed the disruptive aspects of the information society: there was a risk of new splits arising at the expense of the "computer illiterate", the tax authorities in the Member States risked being overwhelmed by increased tax evasion via new technologies, exacerbated by the decentralization and geographical dispersion of enterprises, and restrictive practice legislation needed to be able to respond to the risk of an increase in private monopolies in market sectors affected by ICT. The draft resolution also called on the Commission to make provision for flexible forms of work, such as teleworking, to introduce an "ICT week", as it had done for employment, together with an ICT exchange in collaboration with CeBit in Hanover, to strengthen links between universities and enterprises, including training schemes in the United States and Japan and, finally, to re-launch the dialogue between industrialized and developing countries in order to establish strategies to prevent new inequalities from being generated by ICT. ?

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In its adoption of the report by Mrs Johanna BOOGERD-QUAAK (ELDR, NL), Parliament insists that the global approach advocated by the Commission should take full account of the social and cultural aspects. It lays particular stress on education and training, and calls for the introduction of new technologies in schools to be implemented in such a way as to reduce inequalities. Parliament believes that the development of the information society should ensure the protection of cultural and linguistic diversity within the Union, excluding all forms of discrimination based on race, gender, religion or social status. The Commission and the Council are called on to give 'high priority' to achieving the convergence of Member State law in the field of the information society, and to lose no time in dealing with unfinished business such as universal service and encrypted services. Parliament also demands incentives for investment in the infrastructure of the information society, and wishes to see a climate in which innovative enterprises can prosper. It proposes linking all primary and secondary schools by means of a broad-band network with, at the minimum, a programme for pupils and a programme to instruct teachers in the use of information and communications technologies (ICT). The Commission and the Council are called on to pay particular attention to ICT access for women, the elderly, persons without formal education and groups liable to be excluded. Parliament also insists that measures should be taken to protect the public from illegal and harmful material, and calls for EU support for research into the social implications of technological change under the fifth framework programme for research and development. It also wishes to see priority support for large-scale, innovative and risk-taking projects. While supporting the extension of the Commission's powers as regards international negotiations, Parliament insists on the need for dialogue between industrialized and developing countries to ensure that information and communications technologies contribute to social, economic, ecological and cultural development. ?

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The Committee confirms its position, already expressed on numerous occasions, on the need for a European IS model laying equal stress on integration and competitiveness in the global market, and on social and cultural factors. The Committee is hopeful that a solid legislative framework covering liberalization and guaranteeing competition and pluralism will be put in place by the 1 January 1998 deadline. The Committee would ask the Commission to take all the measures set out in the rolling action plan which are designed to ensure sound management of the universal service, the licensing of services, and protection of the public's right to privacy. Major importance should be given to the public authorities' role in developing the information society. In this connection, the public services' technological modernization programmes must be relaunched and strengthened, and a large-scale training programme for civil servants must be undertaken. ?