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Communication from the Commission
to the Council

WORK PROGRAMME

FOR

CREATING A COMMON INFORMATION MARKET

November 1985

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S U M M A R Y

At its meeting in Brussels on 29 and 30 March 1985, the European Council approved the realisation of a common information market as a specific goal.

The present Communication underlines:

- the key role of information for trade and industry, as well as its economic and social impact;
- the problems faced by the European information market, and the Community's late start in developing advanced information services;
- the need to create the right market conditions now.

The Commission intends to make specific proposals to Council on the actions which need to be taken to achieve a common information market. In this Communication, a work programme identifying the scope and timescales of such proposals is detailed, together with an indication of the overall approach of the Commission to this market.

The objectives which will be addressed by the proposals are :

- to create internal market conditions which will enable competitive supply of advanced information services in the Community;
- to strengthen the Community's position in the growing world information market, from the point of view of suppliers and users alike.
- to ensure that the potential economic, social and regional impacts are fully taken into account in information market initiatives.

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To work towards these objectives, the Commission intends to initiate as early as 1986 actions along five lines :

- strengthening the competitiveness and marketing capabilities of European information services,
- reducing the uncertainty of the market,
- removing barriers to information flows,
- stimulating demand,
- stimulating convergence of policies affecting the information market.

Within these lines, the following actions are foreseen as immediate steps :

- improving collection of data about the information market for decision making and policy planning;
- detailed analysis of the problems inhibiting development of the information market and identification of the means for their resolution;
- facilitation of access by SMEs to information resources;
- encouraging European cooperation arrangements between participants in the information market and related industries in order to stimulate development of advanced information systems at Community level;

To assist in the implementation of those actions, and to stimulate the necessary convergence of the Member States' and Community activities, the Commission intends to create an advisory group consisting of senior representatives from the Member States reflecting the range of responsibilities relevant to information market issues in their respective countries.

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The Commission invites the Council to endorse the general orientations of this Communication, including the accompanying work programme and timetable, implementing the commitment of the European Council of 29 and 30 March 1985 to set up an information market.

The Commission will present a report on progress before the end of 1986.

INTRODUCTION

1. At the European Council meeting in Brussels on 29 and 30 March 1985, the Heads of State and Government agreed that the achievement of a common information market should be a specific goal of the Community.
2. The European Council decision is a reflection of the increasingly important role which information now plays in modern societies. The information market is undergoing far reaching changes, mainly due to :
 - the almost exponential growth of the amount of information available;
 - the growing speed with which information becomes obsolete;
 - the strong tendency of information to flow across borders ; and
 - the application of new information technologies.

The Council decision reflects awareness that the lack of a unified Community information marketplace is acting as a brake, for suppliers and users alike, in the development and use of advanced information services and in the modernisation of the information environment of the Community, with all its attendant benefits.

3. Information of all sorts is becoming more important in economic and social activities. Thus it is estimated that the proportion of the population employed in information related activities in the 1970's was between 30 and 35% in Europe as against 41% in the U.S., where this figure has now probably risen to over 50%. The Commission is particularly concerned to improve the Community market in information services of use to research, business and industry. With the development of international trade, specialisation in production and rapid changes in technology, such information services have become a key economic resource. They have a direct impact on the potential for development and competitiveness of the Community as a whole and of its regions.
4. In this context, the Community must use the resources at its disposal to facilitate the access of European users to high quality information services of relevance to their needs; and equally, to encourage a stronger presence of European suppliers of information in the fast growing and increasingly international market for information services.

5. Europe's position has in fact become relatively weaker in the international information market, since the advent of electronic services. Its late start in developing electronic information services and the advantages accruing to early and larger-scale contenders in the field have made Europe increasingly dependent on important non-Community information sources and, consequently, vulnerable.
6. In this Communication, the Commission's general approach to the potential and problems of the information market is outlined, together with its initial work programme.

I. THE CHANGES IN THE EUROPEAN INFORMATION MARKET

Impact of new information technologies

7. The increasing penetration of new information technologies in the supply of information services gives rise to serious adaptation problems for European information service providers. They do not enjoy an environment conducive to meeting the challenge of electronic publishing and the international competition this entails. The main problems encountered are the following.
8. Considerable initial investment is required to set up an electronic information service while marginal costs of providing the service to more users are very low. Thus, large economies of scale are necessary to recoup the high initial costs. In practice, European information service providers have difficulties in achieving a big enough market, since the European market is effectively fragmented by numerous linguistic, technical and possible legal barriers. What actually exists is more a juxtaposition of national markets than a real Community-wide market. As a result, it is difficult for the European information services to achieve financial stability, since investment in this activity is particularly risky and promotion of services costly.
9. It is therefore essentially public bodies or non-profit-making learned bodies which are the prime suppliers of specialised electronic information services in Europe and which market two thirds of the specialised data bases produced in Europe for on-line access today, whereas in the United States 75 % of the data bases are provided by the commercial sector.

10. Whereas with print-based services there exists a balance between public and private value-added services, the advent of electronic information services adds a new dimension, which makes it necessary to analyse the new situation, so that distortions of competition are avoided and synergy of efforts is achieved for the benefit of users.
11. In addition, non-traditional publishers (such as financial institutions, professional associations, advertising agencies) are now beginning to provide information services. The problem for Europe's traditional information service providers is that these new entrants are sometimes not subject to the same rules as the press and publishing sectors.
12. There are many legal and policy uncertainties surrounding the new methods of producing and disseminating information, especially over copyright, the right of reply, liability and protection of personal data. These uncertainties are multiplied for service providers trying to operate in the Community-wide market.
13. Supply and demand in electronic information services show substantial sensitivity to policies pursued in the post and telecommunications field (infrastructure, tariffs, standards, regulations), and to industrial developments (costs, operational specifications, compatibility and availability of equipment for handling and receiving information).
14. There is increased pressure from international competition due to the dominant position occupied by transatlantic electronic information services, which have had for several years a firm grip on a large domestic market and which take advantage of economies of scale in order to penetrate the European market, either directly via international networks or by acquiring European firms or by opening subsidiaries.
15. Current market conditions are such that, with a few rare exceptions, most of the online European information service suppliers are unable to recoup their investment costs without state support. Private investors are hesitant to invest in the European electronic information market.
16. Faced by this situation, associations of online information service users such as EUSIDIC, associations of publishers and providers of electronic information such as EURIPA, together with the Union of Industries of the European Communities, have urged the Community to act to create conditions for a Community wide market.

Economic consequences

17. The changes affecting the information market have an influence on the structure of the economy itself. The rapidity and effectiveness of electronic information services give those enjoying access to them a considerable technical and commercial advantage. But because of the present complexity and cost involved in using such services, it is basically large organisations with well-qualified staff which benefit from them. Most of the small- and medium-sized companies (SMEs) have access to traditional information sources only.
18. Bearing in mind the economic importance of SMEs, action should be stimulated to avoid aggravating the problem of a two-speed economy in which the small- and medium-sized enterprises are disadvantaged.

Regional consequences

19. Similarly, if action is not taken, there is a risk of accentuating regional imbalances mainly to the detriment of peripheral regions in the Community. Firstly, the industrial framework in these regions is to a great extent made up of SMEs in industry, tourism and services, and information-rich companies are rather the exception. Secondly, telecommunications infrastructure is less developed, partly because of low density of population and economic activities. Technological advances in this field tend to reach these regions at a later stage, if at all. Thirdly, the information environment is less favourable because of the lack of research facilities and lower representation of universities and other high-level technical and educational institutes.
20. Because of these features, a necessary precondition for avoiding a further increase in the gap between information-rich and information-poor regions of the Community is that economic activity in these latter areas, particularly in respect of SMEs, should be in a position to fully participate, through appropriate measures, in the development of the Community information market.

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Social consequences

21. Traditional information activities are very labour-intensive. Technological changes, especially in printing methods, have been accompanied by the sometimes painful need to restructure and redeploy. This process has greatly affected the work conditions for the one million people working in the printing and publishing sector. The new electronic publishing methods require extremely novel combinations of qualifications, which European operators are hard-pressed to find among their staff and on the job market. This barrier is another indictment of the failure of companies to invest sufficiently in human resource development.
22. These changes also have an impact on employment and on the qualifications of staff employed by the information industries and user services. The nature of the work and tasks of company documentalists changed with the advent of the first online documentary information systems. Nowadays business and management staff and engineers are all affected by the new information services.
23. The social acceptability of the new information systems and the existence of a population of users able to operate them are essential elements which make the future European information market depend to a large extent on educational and vocational training policies.

International implications

24. In practice, Europe, traditionally strong in the press and publishing sectors, lags well behind in developing an electronic information market. For example, it produces fewer than half as many data bases accessible online than the US does. The 1982 turnover of European providers of electronic specialised information services was barely one fifth of that achieved by their U.S. counterparts. It is estimated that the European electronic information market is five years behind that of North America. This situation is worrying because the market is growing between 20 and 30% each year.
25. We are, in effect, witnessing a worsening in the terms of trade for information flows between Europe and North America. Europe exports raw information to the United States, mainly as paper products, which it reimports after processing and enrichment in the value-added form of data bases and online information services. The Community is thus increasingly dependent on the US for advanced information services in some sectors, e.g. chemistry, company information. It is estimated that in the scientific and technical information area about 50% of the online documentary searches initiated by European users are carried out via hosts located outside the Community.

26. In the United States new multi-media groups are being set up, centred around the major publishers, banks, computer manufacturers and operators of value-added networks. Europe is at the moment very badly placed to take on such competition internationally.

II. THE COMMUNITY RESPONSE

27. Following the 1979 European Council in Dublin, during which the Commission presented a paper entitled "European Society Faced with the Challenge of New Information Technologies : a Community Response", a series of concerted actions have been undertaken, notably :
- ESPRIT and the Multiannual Programme in the field of data processing;
 - the Community action programme in telecommunications ;
 - the programme to promote a European infrastructure for innovation and technology transfer;
 - the Community programme to develop the specialised information market in Europe;
 - the educational and vocational training measures relating to new information technologies;
 - parts of the FAST programme;
 - the INSIS and CADDIA programmes.
28. So far the Community has placed the main emphasis on the "T" in New Information Technologies and currently is also devoting attention to the infrastructure, but it must now take up the challenge of information, the "I". Indeed, it is the availability of high quality information services tailored to European needs which will determine - be it on economic or social conditions, patents and available technology, new materials or regulations - not only the competitiveness of Community industries and services but also the amortisation of the considerable investment made in Europe to develop new technology industries and the communications network infrastructure, in particular broad-band communication facilities using cable or satellite.
29. It is against this background that the importance of the debate prompted by publication of the Green Paper "Television without Frontiers" is thrown into full relief.

30. The Community's action plans on information and documentation stimulated the development of a basic European infrastructure on which to build the specialised information market. They and the recently adopted five-year programme for the development of the specialised information market focused also on the provision of the supply of high quality information services by European enterprises, but as long as demand remains insufficient and fragmented into national segments these will be inadequate. These initial supply side actions must now be completed and reinforced by similar attention to the conditions needed to create a Community-wide information marketplace.
31. In view of the important implications of possessing specialised information facilities and the industrial implications of developments in telematics, many Member States have failed to take advantage of the Community dimension to set up a viable information industry and have, on the contrary, artificially boosted the creation of purely national services through large subsidies.
32. The result is a general weakening of the European position in this international market.
33. What is needed at Community level is an overall approach, concentration on the most urgent problems and formulation of a policy framework with a view to creating a true common market for information.

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GENERAL APPROACH

34. The Commission considers that the Community can attain a strong healthy common market for information which would procure internal trade benefits, strengthen the Community's international position and reinforce other Community policies.
35. The main objectives must be to:
- create market conditions which will enable competitive supply of advanced information services in the Community;
 - strengthen the Community's position on the world information market;
 - ensure that the potential economic, social and regional impacts are fully taken into account in information market initiatives.
36. With these aims in view, the Commission intends, as from 1986, to pursue five main lines of action:
- strengthening the commercial capacity and competitiveness of European information services;
 - reducing market uncertainties;
 - overcoming the barriers to information flow;
 - stimulating demand;
 - stimulating convergence of policies affecting the information market.

Strengthening the commercial capacity and competitiveness of European information services

37. The improvement of the Community's position on the world information market will involve a number of different measures aimed at strengthening the innovative capacity and commercial efficiency of organisations active in the information market, seeking to improve the environment in which such organisations operate, for instance by encouraging European joint ventures in accordance with competition rules.

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38. To this end the Commission intends to propose measures to:

- improve the tools for measuring and analyzing trends in the information supply sector;
- encourage better synergy of public and private sector efforts to extend the range of advanced information services available;
- optimize use of the post and telecommunications infrastructure by seeking ways to facilitate access and use of international services;
- encourage European collaboration and joint ventures in order to consolidate the Community's positions in areas at risk and to come up with innovative products;
- improve the fiscal and commercial environment in which information market organisations operate by seeking more equitable tax arrangements for information (at present it sometimes happens that users do not have to pay VAT when accessing an online information service located abroad, but are liable when interrogating a national host), and by clarifying the valuation and accounting rules and practices applicable to information goods.

Reducing market uncertainties

39. There are too many uncertainties hindering development of the common information market, particularly as regards:

- the economic, social and regional consequences of the changes in information production and dissemination as a result of new technologies (i.e. the nature of the work and working conditions in a company, the problem of access by SMEs and peripheral regions to advanced information services);
- the legislation governing electronic information services (for example, do they come under legislation on public or private communications?);
- public policies affecting the information market (especially as regards telecommunications and data processing);
- the conditions governing transborder data flows (for example, the American embargo on the transfer of technological information between the American parent company and its European subsidiary in connection with the construction of the trans-Siberian gas pipeline).

40. The Commission intends to undertake actions to reduce these uncertainties by:
- encouraging and synthesising the results of research at European level into the socio-economic aspects of information and communication (consultation structures, work organisation and working time, education and training provision, etc.);
 - setting up a European legal observatory for the information market, inter alia, to guard against the development of legal obstacles which would fragment the European market and advise on desirable Community initiatives;
 - formulating recommendations on public policies affecting the information market, and codes of conduct on the interaction between the public and private sectors;
 - compiling basic statistical indicators of information market trends, implementing measures to improve the accessibility and quality of the information available, and encouraging the development of new analytical tools to facilitate decision-making and policy planning;
 - studying in detail the problems posed by transborder data flows, and strengthening the Community's positions in international fora.

Overcoming barriers to information flow

41. Although considerable progress has been made in developing postal and telecommunications infrastructures, allowing Community users to communicate with almost any point on the globe, there are still many factors which tend to fragment the Community information market. Some of these barriers are natural (language, for example,) but others are artificial and should be eliminated or overcome.
42. A number of technical barriers result from the historical conditions under which national networks developed and from the choice of different standards (videotex, for example). The progress made at Community level in harmonising standards for new technologies and telecommunications gives reason to hope that these barriers will be progressively eliminated within a reasonable period. However, there are other technical, administrative, commercial and social barriers which warrant attention in the context of a Community information market policy.

43. The lack of standardisation for electronic information products and services means that many applications are incompatible despite the use of standardised hardware. For example, there are over 600 different information formats for "standard" 130 mm diskettes. Moreover, there are many different procedures for accessing hosts, a whole range of retrieval languages and very little harmonisation of data base fields, all of which artificially limits the inexperienced user's access to the material available.
44. Certain tariff conditions discriminate against international users (subscriptions to certain videotex services), and there are administrative barriers to international use of some services (examples include lack of procedures for registering as a foreign customer, limited choice of payment methods or, viewed from the opposite angle, restrictions on currency transfers to pay for subscriptions to international services).
45. The rigidity of certain rules governing postal and telecommunication services may hamper Community-level development of innovative information services (for example, limited facilities for host interconnection, loss of entitlement to the preferential printed matter rate when a periodical contains a microcomputer-readable electronic insert).
46. There is also a lack of information and facilities to help users and suppliers cope with the problems involved in using international information services.
47. The Commission will, in collaboration with the competent authorities in the Member States and the users of information services, identify the obstacles to the flow of information in the Community and will propose solutions to overcome the barriers. Initially, this work will cover the following principal areas:

(i) standardisation

In addition and within the framework of Community efforts in the field, the Commission will conduct an awareness campaign among suppliers of information to encourage them to adopt existing international standards and harmonise their information service formats. It will, in particular, seek to promote use of common standards in public sector information services.

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(ii) telecommunication services

The Commission will participate in the analysis which will inevitably be made by the telecommunications operators of the conditions for international information services, including tariff questions. Together with the operators, hosts and users, the Commission will seek improvements leading to better use of the international telecommunications infrastructure.

(iii) postal services

Together with the specialised-press publishers and the postal authorities in CEPT countries, the Commission intends to study the specific problems involved in disseminating technical and commercial publications, particularly in developing countries, and the implications of new information products which are sent through the post (cassettes, optical disks etc.).

Stimulating demand

48. Stimulating demand is a vital ingredient in helping the information supply sector adapt to the new technologies and catch up with its transatlantic competitors.
49. The Commission intends to take action to boost demand by means of mechanisms geared to encourage public demand and by supporting certain categories of users so as to facilitate their access to Community information sources:

(i) public sector demand:

The public sector is a large consumer of information. Together with the competent authorities in the Member States, the Commission will seek ways of better orientating public sector demand in order to stimulate development of the information market. The Commission's recommendations will focus on ways of facilitating access by public administrations to the external information sources provided by the commercial sector, and especially on the principles governing invitations to tender for information and documentation services.

(ii) demand from small- and medium-sized firms:

The Commission will provide support here, particularly in the form of calls for proposals to develop new information products geared to small- and medium-sized companies.

Together with the Chambers of Commerce, it will study ways to improve SME access to the Community's information sources. Furthermore, the Commission will encourage the development of "third generation" advanced information services tailored to meet the needs of SMEs and much easier to use than existing electronic services.

(iii) demand from the education sector:

In conjunction with the school and university authorities in the Member States, the Commission will study ways of familiarising pupils - from a very early age - with information processing and search techniques (in particular by means of library visits and introducing them to micro-computers), as well as ways of fostering instruction of students in the use of advanced information systems. In this respect it will build on the work already undertaken in its programme to introduce NIT's into school systems and on its COMETT proposals to stimulate cooperation between universities and industry in high level training.

(iv) demand from peripheral regions:

In addition to the Commission's measures to strengthen the basic infrastructure in the Community's peripheral regions - both as regards telecommunications and utilisation of local information sources - a special effort will be made to train people to use advanced information and documentation systems. In particular, the Commission will seek ways of setting up mechanisms to compensate for the extra cost of interrogating Community information services which results from the particular situation of the peripheral regions.

(v) demand from other sectors:

It is clear that preparing people to utilise information services is an important part of demand stimulation in general and not just in peripheral regions. The need for trained staff in all sectors of the economy is paramount if information services are to be used effectively. Particular emphasis will be placed on this aspect in the Commission's proposals.

Stimulating convergence of policies affecting the information market.

50. The information market is directly affected by policies in other fields (for example, policies to promote new technologies, policies concerning telecommunications, the media, culture, scientific and technical information), which have their own rationale but do not necessarily tie up favourably with efforts to establish a Community information market (2).

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(2) These policies often correspond to the competences of different ministerial departments in the Member States.

51. The main difficulty arises from the fact that setting up an information market is a horizontal task involving a wide variety of government departments, which are not primarily concerned with promoting the information market and do not have a global approach to information issues.
52. The Commission believes that one of the prerequisites for developing the information market is that those initiating such policies pay greater heed to their impact on the information market, and that appropriate mechanisms be set up at national level to facilitate convergence of these policies to achieve the goal specified by the European Council of 29 and 30 March 1985.
53. However, consistency at the national level does not imply consistency at Community level. The Commission therefore intends to maintain close contacts with the Member States in developing information market policy with the aim of :
- avoiding any divergent tendencies which would be contrary to the interests of the Member States;
 - avoiding unnecessary duplication of effort;
 - helping the formulation of convergent information market policies at national and Community level.
54. The Commission considers that the formulation of proposals for decisions aiming at creating a Community information market would be facilitated through an advisory group of senior officials. The group would be able to reflect the range of responsibilities relevant to information market issues in their respective countries. The Commission therefore seeks the assistance of Member States in forming such an advisory group.

CONCLUSION

55. The Commission invites the Council to endorse the general orientations of this Communication, including the accompanying work programme and timetable, implementing the commitment of the European Council of 29 and 30 March 1985 to set up an information market. The Commission will present a report on progress before the end of 1986.

TIMETABLEFOR THE WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE
CREATION OF A COMMON INFORMATION MARKET

General: The Communication points out that:

- The economic interest for the Community of the creation of a common information market is obvious and generally accepted.
- The promotion of a healthy and competitive Community information industry, making as much use as possible of the economies of scale of the common market, is a logical consequence.
- So is the stimulation of the use of and user demand for advanced information services.
- The common market at this moment is fragmented and shows many divergences and lack of transparency, both at national and at Community level.
- It is the task of the Community to improve this situation by stimulating the creation of optimal conditions for the common information market.
- Therefore, part of the approach of the Commission will be active participation in these thinking processes in order to achieve optimal convergence at national level. Part of the approach will be the proposal to Council of concrete actions. Part of the approach will be the continuous monitoring of the factors influencing the information market and the establishment of macro-economic tools for policy decision makers in governmental and private enterprise environments.

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- The outcomes of the analytical work done thus far show that the Commission should concentrate on eight areas in the information market:
 1. Role of the public sector.
 2. Legal and regulatory aspects.
 3. Economic aspects.
 4. Removing barriers to information flows.
 5. Use of and demand for advanced information services.
 6. Convergence of national and Community policies.
 7. Fiscal and commercial environment.
 8. Participation of the less favoured regions in the advanced information services market.

- These eight areas constitute the framework for the initial work programme which the Commission has developed and for which it presents the following timetable.

INITIAL WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE CREATION OF A COMMON INFORMATION MARKET.

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Date of Commission proposal or start of activity</u>	<u>Expected date and form of action</u>
I		
<u>ROLE OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR</u>		
Ia <u>Supply of information</u> Development of code of practice for public sector as supplier of information.	1985	Commission recommendations, 1987
Ib <u>Support of information services</u> Formulation of guidelines for direct and indirect public support of data bases and other information services.	1985	Publication of guidelines by Commission, 1988

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Date of Commission proposal or start of activity</u>	<u>Expected date and form of action</u>
II <u>LEGAL AND REGULATORY ASPECTS</u>		
IIa <u>Protection of intellectual property</u> Protection of the contents of electronic information services.	1988	Depending upon consultations following publication of the Green Paper on copyright: Council Recommendation, 1989 Directive, 1989
Protection of computer software.	1988	
Green Paper on Copyright.	late 1985 - early 1986	Council Recommendations, Directives; 1988-90
IIb <u>Data protection including privacy</u> Council decision on ratification of Council of Europe Convention or directive; recommendations 81/679/EEC, E.P. resolution 9.3.82.	1988	Commission Recommendation already made (1981); reinforcement by Council ref. decision, if required, 1989
IIc <u>Liability of suppliers</u> Actions concerning NIT services such as: specialized information services, teleshopping services, financial services etc.	1988	Council Recommendation, 1989
IIId <u>Inconsistencies in legal rights and obligations</u> Actions concerning divergent, potentially distortive legal provisions applicable to different categories of competing information providers.	1988	Commission guidelines, 1989

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Date of Commission proposal or start of activity</u>	<u>Expected date and form of action</u>
<u>IIe</u> <u>Health and safety regulations</u> Actions to ensure convergences among Member States' and Community regulations.	1985	Directives, from 1987
<u>II f</u> <u>New legal problems created by NIT services</u> These include: authentication of signature, the question of proof, labour issues etc; recommendations per type of service.	1986	'Green Book, 1988 Commission Recommendations, 1989
<u>IIg</u> <u>Accessibility of public sector information.</u> Code of practice to counter divergences between Member States in the practical accessibility of public sector information and conditions of its use in commercial information services.	1986	Publication of code of practice by Commission, 1987

Note: The Legal Observatory created by the Commission in 1985 with Member States' experts will itself play an important rôle in promoting convergence on legal aspects of the information market. Further issues may well be identified during the course of the Observatory's work and new priorities put forward.

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Date of Commission proposal or start of activity</u>	<u>Expected date and form of action</u>
III <u>ECONOMIC ASPECTS</u> (tools for policy decision makers)		
IIIa <u>Improvement of availability and quality of data on information market trends.</u>		
Actions for better integration and exploitation of existing information sources.	1986	Publication by the Commission of guidelines, 1987
Encouragement of the design and production of new statistical tools.	1986	Cooperation agreement among Statistical Offices, 1988
IIIb <u>Promotion of research on information market trends and their socio-economic impact in a European dimension.</u>		
Actions for better exploitation of Community expertise in socio-economic aspects of information and communication.	1986	Publication by the Commission of Memorandum of Understanding, between Commission and interested parties, 1989
Encouragement of concerted research efforts.	1987	

Subject

Date of Commission
proposal or start
of activity

Expected date and
form of action

IIIc Improvement of availability of and
access to economic and technical
information about the information
technology and telecommunications
sectors.

1986

Cooperation agreement
among information
sources, 1986

Actions for better integration of
and user-friendly access to
existing information sources.

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Date of Commission proposal or start of activity</u>	<u>Expected date and form of action</u>
IV <u>REMOVING BARRIERS TO INFORMATION FLOWS</u>		
IVa <u>Harmonization of information standards</u> Development of harmonized standards in the fields of new information technologies and telecommunications (including information formats) in the framework of CEN/CENELEC/CEPT working programme.	ongoing	ongoing
IVb <u>Application of information standards</u> Formulation of recommendations on application of common information standards by the public sector.	1987	Commission recommendations, followed by Directive, if necessary, 1989
IVc <u>Telecommunications services</u> Participation in the review of conditions for access to telecommunications services in order to increase the use of telecommunications facilities for the information market.	1986	Commission proposals to the telecommunications authorities, 1987
IVd <u>Postal services.</u> Recommendations for improving conditions for the postal dissemination of special information products.	1986	Council Recommendation, 1988
Study of possibility of special budget aid for postal dissemination of specialised information products relevant for LDCs.	1986	Report 1987, followed eventually by Council Decision 1988

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Date of Commission proposal or start of activity</u>	<u>Expected date and form of action</u>
V <u>USE OF AND DEMAND FOR ADVANCED INFORMATION SERVICES.</u>		
Va <u>Stimulation of use and demand.</u>	1986	Council Decision,
Development of action plan for continuous awareness campaign via - market research (panel) - public relations activities - conferences, workshops - newsletter.		1989
Vb <u>Access to electronic information services for non-expert users</u>	1987	Council Decision, 1988
Development of action plan (based on cooperation with the information industry) for the creation of easy-access information services for SME's.		
Vc <u>Education of professional information handlers</u>	1987	Council Decision, 1988
Development of action plan for the stimulation of the education in Member States of professional information handlers.		

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Date of Commission proposal or start of activity</u>	<u>Expected date and form of action</u>
VI <u>CONVERGENCE OF NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY POLICIES.</u>		
VIa <u>Member States Advisory Group.</u> Establishment of an advisory group, consisting of high level representatives from Member States, in order to create a proper forum for the continuous exchange of views and information with Member States.	1985	First meeting, 1986
VIb <u>International aspects.</u> <u>OECD - transborder data flow.</u> Continuing active participation in OECD discussions on transborder data flow and related policy issues.	1985	On-going; no decision needed
VIc <u>International trade in information services.</u> <u>Preparation of negotiating position for the proposed GATT negotiations on international trade.</u>	1985	Council policy position within the overall framework of negotiating guidelines for the New Round 1986.
VI d <u>Restrictions for Community users of non-Community information.</u> Establishment of a continuous monitoring system; proposals for actions to depend on factfinding.	1985	Continuous action with regular reporting

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Date of Commission proposal or start of activity</u>	<u>Expected date and form of action</u>
VII <u>FISCAL AND COMMERCIAL ENVIRONMENT.</u>		
VIIa <u>Accounting rules and practices.</u> Assessment of accounting rules and practices for the valuation of information goods.	1987	Commission Recommendation, 1988
VIIb <u>Fiscal and custom treatment.</u> Any necessary actions to prevent distortions in the fiscal and custom treatment of information.	1987	Council Recommendation, 1989
VIIc <u>Advertising rules on electronic information services.</u> Recommendation for code of practice.	1987	Publication by Commission of code of practice, 1988

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Date of Commission proposal or start of activity</u>	<u>Expected date and form of action</u>
VIe <u>Relations with less-industrialised countries</u>	1986	Commission Recommendations, 1987
Study of means to improve and support access (including the necessary telecommunications element) by users in LDCs to information services; also to improve the production and supply of information services of relevance to users in LDCs; and of information services concerning LDCs (thus seeking to diminish the imbalance in North-South information flows).		

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Date of Commission proposal or start of activity</u>	<u>Expected date and form of action</u>
VIII <u>PARTICIPATION OF THE LESS FAVOURED REGIONS IN THE ADVANCED INFORMATION SERVICES MARKET.</u>		
VIIIa <u>Regional divergences.</u>	1986	Council Decision, 1987
<p>Preparation of action plan within the framework of the Community telecommunications programme for the LFRs to reduce the development lag of LFRs within the Community with respect to the use and supply of advanced information services and the required telecommunications infrastructure.</p>		
<p>Among the aspects to be addressed in the action plan for the LFRs will be the examination of measures to</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) optimize the supply and use of information services in the LFRs made possible by the emerging Community-wide advanced telecommunications networks. b) provide supply and demand stimulation of information services. c) secure access to and use of international information services. d) maximize technology transfer through information services. e) develop specialised regional information services. f) compensate for extra costs borne by users in LFRs in interrogating Community information services. 		