IS FORUM FILES FIRST REPORT

"OUR WORLD IS CHANGING AND IT'S CHANGING NOW"

When the Information Society (IS) Forum was created by the European Commission as a 'think tank' composed of some 128 prominent people representing a cross-section of European society and industrial and governmental spheres, its first goal was to assess the situation, and recommend how Europe can capitalise on the Information Society.

In the year since the Forum's creation the Information Society has progressed faster than anyone could have predicted. Today, as the Forum releases its first yearly report its main observation is a word of caution for non-believers. The pace of change is progressing so rapidly that Europe's citizens must be given the tools to adapt and move with these changes, and it is European policy makers' responsibility to create the framework which will encourage this to happen.

For all European citizens in all professions, the key words for the coming decade are flexibility, openness to change, and life-long learning.

THE PRIMARY OBSERVATIONS OF THE INFORMATION SOCIETY FORUM WERE SUMMARISED IN THE REPORT'S 12 POINTS

From Information Society to Life-long Learning Society. The pace of change is moving so quickly that people can only adapt if the Information Society becomes the "Life-long Learning Society". To build and maintain competitive economic advantage, peoples' skills and talents must be continually reshaped to meet the changing needs of the workplace. The Learning Society will offer people unprecedented possibilities for personal development.

Guard against exclusion. We must not tolerate an Information Society of 'have's' and 'have not's'.

Government involvement in quality of life. Governments should commit themselves to a broadly-based improvement of the quality of life for all citizens, by providing electronic public services.

New democracy or 'snooping society'? Our democracies face new opportunities and risks: We can revitalise them by bringing people into the decision-making process and giving them closer scrutiny over the acts of government. Or we can allow the Information Society to become the 'Snooping Society' and suffer the loss of individual liberties by failing to safeguard such basic rights as privacy and freedom from intrusion.

Involve citizens in the IS debate. Much more effort should be devoted to raising peoples' awareness of the issues and opportunities raised by the Information Society and to involve them in the debate on how to respond to the challenges.

A new creative and scientific renaissance. The Information Society could give birth to a Second Renaissance, with a new flowering of creativity, scientific discovery, cultural development and community growth.

How to adjust the job market to information opportunities? The new information and communication technologies will eventually create more jobs than they destroy, but the speed of delivery depends on how well and quickly we can adjust to what will be very different working and social environments.

The age of telework. Teleworking will be the employment future for millions of people: it should not be feared, but it may need to be carefully regulated.

Will new technologies really bring sustainable development? The new technologies look likely to make a real contribution to sustainable development, but there is no guarantee that they will.

New growth markets - don't wait, stimulate. The growth of markets for interactive services based on multimedia and other technologies will continue to be slow unless more is done to stimulate them.

The business, industry, education partnership. Businesses and industries must form new partnerships with educators to ensure that the new and changing skills they require are being taught.

Regulatory support required. The regulatory framework is a key factor enabling us to make the most of the Information Society as soon as possible. Its development should be pragmatic with some regulations needed at EU level and others to be taken care of by the Member States. ∎

Copies of the Forum's first Annual Report and of the supplementary report (Working Group reports) can be obtained from the IS Forum Secretariat: Fax: +32 2 2950688, e-mail: fabrizia.derosa@bxl.dg13.cec.be). The full texts are also available on the ISPO web server at http://www.ispo.cec.be/infoforum/pub.html

IS News: Can you tell us what is the central message of the Forum's First Annual Report?

Birgitta Carlson: The Forum's First Annual Report puts people first. This should not be a surprise. The Forum is a rare body drawn from civil society and including a very wide cross-section of social, political and economic expertise and experience. We are no more intrigued by the technological splendours of the Information Society than most ordinary people. In our work we have taken the word "Society" seriously and have tried to understand and share the concerns people have about the new technologies. We want to make sure that the policy makers are listening to these concerns.
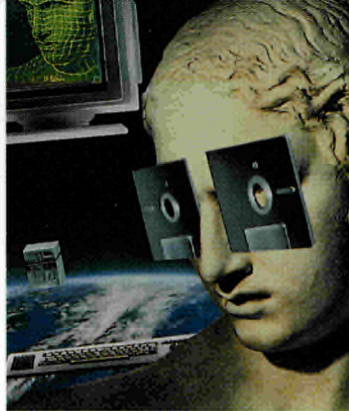
IS News: Do you believe that the Information Society could deliver economic and social benefits for Europe?

BC: Yes, I am convinced that it could happen if the transition process is properly handled. This means recognising that people are as important as markets. If we take their needs into account as citizens, as consumers and as human beings then we shall enjoy faster economic growth, real prosperity and a better quality of life. But none of these benefits will be automatic. We have to earn them. Nor should we think of the Information Society as some future phenomenon. It has arrived; we cannot disinvent it; we must adjust to it with a greater sense of urgency than has so far been apparent.

IS News: In its Report, the Forum identifies a number of keys to success; can you summarise them?

BC: Our most important proposition is that no one should be excluded from the Information Society. In practice this means two fundamental policy approaches will be necessary: one is that people should be helped to acquire the confidence to use information appliances and applications; this confidence will come through education, through the simplicity of the appliances themselves and through involving people in the design of applications so

THE GIP PROJECT

TRACKING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

How is the Information Society developing? How will it affect the European citizen? Which new services and projects being created today will affect the way we work and live tomorrow?

The Global Inventory Project (GIP), led by the European Commission and Japan, was launched as one of the eleven Pilot Projects at the G7 Information Society Conference held in Brussels in February 1995, as a first step towards providing a barometer which allows citizens, governments and industry to track the evolution of the Information Society.

The overall goal of the GIP is to create and provide an Internet-based multimedia inventory of information regarding national and international projects, studies and other initiatives relevant to the promotion and their further development of knowledge and understanding of the information society.

To achieve this goal, the GIP has defined four objectives:

• to act as an international point of reference for the provision of information that will assist at national and international level in the promotion of the information society

• to establish a network for the free exchange of information about national and international initiatives relating to the information society (the "Electronic Forum")

• to promote and gain an understanding of the impact of the implementation of the Information Society activities on the economy, industry and society

• to foster international alliance building and multinational projects and investments.

The Global Inventory Project will take a decentralised approach with a master index. It will be based upon the World Wide Web (WWW) and other technologies which are easy to use and commonly available.

Participating countries will either produce their own separate national server or data will be held in an area assigned to them on the GIP Host. Each of the national inventories will be a self contained unit, with indexing and local search capabilities. These indexes will be combined on the GIP Host to create a truly global index of information society projects. Users will access this index and be able to carry out a global search, by keyword, in the language of their choice. The results of this search will include the minimum data-set of information for the projects which will be available in the original language as well as English. As a further step, more detailed information, in its original language, can easily be accessed on the source server.

The technical and organisational requirements of the project have been defined with the GIP Steering Committee. A GIP pilot demonstrator has been created and links set up to a number of G7 national inventories, some of which have already collected considerable sample data. A demonstration of this pilot was set up as part of the G7 Exhibition at the Information Society and Development Conference (ISAD) held recently in South Africa.

The European Commission, through its ISPO office (a joint initiative of DG III and DG XIII) has launched an Open Call for Tender for the provision of services to develop the GIP Host facilities. As a result of this Call, a consortium was selected, led by Video on Line with MIT Media Lab, DATAR and PSI as sub-contractors. This will facilitate the completion of the GIP project, in particular the GIP Host, within the predefined time frame of 2 years. It will also allow for support measures to encourage the participation of non-G7 contries in the GIP through awareness raising and dissemination activities. It is through the extension of the GIP to non-G7 countries, international and national organisations that its key objectives will be achieved. ■

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STUDENTS LEARN THE WEB

Students from the 15 European Member States came together recently as a part of the Schools Adopt Monuments project, to attend a special workshop held during the Summit of Heads of State and Government in Florence.

The purpose of this workshop was to encourage students to reflect upon their identity as European citizens.

It proposed sessions where oriflammes were created and a multimedia workshop, which allowed children to create Webpages and work on the Internet, incorporating images from their work with digital cameras. ■

For more information contact:
Pegasus Foundation Brussels
Fax: +32 2 2849009 or
http://www.ispo.cec.be/infosoc/ed
uc/pegase.html

THE INTERNET IS EXPANDING. BUT HOW FAST?

Seldom does an industry report, magazine article or conversation between netwizards go far before the topic of the Internet's unrelenting expansion is mentioned. But the exact number of computers that is connected today remains a mystery. In this highly flexible communications environment, precise facts about the number of Internet users are very difficult to find, some estimates say 10 million; others 60 million.

The only concrete figure that can be cited is the number of hosts. The development of this population is interesting to track: from 213 operators in 1981 to 1,000 in 1984; 100,000 in 1989; one million in 1992; and some 9.5 million hosts today. Perhaps the most arresting figure is the creation of some 5 million new servers over the past 12 months.

But this host population is only the tip of the iceberg, and this is where prediction becomes more complex. Each server can contain hundreds, thousands or millions of pages, and can serve just as many user queries per day.

Recent figures released by the Altavista search engine give us a clue to the importance of Internet. In July 1996 Altavista received some five million visits every day asking for information. But why speculate? Measure the Net's progress for yourself. Some useful sites are: http://www2.mids.org/growth/internet/index.html displaying internet growth graphs and http://www.nw.com/zone/WWW/top.html with an internet domain survey. ■

TELECOMS MINISTERS REACH POLITICAL AGREEMENT ON TWO DIRECTIVES

The Council of Telecoms Ministers recently reached a political agreement for common positions on directives on personal data protection and Open Network Provision (ONP).

The first directive focuses on improving the protection of personal data provided by the existing general directive on data protection in the telecoms sector. It will extend the coverage of personal data protection, currently limited to natural persons, to legal persons (companies), and will also cover the protection of privacy. The directive also translates the principles of the general directive into more concrete and operational requirements which will limit the risk of divergent interpretations by Member States and operators.

The second directive aims to adapt the ONP framework directive and the ONP leased lines directive to the introduction of full competition in the telecoms sector by 1998. The most important modification is the reinforcing of the independence of national telecom regulatory authorities. This is a basic requirement of the central role they will play in a liberalised market. The overall objectives of the ONP directives remain unchanged: the framework directive aims to harmonise conditions for access to and use of public telecom network services; the leased lines directive requires that leased lines be offered to all users on request and without discrimination. ■
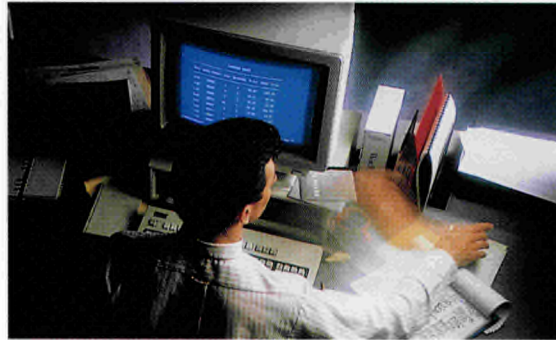
INTERVIEW WITH BIRGITTA CARLSON

that they are actually relevant and useful in peoples' day to day lives; the second policy priority should be to guarantee universal access at affordable prices and irrespective of where a person lives to such basic on-line public services as public information, health and education. Learning is rapidly becoming a lifelong requirement and in our view the Information Society will be the Lifelong Learning Society. We must quickly embark on the restructuring of our education systems to meet the changing needs of companies and individuals.

IS News: The impact of the new technologies on jobs is a source of very great public concern. What is your understanding of the process?
BC: The knowledge of the process of job destruction and creation is too shallow to make confident predictions. But we do believe that the more quickly that companies and organisations of every kind change their structures to make the best of the new technologies, the more probable it is that we shall see new jobs created more quickly than old ones are destroyed. ■

ELECTRONIC LINKS BRING EURO-OMBUDSMAN CLOSER TO PEOPLE

After several months of operation, the European Ombudsman's service has succeeded in its goal of bringing the European Institutions closer to their citizens. The next step recommended by the European Parliament is to put contact with the Institutions at the tip of the citizens' fingers – by providing an Internet link where all citizens can submit complaints, queries and comments electronically.

In its review of the first months of the Ombudsman's work, the Parliament gave the new service full marks for building closer links with Europe's population. The Ombudsman's service is as the defender of European citizens. It must help the European Commission to work better, correct its mistakes and to become more transparent, commented Commissioner Manuel Marin at the meeting.

As the role of the European Ombudsman develops, it is certain that the planned electronic link will build a permanent dialogue between European policy makers and the citizens they represent. ■

INNOVATORS, APPLY HERE EUROPEAN IT PRIZE

If your company has developed a ground breaking new information product or service that has market potential, be sure to submit an application for the European IT prize (ITEA), to be eligible for an award of 5,000 or 200,000 ECU.

ITEA awards the most innovative and imaginative information products created by companies in the European Union and in Central and Eastern Europe. ITEA is organised by the Esprit programme jointly with EURO-CASE, the European Council of Applied Sciences and Engineering.

Up to 25 awards of 5,000 ECU and three companies will be selected for the 200,000 ECU Grand Prize.

All ideas are welcome and the theme for this year's awards is: Novel products with a high IT content and evident market potential. The project should be at least a demonstrable prototype and if already marketed it should have been introduced into the market after 1 January 1996. But money is only one of the advantages. Each winning idea will also benefit from the extensive publicity generated by the competition. The prizes will be awarded by Jacques Santer, the President of the European Commission on 26 November in Brussels during the European IT Conference, EITC 96.

All applications must be submitted by August 21, 12h00. The ceremony will take place at the occasion of EITC 96 on 25/27 November in Brussels. ■

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540MB DISC IS IN THE POCKET

French company creates removable 540MB Power Disc Cartridge.
The latest removable hard disc drive technology has arrived. It's called the Power Disc Cartridge, and it's a European innovation. The French company, Nomai, with the support of the Esprit Programme, developed a 540MB removable hard disc drive that heralds the next generation of removable disc technology. The Nomai disc has the important advantage over other previous technologies that it is forward and backward compatible. This allows users to update the disc with information adding older

or more recent information on the disc in the correct order. With this technology large amounts of data are truly portable for the first time. One such disc can contain the entire contents of a daily newspaper, including text, graphics and layout. The Power Disc Cartridge data storage format was introduced to the world as the new standard in a joint presentation by Nomai and the American Syquest company, the former world leader in removable storage technology. ■

For more information, contact Nomai:
Fax: +33 1 33891600
e-mail: nomai@applelink.apple. com

CALENDAR

TRANSFORMING PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS INTO CUSTOMER SERVICE ORGANISATIONS

IDA conference discusses Public Administrations' role in the Information Society.
The top-level political will is there and the technology is ready. But the missing link between the policy and reality of bringing Europes Public Administrations into the Information Society is the willingness to change old work habits that still exist at the operational level of many organisations today.

This was one of the primary concerns examined by directors of public administrations, specialists from industry and officials from the European Commission, at the first IDA Conference on the Exchange of Data between Administrations, held on 20-21 June in Rome. IDA is the European Union Programme that funds projects aimed at helping Europe's Public Administrations to build trans-European information services.

A number of IDA-supported trans-European public administration networks are running today, and examples were presented at the conference. But the broader theme discussed by experts at this meeting was: how can Europe's Public Administrations offer better services to the citizen; and what are the obstacles to achieving this.

In his keynote speech, Larry Irving, Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information of the United States Department of Commerce, explained how government can help create jobs – and bring better, lower-cost services to the citizen – by establishing policies that deregulate the market and encourage competition. He commented that the United States government has recognised that:

Telecommunications is the most vital component of our global economy, and it will only become more important. Irving illustrated the job-creation potential of a deregulated telecommunications market, citing several recent figures from the United States. Internet services have created 71,000 new jobs in New York alone in the past year – a figure that is expected to double by 1998. Some 250,000 new jobs are currently being created in North America's emerging cellular communications market. One of the emerging new carriers on the US market started with 12,000 employees in 1985 and employs 60,000 today.

Roberto Masiero, President of IDC Europe, offered a view from the information technology industry. He said that the primary concerns faced by the emerging European market are to overcome its fragmented and defensive attitude to change and competition. The world economy – and especially the Information Society – are moving forward rapidly. So we have no choice but to follow this lead.

These points were also discussed by Carl Magnus Lemmel, Deputy Director General of European Commission DG III (Industry) in his keynote presentation. He remarked that the obstacles to achieving rapid accession to the Information Society are not technology but people's attitudes. Those of us that are willing to adapt today will set the rules for those who follow. And our biggest challenge in Europe is to rapidly transform the telecommunications monopolies, to create an open and competitive European Information market.

The IDA conference on Public Administrations and the Information Society welcomed more than 400 participants from public administrations and members of the Information Technology industry across Europe. ◼

For further information on the IDA conference, please contact the IDA Central Office, Fax: +32 2 2990286
e-mail: ida-central@dg3.cec.be
web site: http://www.ispo.cec.be/ida/ida/html
X-400: C=BE; A=RTT; P=CEC; O=DG3; SN=IDA-CENTRAL

INFORMATION SOCIETY RELATED CONFERENCES/WORKSHOPS IN THE FORTHCOMING MONTHS

European Health Telematics Education Conference
Corfu (GR)
5-8 September 1996
EC DG XIII/NIGHTINGALE Project
Dr Marianna Diomidus
Fax: +30 1 7715738
http://www.dn.uoa.gr/nightingale/conference.htm

CEEC/EU Information Society Forum
Prague (Czech Rep.)
12-13 September 1996
National Information Center NIS
M. Pavlu
Fax: +42 2 24231114
e-mail: nlpavlu@dec.nis.cz
EC DG XIII (BU 9 3/204)
Rudolf W. Meijer
Fax: +32 2 2961716
e-mail: rme@dg13.cec.be

People First – Challenges of Living and Working in the European Information Society
Dublin (IRL)
30 September-1 October 1996
Betsan Bradley
Fax: +353 1 6785047
e-mail: peoplefirst@agenda-comm.ie
http://www.peoplefirst.agenda-comm.ie

Advanced Communications for an Electronic Marketplace
Zurich (CH)
2 October 1996
M Waidner
Fax: +41 1 7103608
e-mail: wmi_zurich.ibm.com

Cities and Regions Infoway to Europe:
"The Bangemann Challenge mid-term review in Barcelona"
Barcelona (E)
7-9 October 1996
Ajuntament de Barcelona
Olga Vilanova
Fax: +34 3 4027877

5th European Forum of Competitive Technology – TEC '96
Grenoble (F)
15-17 October 1996
Grenoble Chamber of Commerce

& Industry
Fax: +33 76 282795
e-mail: tec@esc-grenoble.fr

European Telework Week
4-11 November 1996
Three major events:

3rd European Assembly on Telework and New Ways to Work
Vienna (AT)
4-6 November
Fax: +43 1 495044240
e-mail: j.hochgerner@magnet.at
http://www.bco.co.at/bco/tw96/

Telework Deutschland '96 : New Ways to Work and Employment
Bonn, Germany
11-13 November 1996
Werner B.Korte, Empirica GmbH
Fax: +49 228 9853012
e-mail: konferenz@empirica.de
CompuServe: 100065,1675
http://www.empirica.com

Tomorrow's Workplace
London (UK)
6-8 November 1996
Fax: +44 1734 622230
e-mail: teleworkevents@cix.compulink.co.uk

CYBERCITIES – The everday life in the digital cities
Rome (I)
6-7 November 1996
Francesco Marcolini
Fax: +39 6 36001144
e-mail: publica@m.vox.vol.it

ACTS Mobile Communications Summit
Granada (E)
27-29 November 1996
Dr José Luis de Miguel
Fax: +34 1 3374402
http://www.telefonica.es/acts.mobile