

INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION

CREATING A EURO-MEDITERRANEAN INFORMATION PARTNERSHIP



The Euro-Mediterranean Conference, held on November 27-28 in Barcelona, set itself the objective of creating a true Euro-Mediterranean partnership stressing

the importance of the role of science and technology in all countries' social and economic development.

In this context, a series of workshops and a final Euro-Mediterranean conference on the Information Society were sponsored by the Italian Presidency, together with the European Commission and INRIA (Fondazione Bordoni and Consorzio Nettuno).

The Conference – "Construction of the Euro-Mediterranean Information Society: Communication, Training, Education and Research" – held in Rome on May 30-31, 1996 - was attended by eleven Ministers of third countries and a significant number of European Union Ministerial delegates. It underlined the importance of a "harmonious transition towards the Information Society in the Mediterranean region" and of defining "national priorities and strategies to create a favourable environment for this evolution". ■

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COUNTDOWN TO 1998

WTO TELECOM AGREEMENT DELAYED BY U.S. STANCE ON SATELLITES

The 53 countries participating in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) negotiations on the liberalisation of telecommunications services failed to meet their April 30 deadline for completing the talks but agreed to set a new deadline for February 15, 1997.

This delay is largely due to the United States' refusal to drop their request (which was supported by none of the other 52 participants) to exclude satellite services from the agreement. The WTO talks cover both competition principles and the removal of market entry barriers such as foreign ownership restrictions.

This failure to conclude the talks is a serious setback towards the rapid creation of a worldwide environment favourable to investment in information infrastructures that support the rapid creation of the Global Information Society. But the agreement to set a new deadline may encourage some countries to improve their offer and others – particularly partners in the developing world – to submit one. ■



The exploitation of space has been an area of rising importance over the last 40 years. It started with the strive for the moon and became rapidly a major stake of defence

strategies. Today, space offers an essential element for the emergence of the information society: the exploitation of satellite systems.

Satellite systems allowing for world-wide high-speed interactive multimedia communications will indeed constitute a fundamental building block of the information infrastructure underpinning the Global Information Society. The emerging markets for satellite services and equipment also offers huge market opportunities for European industry.

As could be expected, the importance of the satellite sector in the WTO talks on telecommunications services is considerable. In the future, space will become the focus of ever increasing attention in international negotiations.

Of particular importance are satellite personal communications services (S-PCS) which enable users to place phone calls from anywhere on the globe and to constantly stay on-line via autonomous light-weight multimedia terminals. The USA have already taken important steps towards obtaining global access for fast emerging US-led S-PCS systems.

These developments underline the urgency to take decisive Community action in the field of S-PCS. Otherwise, Europe would risk falling behind its competitors in many segments of space-related activities. Unfortunately, despite the crucial importance of this sector, there is little attention for a global approach to space questions in Europe.

The proposal put forward by the Commission in November 1995 for a Council and Parliament Decision on an action at EU level in the field of S-PCS should be seen in this perspective. It aims at securing that Europe's industrial and technological potential is fully exploited and that European businesses reap the full benefits of the emerging satellite systems. Foremost, it proposes a strategy for integrating space issues into Europe's information society strategy. ■ ROBERT VERRUE, Director General DG XIII, Telecommunications, Information Market and Exploitation of Research

CONSENSUS POINTS FOR THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN INFO SOCIETY

- * The importance of open dialogue between both sides.
- * The importance of common standards to ensure interoperability.
- * A proposed workshop on satellite applications.
- * An urgent need for North/South research cooperation.
- * Creating links between EU Information Society application projects and those of Mediterranean partners.
- * Creating a high capacity Euro/Mediterranean data transmission backbone with submarine and satellite links.
- * Creating a Euro-Mediterranean 'people network' to identify potential partners and exchange information.
- * The importance of training efforts in achieving these goals, especially distance learning.

**INTERNATIONAL
DIMENSION**

THE INFORMATION SOCIETY AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

ISAD CONFERENCE DEFINES ROLE, CREATES CONSENSUS

As the global Information Society continues its rapid expansion, a series of practical economic issues are coming to light. Today's most pressing issues are:

- That there is a direct correlation between a country's economic development and the ability of its citizens and businesses to have low-cost links to the Global Information Highway.
- That there is a similar correlation between a country's or region's Gross Domestic Product and its penetration of telephone lines.
- That the world may potentially evolve toward a divide of 'have's' and 'have-nots' – with the dividing line situated between those industrialised regions that can become players in the Information Society today, and those that cannot.

For the European Union's partners in the developing world, this can mean two things: that they run the risk of being rapidly left behind if their telecommunications infrastructure is not expanded in the near future; or – given the right combination of technology and forward-looking government policy – that they can 'leapfrog' past several interim stages of technological development to become leading-edge players in the Global Information Society.

This was precisely the theme of the first international dialogue between industrialised and developing countries, initiated in Midrand, South Africa last May at the Conference on Information Society and Development (ISAD). This meeting brought together senior government officials, members of the information and communications technology industries, and representatives of 18 international institutions. Some 40 nations were represented – 30 of them developing countries.

The conference, hosted by the South African government, was the initiative of South African Executive Deputy President Thabo Mbeki as a follow-up to the G7 Conference on



the Information Society hosted by the European Commission one year ago. Speaking for his colleagues in the developing world, Mbeki stressed that each developing nation should develop an information society adapted to its own needs and specific realities.

The highlight of the conference was the consensus reached between participants, outlining the roles which governments and institutions must play to drive change forward in developing countries. It was agreed to support a series of principles sponsored by the European Commission and endorsed by the G7 last year. These are:

- That private investments will be a driver behind the deployment of a global information infrastructure.
- That governments must remove obstacles to investment by defining legislation based on competition and providing open access to the networks.
- That governments must ensure universal access to services at a reasonable cost.

Participants also said that they are committed to foster public-private partnerships, to launching or continuing national information policy planning that meets the needs of the Global Information Society, to share information on best development practices, and to launch projects in conjunction with international organisations and non-governmental organisations.

Based on its experience, the European Union has a special role to play in this process. The efforts that are currently being undertaken to develop a truly trans-European information infrastructure will serve as useful model to help its partners in the developing countries solve their problems rapidly and efficiently.

A follow-up meeting to the ISAD Conference will be held in Cairo before the end of 1996 to identify themes and projects for collaborative action at a global level. ■

Web site:
<http://www.ispo.cec.be/isad/isad.html>

**BUSINESS
UPDATE**

CONCRETE ANSWERS VIRTUAL QUEST

BUSINESS ON THE WEB CONFERENCE INTERNET TO ENTREPRENEURS



WWW as an environment for SMEs was the subject of the European Commission's Fifth International World Wide Web Conference that was recently held in Paris. The purpose of this meeting was to introduce the world of opportunities available on the World Wide Web to European entrepreneurs. In the words of Commissioner Papoutsis – to give very concrete answers to concrete questions:

- How do SMEs make profits in Europe using the WWW?
- What products and services are they selling?
- How to get started with a WWW-based business?
- How entrepreneurs can use the WWW in business and business communication?
- What pitfalls can new on-line entrepreneurs avoid?
- Is it better to build one's own server or to rent disc space?
- Where can one learn about electronic commerce and interactive advertising?
- What's new in the US on-line business spectrum?
- Can small entrepreneurs compete effectively with big business?
- What sort of entrepreneurial profile is best suited for the WWW revolution?

WWW AWARDS COVERAGE

For step-by-step coverage of the First European Business Awards given by the European Union at the conference "Doing Business on the Web", link into the ISPO WWW Home Page (<http://www.ispo.cec.be>) and point your browser at the EW3BA link, or check the Official Conference site (<http://www5conf.inria.fr>).

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WERS TO IONS

ANCE EXPLAINS IMPORTANCE OF

The conference is one of the Commission's first public attempts to stimulate the potential of the Web as an important new source of future business and profit for European Small and Medium-sized companies. But this conference achieved far more than simply talking about the importance and challenges that the World Wide Web brings to all businesses in Europe. Several live links and global discussion groups' enabled users to participate in the conference from locations across Europe. A video conference link allowed a panel discussion between speakers in Paris and some 1,500 SMEs located in different European locations and cable TV companies brought this discussion to audiences in Brussels and London.

The answer to many of the questions which a business professional can have about how companies can use the Web to provide better customer services and win new business was provided through practical examples. Ten case studies of 'live' WWW applications were presented, in examples ranging from small companies to multinationals, and from traditional industries to the latest information services. A highlight of the meeting was the Awards presented to the most innovative services and business solutions created to encourage business on the Web. Winners included members of companies of all sizes from Denmark, Germany, Spain, France, the UK and Ireland. Irish company, NUA won the Best Overall Award for its 'Web planner' which allows companies to evaluate whether or not they need a Web Site. The Jury's Wild Card award went to Botham's Bakery, a company operating from a remote UK location, that is using its Web Site to sell Wedding Cakes around the world. ■

NEWS



FOCUS ON THE CUSTOMER; NOT ONLY THE TECHNOLOGY

COMMISSIONER BANGEMANN'S RECIPE FOR EUROPEAN COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

We do not know precisely where today's information explosion will lead us. But even at this early stage, one thing is clear – the consumer will be the king of the Information Society. This was the prediction of Martin Bangemann, European Industrial Affairs Commissioner, as he opened the 10th World Congress on Technology and Services in the Information Society, held in Bilbao on June 3, 1996.

As the world moves toward a knowledge-based economy and society, he stressed that it will be market pull, not technology push that will determine which services are created, offered and used. And it is important that Europe recognises this evolution and takes up the challenge.

He remarked that – contrary to many people's opinion – it is the services sector that will be responsible for creating many of the new information tools and products which will be the foundation of tomorrow's European economy. These services will call on the communications and information technology industries, but it is ideas and services that will be the driver.

To build an awareness of this culture across European Society, Mr. Bangemann stressed the importance and urgency of training at all levels of European society. This component is important for two reasons: firstly because a critical mass of users and 'information enthusiasts' is required to create a market for the emerging on-line services. The second reason is because a 'learning society' will also ensure that Europe remains competitive, as its workforce will be better suited to deal with change and to work in new ways, as the Information Society changes the way we work and live.

Against this background, Commissioner Bangemann reminded his audience that the decisive factor in creating a useful and valuable Information Society is to keep focusing on the customer. "The service sector is the key to creating employment right across our economy – and not only in the IT and telecommunication sectors," he stressed. "The key for us is to see where new technology can be used to improve customer services and satisfaction." ■

SUCCESS STORIES

E-CASH BRINGS MONEY ON THE 'NET'

Last year's ITEA winner Digicash is successful not only in the award selection but in the marketplace as well. Deutsche Bank and the Dutch company announced that they are starting a pilot project to test the secure and anonymous transfer of money on the Internet. Digicash contributes its e-cash technology, Deutsche Bank the framework of a large commercial bank. Some weeks earlier, Merita, Finnish bank, announced a trial with e-cash. The system is also being tested by a US bank.

This new service will provide companies and private individuals with solutions needed for doing business on the Internet, thus starting electronic commerce. The project's technology is based on the e-cash system, which won Digicash the European Commission's 1995 Information Technology European Award, EITC, organised by Esprit in November 1995.

The first phase of the trial is for Deutsche Bank collaborators only and will end in the autumn. It will then be opened to a limited number of clients.

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FLEMISH MASTERS GO DIGITAL

The Flemish baroque paintings of the Alte Pinakothek in Munich are the world's first collection that are published in a colourful picture catalogue which has been produced without taking a single photo. These images were captured digitally, saved on a disc and printed using a new technology called Methodology of Art Reproduction in Colour (MARC) developed in a project supported by the EU Esprit Programme.



The entire process from the saving of the paintings' image to printing the book was digital – this technology is specially designed for the production of art books, which guarantees true colours.

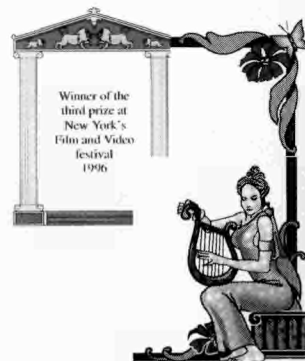
Traditional photographic technology always gave a specific 'interpretation' art reproductions, as a true colour reproduction was impossible. Another advantage of MARC is less damage to these sensitive works of art, as less flashes are needed to take pictures. A third advantage that the MARC project brings to European citizens, is the reduction of production costs for art books and catalogues, enabling more people to afford these luxurious publications.

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ESPRIT VIDEO ATTRACTS U.S. FILM CRITICS' ATTENTION

The European Union production entitled 'Esprit: Europe's Future' received third prize from the jury of the US International Film and Video Festival in New York in the category for Advertising, Sales, Sales Promotion, Marketing, and General Information. This selection was made from some 1,500 entries from 35 countries this year. It was produced by Peter Vekinis, DG III/F. ■

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COUNTDOWN TO 1998

WELCOME TO THE EUROPEAN TELE-COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

One of the first practical signs of the deregulated European telecom market is with us today. It is called the European Telecommunications Office (ETO), and gives users and telecom operators one contact point for registering services for all of Europe. The main responsibilities of this organisation, which was created in 1994, is to oversee licensing and numbering issues for all European connections. Operators from some 23 countries are members of the ETO. They have signed a Memorandum of Understanding, agreeing to a 'one-stop-shop' procedure which allows operators to receive licensing, numbering and other authorisations from a single contact point – the ETO – which authorises all operations across Europe. In the recent past, this



permission could only be obtained by applying for approval in every country where the operator wanted to provide services. The ETO is also examining the feasibility of future services through a series of working groups. Some of the topics currently being examined are the creation of a European Numbering Scheme and number portability. All details of the licensing regime of all European countries that have signed the one-stop-shopping procedure – and other useful information – can be easily consulted on the ETO database through the World Wide Web (<http://eto.dk>). ■

For further information, please contact ETO, Holsteinsgade 63, Copenhagen DK. Fax +45 35 436005

EVENTS UPDATE

SMES AND THE INFORMATION SOCIETY: BUILDING AWARENESS

More than 60% of the managers of SMEs from across Europe who participated in the IS Awareness Week 1996, responded to a questionnaire where they indicated they will take concrete action to bring the benefits of the Information Society into their way of doing business. This positive response shows the impact of the Information Society Awareness Week, which was held in May. Where two years ago this event might have been a conference located in one city, the 1996 Awareness

Week was organised in the true spirit of the Information Age – with 44 concurrent events running in parallel across the European Union, and even in other locations. The purpose of this event was to allow SMEs to see the Information Society in action through a series of practical demonstrations of new technologies and applications, and to encourage them to look at their organisations to see how they could use these new tools to give their company a competitive advantage. One of the highlights of the meeting was a direct satellite link with the Business on the Web conference in Paris. This feature was rated very highly by most Awareness Week participants. Some 4,000 businesses from across Europe attended the events, and another 8,000 consulted the special Awareness Week area created on the ISPO Web Page. The Awareness Week initiative will be continued through a series of other activities which will be held in Tunis, Bucarest and Budapest in September. ■



CALENDAR

THE BANGEMANN CHALLENGE REACHES 'PHASE 2'

Since its introduction six months ago, by the City of Stockholm, The Bangemann Challenge has attracted the interest of 23 European cities that have entered this competition to provide the most advanced information services to citizens.

The next phase of the 'Challenge' takes place at a conference planned for Barcelona on October 7-9. This event will illustrate the progress that these cities are making toward the initiative's goal of encouraging Europe's cities and regions to integrate information and communication tools at all levels of society. The conference will include presentations and working sessions where cities and regional authorities can exchange views. An exhibition showing examples of all work completed to date will also be featured. (For information and registration please see Conferences/Workshops below) ■

INFORMATION SOCIETY RELATED CONFERENCES/WORKSHOPS IN THE FORTHCOMING MONTHS

CEEC/EU Information Society Forum
Prague (Czech Rep.)
12-13 September 1996
National Information Center NIS
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Fax: +42 2 24231114
e-mail: nlpavlu@dec.nis.cz

EC DG XIII (BU 9 3/204)
Rudolf W. Meijer
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Cities and Regions Inflow 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 – Neue Wege zur Arbeit
Bonn (DE)
6-7 November 1996
Fax: +49 228 9853012
e-mail: werner.korte@empirica.de
<http://www.bonn-service.de/empirica>

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

ISPO SECRETARIAT

Free phone service

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Belgium	0800 13891
Denmark	800 1 8888
Finland	0800 113635
France	0591 7227
Germany	0130 821943
Greece	00800 3212635
Ireland	1800 553224
Italy	1678 76790
Luxembourg	0800 2929
Netherlands	060 222086
Portugal	0505 329635
Spain	900 993290
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