

**COUNTDOWN  
TO 1998**

## TELECOMS MINISTERS DISCUSS INTERNET

Europe should avoid any over-reaction that could stifle the development of new on-line services, thereby slowing down the take-off of the Information Society. This is the consensus regarding regulation of the Internet, which emerged amongst EU countries at an informal Telecommunications Council held in Bologna on April 24-25. However, EU ministers recognised that to



make the best use of the Internet a balance must be struck between avoiding restrictions and the need to establish some rules of the game, tackling issues such as privacy, the protection of intellectual property rights and the fight against criminal activities. While national legislation applies to the Internet, many ministers said that this is not a sufficient solution and that a multilateral code of conduct or international conventions within the WTO or the OECD could be an appropriate answer. The Commission was asked to prepare a study on this issue.

At the same Council Commissioner Bangemann presented the recent Commission Communication on the future development of universal service. A large majority of EU ministers agreed with the text, which defines universal service for telecommunications as access at an affordable price for all European citizens, wherever they live, to a voice telephony service over a line allowing them to use a fax machine or to hook up a computer. This definition, which is due to evolve over time, already allows citizens to participate in the Information Society by providing a connection that enables them to access on-line services on the Internet. Some ministers, however, said that universal service should cover the connection of schools, universities and hospitals to the Internet. The Council is likely to approve a Resolution soon on the Commission Communication. ■

**INFORMATION  
SOCIETY SERVICES**

## EURO-ISDN CALL FOR PAN-EUROPEAN INFO HIGHWAY

A Call for tenders recently issued by the European Commission for the development of Euro-ISDN services as a trans-European Telecommunications network, is an important step forward in bringing Europe's well-developed national telecommunications infrastructures into a common European Information Highway. ISDN refers to the Integrated Services Digital Network standard.

This Call intends to attract projects answering needs in several Members States, with services for the citizen and for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). EU funding will take the form of co-financing of studies or – in certain cases – subsidies to cover the interest on loans.



Several categories of work will be evaluated under the Call:

- Trans-European telecommunications networks for the citizen, including: healthcare; education; culture; promotion of new applications and development of cross-border applications.
- Trans-European telecommunications networks for SMEs, including: interoperability of generic services; electronic commerce; new methods in the Information Society (telework, etc).

To obtain the complete information package for this Call, please contact:  
EC DG XIII, A BU31 3/7  
Ref. EURO-ISDN I/96  
Fax: +32 2 2968393.

This newsletter is also available on the ISPO  
Web: <http://www.ispo.cec.be>



The Information Society presents us with a whole new set of challenges and opportunities. Just as two centuries ago the Industrial Revolution transformed the world,

so the Information Society will bring change in almost unprecedented measure. The opportunities it offers are limited only by the scope of our imagination – indeed as the past shows, even this limit can be exceeded: in the 1870's, businessmen could not see the point of the recently invented telephone, asking why people needed to talk to each other when the telegraph made communications so easy!

The Industrial Revolution regrettably demonstrates how easy it is for people or even nations to be left behind. It created a world of 'haves' and 'have-nots'. In the Information Society, we cannot afford to create divisions between the 'wired' and the 'un-wired.'

We have been working with our international partners to ensure that the Information Society is truly global. The ESPRIT programme and other Commission research programmes place a high priority on encouraging the involvement of partners from outside the EU. We have been actively promoting dialogue and cooperation with the Central and Eastern European Countries through the Information Society Forum. We are also committed to helping Mediterranean countries to take advantage of the 'wired' economy. The Information Society will revitalise Europe's historical links with the Mediterranean region.

The conference on the Information Society and Development, held in South Africa on 13-15 May 1996, and the conference on Cooperation with Mediterranean Countries in the Area of the Information Society, held in Rome on 30 and 31 May will prove to be pivotal in helping to ensure that the Global Information Society is not just for the few.

Stefano Micossi  
Director General DG III -  
Industry

**BUSINESS UPDATE**

**INTELLIGENT SHIPBUILDING MAKES BETTER COMPETITION**

Several projects from the EU's ESPRIT Programme have helped the Odense shipyard to transform its competitiveness through 'intelligent ship-building'. This topic is covered in detail in a video report that is now available.

Please contact the ESPRIT Help Desk:  
Tel: +32 2 2968594  
Fax: +32 2 2968388  
e-mail: [esprit@dg3.cec.be](mailto:esprit@dg3.cec.be)



**WHO'S WHO ON THE 'WEB'?**

All you need to know about Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) is now at your fingertips in an on-line Register of Information and Communication Technologies on the Web. This Web site contains complete details on every product which conforms to European Standards. It includes data on regulatory, certification and interoperability status, and information about European test services. This database will be especially useful to public procurement officials and non-European manufacturers seeking test services. It has been developed under contract to EOTC (European Organisation for Testing and Certification) by DG III/B (Standardisation).

Visit the site at:  
<http://www.level7.co.uk/~eotc/>  
For further information contact: [postmaster@eotc.be](mailto:postmaster@eotc.be)  
or Tel: +32 2 5024141

**THE MARKET**

**WELCOME TO THE AGE OF ELECTRONIC COMMERCE**

Never before have the world's established social, market and financial structures been set for such rapid and drastic change. The primary reason for this change can be described in two words: "electronic commerce".

Electronic commerce has grown quietly over the past decade. Most consumers have noticed this in the form of banking and credit card services that allow consumers to purchase goods or retrieve cash in foreign countries. But in the past three years – more precisely since the creation of the World Wide Web – thousands of new types of electronic services have been introduced around the world every month.

This new mode of business is good news for innovators. Companies are using it to create direct and fast feedback links to customers – who can now access product information, choose and pay for products and access help-files by placing a local phone call in any city in the world. Others decentralise their activities, in many cases allowing employees to work from home.

For consumers it means that with a click of the mouse they can, for example, purchase clothes, CDs, books, publications and Belgian chocolate, locate specialised consultants, or simply exchange information with anyone in any part of the world.

For retailers or small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the age of electronic commerce means that small is beautiful. Today, a small company can compete on equal terms with competitors many times its size by using information tools in an innovative way, to promote and sell products. On the other hand global competition affects every business – even in their own backyard.

To date, the growth of electronic commerce has evolved on the

world's private networks – such as Minitel in France or the American CompuServe – where Europe is leading the pack. The near future will see an increasing trend toward the use of open networks, an area where the United States is leading. A survey recently published by the Gartner Group reveals that consumers will use multiple access points to the information highway to do their shopping – including interactive television, Internet services and access to other on-line service providers.

While figures are difficult to obtain in this fast-changing market, some first indications from the United States are that electronic commerce will grow by 25% per year – from 4.5% of total to 16% by the year 2000. This represents a total yearly value of some \$1,650 billion in the United States alone. A clearer picture of the Europe's emerging electronic commerce trends will be available in the coming months.

The social aspect of electronic commerce is an important consideration for Europe. It is expected that these new ways of working will have an important impact on competitiveness – and give smaller companies the opportunity to create employment in a range of new sectors.

As the technology tools needed to conduct electronic commerce become cheaper and easier to use, the winners will be those users with the perspective and



**ELECTRONIC COMMERCE**

- Business to consumer
- Business-to-business
- Business to administrations

**MAIN CATEGORIES**

- Tele-shopping, tele-banking, tele-services, entertainment.
- Services, contacts, on-line directories, Electronic Document Interchange.
- Electronic procurement and tendering, rapid access to commercial information, tax, customs, registration data, partner search, technology transfer, etc.

insight to apply them in new ways to serve the market. After all, is this not precisely what innovation is all about?

For further information, please contact:  
<http://www.cordis.lu/esprit/home.html>

## IMPACT ON SOCIETY

# 'IS FORUM': A THINK TANK ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY



How will the emerging Information Society change our lives? How must we adapt to address them? What social impact will the

Information Society have on the citizens and businesses of Europe? Examining these issues and understanding the challenges and opportunities that the Information Society brings European citizens is the task of the Information Society Forum.

The Forum is a 'think tank' created by the European Commission, and composed of some 124 prominent people that represent a cross-section of Europe's society, industrial and governmental spheres. Each Forum Member has been appointed for three years.

The yearly work programme for the Forum includes Plenary Sessions, six working groups, and the production of an annual report that details the progress made toward understanding issues related to the Information Society. The report will be published by the Commission.

### Working Group 1:

The impact on the economy and employment.

### Working Group 2:

Basic social and democratic values in the virtual community.

### Working Group 3:

The influence on public services.

### Working Group 4:

Education, learning and training in the information society.

### Working Group 5:

The cultural dimension and the future of media.

### Working Group 6:

Sustainable development, technology and infrastructure.

The findings of these working groups, and other discussion points highlighted by the Forum will be adopted at the Forum's Plenary Session in June and published in an annual report in July. The progress of discussions covered in the Information Society Forum can be followed on the Internet site on the World Wide Web <http://www.ispo.cec.be> or from the Information Society Secretariat: Fax: +32 2 295 06 88, e-mail: [fdcr@dg13.cec.be](mailto:fdcr@dg13.cec.be)

## SUCCESS STORIES

### ON-LINE RESEARCH RESULTS: EUROPEAN COMPANIES COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

*New service to give direct access to research results, at the click of a mouse.*

European companies looking to improve their competitive advantage by identifying potential partners or searching for the most recent innovations in the area of information technology will soon have a powerful new resource at their fingertips – the PROSOMA esprit service created by the European Commission.

PROSOMA esprit is a multimedia search tool and on-line information service which will give all interested companies direct access to the results of projects funded under the Commission's ESPRIT Programme. The partner search facility includes profiles of all companies active in the ESPRIT projects. The service is managed by DG III (Industry).

### Multimedia Showcase

An important part of PROSOMA will be the Multimedia Showcase. This Multimedia Showcase will present on-line companies that have participated in ESPRIT projects. Film clips, images, animation, interviews and other documentation introduce ESPRIT partners and their expertise. In its first stage, a CD-ROM tested the feasibility of the new service, its flexibility as a multifaceted presentation addressing different audiences, and the added value of a multimedia tool for explaining technical results to a non-technical customer. The service will be available on-line on the World Wide Web and also as a CD-ROM.

Contact: Peter Baur  
Fax: +32 2 2969229  
e-mail: [techtrans.esprit@dg3.cec.be](mailto:techtrans.esprit@dg3.cec.be)  
<http://www.cordis.lu/esprit/src/techxfer.htm>



### A CD-ROM WINDOW ON 19TH CENTURY EUROPE

An interactive multimedia CD-ROM recently produced by a multi-country team of information technology companies and public authorities – and supported by the European Commission's IMPACT Programme (Information Market Policy Actions Programme) – gives us a unique view of the culture of 19th century Europe, as seen through the life of the well-known children's author, Hans Christian Andersen.



The disc traces the life and work of Andersen, by mixing animated clips from his best-known tales with accounts of his travels across Europe. The disc is a learning experience for both children and adults, allowing the user to travel through the author's stories and participate on his trips to various European locations. This electronic document is currently available in Danish, English, French, German, Italian and Spanish. The project team includes partners such as IBM Denmark, the Hans Christian Andersen Museum in Copenhagen, the Danish Ministry of Education, the Odense City Municipality and specialist companies from Italy and Spain.

Contact: Marianne Hoegsted, ORFEUS (DA)  
Fax: +45 86 229956

### MULTIMEDIA TRAVEL AGENCY

*In the Commission's ESPRIT Programme, a prototype travel agency using multimedia has been developed.*

The service in travel agencies can be improved by using new technologies. The prototype travel agency, using multimedia, provides access to complex, powerful computer tools. Reusable customer information is stored in an integrated client file, including the customer's photo and travel preferences. Videos can be selected from a catalogue and edited into an on-line presentation for the customer.

The system uses voice recognition and logical task structuring to ensure that the customer's requirements are met.

For further information contact  
Cap Gemini Innovation:  
Tel: +33 1 49105150  
Fax: +33 1 49100615  
e-mail: [laurence.grumbach@cginn.n.cgs.fr](mailto:laurence.grumbach@cginn.n.cgs.fr)

**CALENDAR**

**HIGH QUALITY EUROPEAN MULTIMEDIA**

A Call for Proposals is likely to be published by mid-June 1996 for INFO 2000, a European Commission programme that will stimulate the development of the European multimedia content industry and encourage the use of multimedia content.

The Call will cover proposals for the establishment of a Multimedia Information Demonstration and Support Network (MIDAS-TEXT) and pilot projects aimed at boosting the production of high-quality European content in four areas: economic exploitation of Europe's cultural heritage; information services for business; geographic information; and scientific, technical and medical information.

INFO2000 Central Office  
EC DG XIII-E-3  
Fax: +352 401162234  
WWW: <http://www.echo.lu>

**CREATING CLOSER LINKS WITH CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE**

*Information Society Forum, Prague, September 1996.* The Second Forum on the Information Society, jointly organised by the European Commission and its partner countries in Central and Eastern Europe (CEEC), will be held on September 12 and 13, 1996 in Prague.

This event brings together members of Europe's business and research community with CEEC ministers and European Union Commissioners to discuss common strategies and the latest developments in the rapidly-evolving Information Society.

The Forum's primary objectives are to create links between the actors that are building the Information Society as some Central European partner countries prepare for accession to the Union. To achieve this, the conference is encouraging cooperation between industry, research organisations, financiers and government authorities in the EU and the partner countries.



Specific topics to be discussed include: Integrating components of the Information Society into the "pre-accession" strategies of the EU and its partners; and facilitating access to information on EU Information and Communications Technologies programmes, projects and funding.

For further information please see "Conferences/Workshops" opposite.

**FIRST CONFERENCE ON TELEMATICS BETWEEN ADMINISTRATIONS**

How will public administrations adapt to the Information Society and what role will they play?

How can administrations use information tools to network with their European counterparts, provide more efficient services to their citizens, and become key players in European integration?

These questions are the key themes of the first conference to be held by the European Commission's IDA (Interchange of Data between Administrations) Programme in Rome on June 20 and 21.

For the first time, the Rome conference will bring together members of the information technology and telematics industries and officials from public administrations across Europe. Leading information strategists and managers from Europe and the United States will address the conference. Participants will be invited to exchange their views in a series of workshops and panel discussions.

For information and registration please see "Conferences/Workshops" opposite.

**INFORMATION SOCIETY RELATED CONFERENCES/WORKSHOPS IN THE FORTHCOMING MONTHS**

**10th Information Technology World Congress**  
Bilbao (E)  
3-5 June 1996  
Congress Secretariat of the 10th World Congress  
Feria Internacional de Bilbao  
Fax: +34 4 4276557  
e-mail: [itcongress@sedisi.es](mailto:itcongress@sedisi.es)  
<http://www.itcongress.sedisi.es>

**Economics of the Information Society – Human Capital in the Information Society**  
Helsinki (Finland)  
6-7 June 1996  
ETLA Research Institute of the Finnish Economy  
Fax: +358 0 601753

**Information technologies in the Human Services: Dreams and Realities**  
Rovaniemi (Finland)  
11-14 June 1996  
National R&D Centre for Welfare and Health  
Fax: +358 0 3967 2001  
e-mail: [husita@stakes.fi](mailto:husita@stakes.fi)

**Information Retrieval and Neurosciences**  
Brussels (B)  
15-16 June 1996  
CID – Centre de Hautes Études Internationales d'Informatique Documentaire  
Fax: +33 1 45268445  
e-mail: [cid@nuri.inria.fr](mailto:cid@nuri.inria.fr)

**SMEs in a Learning Society**  
London (UK)  
20-21 June 1996  
University of North London  
J. Mitra/M. Lapetra  
Fax: +44 171 7537064  
e-mail: [m.lapetra/j.mitra@unl.ac.uk](mailto:m.lapetra/j.mitra@unl.ac.uk)

**IDA '96: Public Administrations and the Information Society**  
Rome (I)  
20-21 June 1996  
Finsiel secretariat  
Fax: +39 6 22715555  
e-mail: [ida.conf@finsiel.it](mailto:ida.conf@finsiel.it)  
IDA  
Fax: +32 2 2990286  
e-mail: [ida-central@dg3.cec.be](mailto:ida-central@dg3.cec.be)  
Web Site  
<http://www.ispo.cec.be/ida/>

**Access to Public Information: A Key to Commercial Growth and Electronic Democracy**  
Stockholm (S)  
27-28 June 1996  
SCIC European Commission  
J-P Scheins  
Fax: +32 2 2953736  
e-mail: [jean-pierre.scheins@mhsg.cec.be](mailto:jean-pierre.scheins@mhsg.cec.be)  
<http://www.echo.lu/legal/stockholm/welcome.html>

**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](mailto:nlpavlu@dec.nis.cz)  
EC DG XIII (BU 9 3/204)  
Rudolf W. Meijer  
Fax: +32 2 2961716  
e-mail: [rme@dg13.cec.be](mailto:rme@dg13.cec.be)

**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](mailto:tec@esc-grenoble.fr)

**ISPO SECRETARIAT**

**Free phone service**

Austria	0660 5835
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
Sweden	020 791635
United Kingdom	0800 962114

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or +32 2 2968900

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or +32 2 2994180

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