

SOCIAL ASPECTS



THE NEXT STEPS TOWARD AN 'IS'

SOCIAL DIMENSION

NEW FLYNN/BANGEMANN COMMUNICATION OUTLINES STRATEGY AND 60 KEY ACTIONS

The social dimension of the Information Society must be further strengthened, so that citizens in the European Union can take full advantage of the opportunities that the Information Society can offer - in terms of job creation, prosperity and quality of life. This is the message of the European Commission's most recent Communication which discusses the complex issue of the social and labour market aspects of the Information Society (IS).

Entitled *The Social and Labour Market Dimension of the Information Society: People First-The Next Steps*, the Communication follows on from the Green Paper, *Living and Working in the Information Society, People First* which was adopted by the Commission last year. This Communication takes the discussion one step further, by proposing a strategy for integrating these social imperatives into Europe's efforts to develop the Information Society - nationally, across Europe and internationally.

Presenting the Communication, Pdraig Flynn, European Commissioner responsible for Employment and Social Affairs, and Martin Bangemann, European Commissioner responsible for Industrial Affairs, summarised the progress made to date on this effort. In examining the challenges to reconciling these interrelated social, economic and technological goals, the Communication identifies some 60 actions which should be taken in EU initiatives, policies and programmes to drive the process forward.

THE STRATEGY CALLS FOR PROGRESS IN FOUR MAIN AREAS

- Public policies for the Information Society should aim at improving democracy and social justice, strengthening the capacity of employment creation, enhancing equal

opportunities between women and men, supporting people with disabilities and improving the quality and efficiency of public administration.

- Access to infrastructure, applications and services. Public policies can help make an 'inclusive' Information Society reality. Member States' responsibility is to create strategies that ensure all citizens easy and cheap access to information services.
- Balancing flexibility for enterprises with security for workers. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) offer a great potential for productivity and prosperity, based on new ways of organising work. This requires a new balance between flexibility for enterprises and security for workers. The Commission will stimulate further social dialogue to facilitate structural change and to develop a new framework for work organisation.
- Turning Information Society opportunities into jobs. The employment potential of the workforce must be improved, to improve the functioning of the labour market. The Commission will support a new culture of life-long learning and promote the development of human resources, in particular through the European Social Fund.

TO ACHIEVE THESE OBJECTIVES, THE COMMUNICATION OUTLINES ACTIONS BY THE EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS AT DIFFERENT LEVELS

- Actions to encourage Member States to implement the social and employment aspects of their strategies and programmes at national, regional and local levels. This can be done through annual round table reviews with the relevant authorities, for example. These efforts are already in progress in the form of Regional Information Society Initiatives (RISI); and the Territorial Pacts, which could be extended to include the Information Society dimension in local development.
- Efforts to integrate the Information Society dimension into all areas of European social policy. This will ensure that social needs are fully taken into consideration. Here, on the one hand, the contributions of the Structural Funds under the different objectives and the Community Initiative ADAPT and, on the other hand, the Commission's RTD Programmes will be enhanced.
- Efforts to promote, the development of technologies that strengthen social cohesion and improve living, learning and working conditions for all groups in society. This will be done through various international fora, and in line with the conclusions of the Ministerial Declaration on Global Information Networks adopted in Bonn in July 1997.



Professor Luc Soete
Director, Maastricht
Economic Research Unit on
Innovation and Technology
(MERIT), University of
Maastricht (Netherlands)
Chairman of the High Level
Expert Group on social and
societal aspects of the
Information Society.

FORGING EUROPE'S IDENTITY IN THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

How does one define the Information Society? Many definitions come to mind. The High Level Expert Group defined the Information Society as "the society which is currently being put into place and involves a general utilisation of techniques of information and data storage and transmission at low costs. Such generalisation of information and data use is being accompanied by organisational, commercial, social and legal innovations that will profoundly change life at work and in society." The increasingly widespread use of information and communication technologies raises a new set of policy changes and challenges.

The information and communication technologies on which the emerging Information Society is built are 'pervasive' - they are very flexible and truly everywhere. What is valid for one industry may not be true for another; what seems appropriate to one group, region or country may not suit another. So, just as there are different models of industrialised societies, we can expect different models of information societies.

Looking toward a definition of the European Information Society, it seems appropriate to emphasise the importance of the social dimension - in line with the White Paper on Growth, Competitiveness and Employment. As the High Level Expert Group's report stresses, a strong ethos of solidarity can be a foundation for the European Information Society. This will certainly not be an easy goal to achieve as our traditional welfare state structures will require substantial change.

But a European Information Society must not be strictly limited to a particular social dimension. The foundation of a 'social' Information Society will be the rebuilding of social policies that focus on European competitiveness and cohesion rather than purely on industrial development, or regulatory harmonisation advantages associated with economic and monetary integration. The true challenge of the European Information Society is the search for competitiveness based on cultural, educational and social variety. So the emerging Information Society signals the need for truly new economic integration. This process no longer emphasises the need for standardisation, product/service harmonisation, access to 'open' infrastructure,

BUILDING THE MARITIME INFORMATION SOCIETY

MARIS - the Maritime Information Society Initiative - was created to illustrate and promote useful applications of Information and Communication Technologies in the maritime sector. The initiative is jointly led by the European Commission and the Canadian government.

According to MARIS coordinators, the purpose of the MARIS projects is to raise awareness of new types of technologies and services among the potential user communities. A parallel goal is to encourage information technology companies to make use of the results produced in these communities.

An important component in the MARIS approach is that it is 100% user-driven. The project areas and the focus for the applications are defined according to needs specified by users in the maritime sector. As a result of this pragmatic approach, most of the ICT applications that have been developed are based on existing technology and on technical infrastructures and telecom services that are being used today in the sector. MARIS seeks to link existing national systems to create a global maritime networks.

The initiative will progress over the coming year, culminating with the presentation of MARIS projects to the public during the World EXPO'98 in Lisbon.

MARIS is currently organised in four project areas:

- **MARSOURCE** concentrates on creating a fisheries and oceans information network. Existing databases will be interconnected to allow sharing of information on oceanography, fisheries and scientific research. The project aims to improve transparency in the fisheries sector at world level for the benefit of the public authorities and private operators concerned.



The MARSOURCE Internet site (<http://www.marsource.maris.int/>) provides the fishing community with real-time market data and other useful information.

- **MARTRANS** is setting up a port logistics information network. This information service will provide real-time information on the movement of cargo and vessels, including worldwide tracing and tracking services. This rapid access to information will bring more efficiency to the logistic chain and improve the competitiveness of ports.

- **MARVEL** is aimed at developing technologies for the intelligent manufacturing of ships and other maritime systems. Under this project, shipyards and their suppliers will be linked into one worldwide network. Related projects, currently running under the EU ESPRIT programme are defining, specifying and implementing communication tools for business processes in shipbuilding, ship surveillance and ship operation. Similar projects exist in the United States and Japan.

- **SAFEMAR** is developing a ship reporting system for vessels to support the implementation of the various international conventions and resolutions. This project is creating a Vessel Traffic Management and Information System (VTMIS), which will also include electronic chart features.

Recently a MARIS regional network was created with Bilbao, Bremen, Genoa and Helsinki as founding members. This network will not only serve as an interface between local maritime players and the global state-of-the-art in advanced ICT, but will also help to write the success stories that show how maritime industries can benefit from the Information Society. ■

Contact:
Ronald Vopel, EC DG III/D-5
Tel: +32 2 2991820
Fax: +32 2 2967014
e-mail: maris@dg3.cec.be
URL: <http://www.maris.int/>

More information on the G7 Pilot Projects is available at:
<http://www.ispo.cec.be/g7/projidx.html>



NETD@YS GETS SET FOR ITS BIG EVENT- OCTOBER 18-25

Schools, companies and education professionals - are you listed on the Netd@ys site?

In recent months, there has been much talk about bringing schools into the Information Society. The Netd@ys Europe 1997 initiative is doing something about it today. Since its beginning as a European Union-funded initiative several months ago, Netd@ys has rapidly become the focal point for the contacts and ideas on education in the Information Society. The Netd@ys Internet site is a wealth of information. Point your browser to <http://netdays.eun.org/aait/en.html> to tap into the Netd@ys on-line weekly newsletter; an electronic documentation centre listing projects in schools across Europe; links to the European Schools Net; and links to all educational sites and resources on the Internet. The European Commission's goal in supporting Netd@ys is to promote European school projects on the

Internet, encourage public/private partnerships, and support the establishment of a European Schoolnet. The next important event on the calendar is the Netd@ys Europe 1997 awareness week, which will take place between 18 and 25 October. This event will include a variety of over 300 activities related to education in the Information Society. All interested schools are encouraged to register their Web sites and Internet projects in the database - see the Netdays Home Page. Businesses are welcome to register their interest in sponsoring specific projects. This is the Netd@ys Europe 1997 Web Site. Why not stop by and have a look around! ■

More details on Netd@ys Europe (including a full list of events) can be found at: <http://netdays.eun.org>
Commission contact:
Alain Dumort/Jimmy Jamar
New Technologies Sector
DG XXII
Tel: +32 2 2952082
Fax: +32 2 2967012
e-mail:
Alain.Dumort@dg22.cec.be
or
Joseph.Jamar@dg22.cec.be

EDITORIAL continued from page 1

and improved transparency of markets - including public procurement across Europe. It recognises and nurtures the many differences in taste, culture and talent. In this spirit the Single European Market should not be limited a common economic space of 320 million European consumers and customers. Its value is also the enormous potential of diversity in taste, creative talent, cultural and linguistic differences within the boundaries of a European Union. To what extent the Information Society can transform this 'productive' potential of European variety into competitive advantage is probably the most central question to

be addressed in the coming years. Europe's regions are the natural place where this variety can express itself most clearly. For this reason, regional policy aspects of the emerging Information Society are, in my view, critical. Not just because of the newly-created potential for bridging space and distance - thanks to information and communication technologies - but also because each region is the best location where variety can par excellence be nurtured, enhanced and integrated into the wider European and global community. ■

The final report of the High Level Expert Group is available on:
<http://www.ispo.cec.be/hleg/Building.html>

CALLS FOR PROPOSALS



CALL FOR PROPOSALS: NEW WAYS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN

Bringing together technologists, educators, academia, and even ... toy-makers

"Experimental School Environments" is the title of a new 13 million ECU research initiative launched by Esprit, the European Commission's Information Technology (IT) research programme. Its aim is to encourage the development of new teaching tools and educational technologies for children between four and eight years old, and to help these children develop key skills such as creative problem solving, working in teams, learning to learn and making learning fun. The "Experimental School Environments" Call for Proposals was published on September 16, 1997. It is the result of broad consultations with members of the education community, industry, and technologists as well as a number of pioneer organisations ranging from "digital" cities to visionary toy-makers. Developing these new teaching tools for the four to eight year-old age group is a special challenge, as this is the period when children's faculties such as sight, sound, touch and smell are brought to life in the classroom. Through this initiative, the Commission hopes to spark the creation of new tools that are game-like or toy-like, portable or even wearable. They could enable both one-to-one and group interactions between pupils in one or more schools and the outside world. The important criterion is that these tools should embody a new relationship between technology and learning. To encourage maximum

creativity, the specifications for the Call for proposals are kept deliberately open-ended. The European Commission hopes to attract applications from consortia that bring together technologists from industry and academia with experts from schools - or creative organisations - such as toy-makers - that would not normally become involved in IT research. ■

For more information on the Experimental School Environments initiative, point your browser to <http://www.i3net.org/schools/> or contact the Esprit Long Term Research unit Norman.Sadeh@dg3.cec.be
Tel: +32 2 2953287
Fax: +32 2 2968390
Jakub.Wejchert@dg3.cec.be
Tel: +32 2 2968032
Fax: +32 2 2968390

For more details on Esprit point your browser to: <http://www.cordis.lu/esprit/home.html>

PUBLICATION

FREE PRACTICAL GUIDE ON THE 'IS'

What is the Information Society? What does it offer me? How can I use it in my private or professional life?

The answers to these and many more practical questions - including case studies and related information - are clearly explained in "How to benefit from the Information Society", a new publication available free of charge from the European Commission's Directorate General XIII. ■

To get a copy, contact the DG XIII Information and Communications Unit,
Fax: +32 2 2999499
e-mail: info-13@bxi.dg13.cec.be

facilitate access to the institutions for the public and for organisations. ■

The document is available at: <http://www.ispo.cec.be/infosoc/legreg/infosoc.html> or can be ordered by fax (+32 2 2969771) or e-mail: valerie.powers@dg5.cec.be

SOCIAL ASPECTS

continued from page 1

- To enhance cooperation with other EU institutions, in particular with the European Parliament. Some useful actions in this area can be to draft a joint communication and information strategy to

SUCCESS STORIES

HELPING VIDEO CONFERENCING GET ITS MESSAGE ACROSS

SAVIE makes teachers more savvy on distance learning

Video conferencing has long been used as a communications medium in the business community, but only recently has the Information Society helped bring this medium to the educational community at a reasonable cost.

To encourage the use of video conferencing in Europe's education and training communities, the EU-funded SAVIE project (Support Action to Facilitate the Use of Video Conferencing in Education), offers orientation and training sessions for beginners and advanced video conferencing users. SAVIE is a part of the Commission's Telematics Applications Programme.

Project leaders, from the University of Leuven in Belgium and Helsinki University, explain that using video conferencing as a teaching and training tool is "just as easy or difficult as teaching in any environment". Once a teacher is comfortable with the new video teaching techniques it's the same as speaking to a class of pupils. The only difference is that the "classroom" can span thousands of kilometres.

The SAVIE team's goal is to spread the video-teaching word across Europe. It is expected that this new technique will be used for information sharing-between schools and universities, for training in companies, and for the important new areas of distance and life-long learning - which the European Union has identified as a priority.

The project has created a series of information tools to help introduce the concept of video conferencing:

- **Video training modules**
A 4-hour course, consisting of a handbook and a video tape.
- **Live video conference training**
An 8-hour distance-tutored course. This consists of two video conferencing sessions taught by a tutor experienced in using video conferencing in an educational context.
- **European Tutoring network**
The SAVIE Europe-wide tutoring

network supports the 8-hour training course. Tutors belong to a range of education and training institutions and represent a variety of teaching backgrounds. Users can choose those tutors that best meet their teaching and language needs, and their timetable.

- **Internet link for training information**

Pupils can also benefit from SAVIE's web-based information resource. The site offers practical information on teaching and learning in the video conferencing environment, and links to other useful sites. A directory of European institutions that use video conferencing for educational and training purposes will soon be listed on the site.

- **'Desktop' courses**

Multi-point and desktop video conferencing courses that can be accessed through a personal computer will soon be available.

The video and live courses are available in English, French and Dutch; Spanish, Finnish and German versions will be available in the near future.

The project team reports that first results have been very positive. Training packages have been successfully tested with over 70 users in Belgium, UK, Finland, The Netherlands and France. Feedback showed a strong preference for the use of real-life teachers as tutors. Another advantage highlighted by these users is the possibility of hands-on use of the video conferencing system right from the start. ■

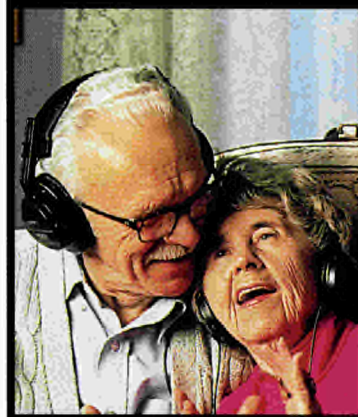
SAVIE
Audiovisual Service, Katholieke
Universiteit Leuven
Tel: +32 16 329250
Fax: +32 16 329298
e-mail: savie@avd.kuleuven.ac.be
[www.http://www.cet.hut.fi/savie](http://www.cet.hut.fi/savie)



ISPO CORNER

A PROMISE OF ACCESS AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Bringing the benefits of the Information Society to older people and disabled people
 The EU-funded PROMISE project is compiling an information resource of initiatives, project examples and good practice that aim to bring the benefits of the Information Society to Europe's older people and disabled people. This resource will soon be published as a set of case studies designed for broad dissemination. It will provide a valuable source of experience on how the applications and services of the Information Society can be made available and accessible to these large groups of European citizen's, and how they can improve their participation in society and quality of life. The examples included cover areas such as interpersonal communication (by voice, text, video, symbols and other media), solutions to accessibility issues (ranging from well-designed telephones to Web pages suitable for visually



impaired people), new services and supports (such as tele-shopping and telecare) and new opportunities to participate in work and education (such as teleworking and distance learning). The draft case studies will provide an important input to the PROMISE Colloquium 27-28 October, 1997, at which representatives of user organisations and policy-makers from across the European Union will participate. The colloquium will be a useful meeting point for awareness-raising, exchange of experiences and discussion of ways to further the inclusion of disabled people and older people in Information Society developments. It will be also be an ideal moment to form partnerships and develop information and awareness actions in the Member States. ■

*For further information about Promise and its activities, contact: Work Research Centre, Ireland Kevin Cullen
 Tel: +353 1 6683988
 Fax: +353 1 6683142
 e-mail: wrc@compuserve.com
 For further information on the Colloquium see the Calendar*

INFORMATION SERVICES

TRACK TODAY'S TRENDS WITH THE 'IS' EXPERTS

Introducing the ISPO Discussion lists

- What do the following have in common?
- A Telemedicine project initiated in Israel, with partners across the Mediterranean basin, looking for partners..
 - The Telematics branch of a UK town council interested in exchanging experience and cooperating with other councils.
 - A French specialist looking to compare EU and US IS interconnection legislation.
 - A psychologist interested in discussing the social and organisational impact of teleworking.
 - A senior Slovenian official responsible for science and technology.
 - A Belgian specialist in machine translation and computer-assisted translation.
 - A regional council in Scotland, interested in creating links between SMEs.

Each of these Information Society experts and enthusiasts participates in the ISPO discussion List - an on-line forum at the ISPO Internet Web Site. Created two years ago - at the same time as the ISPO Web Site - this is probably the first, and certainly one of the most popular electronic areas dedicated to debating issues related to the Information Society. To date the ISPO List counts some 900 members. The ISPO Web site also offers forums where other topical subjects are discussed, including: Electronic Democracy; the interconnection of public administrations and electronic commerce. If you're looking for contacts, information, the answer to a question. Or if you simply want to track today's trends in the Information Society, why not come by the ISPO Web Site and drop in on one of our Discussion Lists. ■

Further information is available at: <http://www.ispo.cec.be/ispo/lists.html> See you there soon ...

Information Society News

is available free of charge. For a free subscription to the magazine write with full details to: EUR-OP (*Information Society News*) 2, rue Mercier (MER 193-195) L-2985 Luxembourg

For any subscription amendments please return to EUR-OP the address enclosed with your newsletter, or quote your subscriber number (8 figures printed on the left next to your name and address) on your correspondence.

Please note: EUR-OP regrets it cannot acknowledge receipt of your request or enter into correspondence about subscriptions.

To receive back copies of the magazine (if still available), and any other enquiries, please write to: ISPO, BU 24 2/778, rue de la Loi 200, B-1049 Brussels e-mail: ispo@ispo.cec.be

This newsletter and previous issues are also available on the web at: <http://www.ispo.cec.be/ispo/newsletter/index.html>

CALENDAR

Promise Colloquium

Brussels (BE)
 27-28 October 1997
 Maria Brättemark
 Tel: +32 2 2824604
 Fax: +32 2 2824609
 e-mail: info@edf.arc.be
<http://www.stakes.fi/promise/>
 (details on PROMISE project in article on this page)

Online Educa Berlin International conference on technology in distance learning

Berlin (DE)
 29-31 October
 ICEF
 Fax: +49 30 3249833
 e-mail: 100770.3137@compuserve.com

Dismantling the barriers to global electronic commerce

OECD Turku, Finland
 19-21 November 1997
 Ms. Elizabeth Lynch
 Fax: +33 1 45249695
 e-mail: Elizabeth.Lynch@oecd.org
<http://www.oecd.org/dsti/iccp/e-comm/index.htm>

European IT Conference & Exhibition EITC 97

Brussels (B)
 24-26 November
 EC DG III - ESPRIT
 Fax: +32 2 2991926
 e-mail: eitc97@dg3.cec.be
<http://www.cordis.lu/esprit/src/eitc97.htm>

3rd European digital Cities Conference

Berlin (D)
 1-2 December 1997
 Eric Mino
 EDC project coordination office
 Fax: +32 2 5520889
 e-mail: telecities@mcr1.poptel.org.uk
<http://www.edc.eu.int>

Euromedia 98

Leicester (UK)
 5-7 January 1998
 Philippe Geril
 Fax: +32-9-223 49 41
 e-mail: philippe.geril@rug.ac.be
<http://hobbes.rug.ac.be/~sccs/conf/eurcmd98/>

European Telematics - Advancing the Information Society

Barcelona (E)
 4-7 February 1998
 European Commission
 Telematics Applications Programme
 Fax: +32 2 7213357
 e-mail: conference@cscdc.be
<http://www.concord.cscdc.be/barcelona/announce.html>

Information Society News (IS News) is published under the responsibility of ISPO. Neither the European Commission nor any person acting on its behalf is responsible for the use which might be made of the information in this Newsletter.

ISPO SECRETARIAT

Free phone service

Austria	0660 5835
Belgium	0800 13891
Denmark	800 1 8888
Finland	0800 113635
France	0800 91 7227
Germany	0130 821943
Greece	08000 3212635
Ireland	1800 553224
Italy	1678 76790
Luxembourg	0800 2929
Netherlands	0800 0222086
Portugal	0505 329635
Spain	900 993290
Sweden	020 791635
United Kingdom	0800 962114

Payphone: +32 2 2968800
 or +32 2 2968900

Fax: +32 2 2994170
 or +32 2 2994180

e-mail: ispo@ispo.cec.be

World Wide Web:
<http://www.ispo.cec.be>

Mail:
 Information Society Project Office
 BU 24 0/74, rue de la Loi 200,
 B-1049 Brussels