'IS' WILL CREATE JOBS. . . IF EU POLICY FOLLOWS QUICKLY

The Information Society presents Europe with a unique opportunity to create sustainable economic growth, to improve competitiveness, promote inclusion and cohesion, and deliver a base of steady good quality employment. These are the conclusions of a recent report from the European Commission to the Council of Ministers entitled "Job Opportunities and the Information Society".

But these advantages must be earned, the report cautions. Jobs are being created today, but the Information Society's full economic potential will be realised only if the policies are coordinated, and focused at making the Information Society work for people and the economy.

BIG STRIDES TAKEN

The report concludes that, today, the EU generally lacks coherence and direction in its Information Society policies. Having said this, it goes on to welcome the big strides that have been taken to date – such as efforts to liberalise telecom and related markets, simplify the business environment, develop an advanced technology base, promote partnerships for work organisation, and to stimulate a risk capital market.

Deeper integration is now needed, and the report recommends six areas for priority

action. It calls on EU decision makers to create a climate that:

- Revitalises the enterprise cultures in the EU.
- Creates a robust yet flexible IS policy framework.
- Drives the expansion of the Information Society by Public Sector example.
- Encourages investments in technology, research and organisational change and development to maximise the IS' potential.
- Ensures that all of society has access to IS tools – including schools, universities, businesses, small companies, and local communities.
- Invests in people's employability and adaptability.

EFFORT MUST BE SUSTAINED

The EU Member States are the prime movers that will put these priorities into action, the report stresses. And the effort must be sustained – "a piecemeal effort is not enough to remove the obstacles to progress," it says.

ACTIONS IN THREE AREAS

The Commission recommends actions in three areas to bring the Information Society's job creation potential to life.

1. Each Member State should take account of the above priority areas for action in its Information Society straegy. Also top priority should be given to swift implementation of EU initiatives directly related to the Information Society. A high level coordination group has been set up to pursue these goals.

2. There is a particular role for the Information Society Industries to show leadership. They are in the forefront of the provision of the tools and services for all the other industry sectors.

3. The Social Partners have a particular role because gaining benefits from the Information Society will need to be agreed by both sides of industry taking full account of the work place environment.

As well as the consultative arrangements with the parties directly concerned, the Commission intends to place all of these contributions on a web site for public consultation, and publish a report of recommendations for action in all relevant policy areas. These results will be presented to the Helsinki European Council in December 1999. ■

CREATING AN INFORMATION SOCIETY FOR EUROPE

The Information Society Technologies (IST) Programme support collaborative projects involving organisations of every kind, in industry, academia, public sector bodies and research institutions – and a first call for proposals will be issued on 17 March.

The Programme has a budget of 3.6 billion Euro for 1998-2002. This makes it the largest component of the European Commission's Fifth Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development.
Its size and scope reflect the pervasiveness of Information and Communication Technologies in our society, and the rapidity of developments in the technologies and infrastructures themselves. This means that continuous efforts are required in research, technological development, demonstration and in the support of technology up-take.

The structure and content of the Programme reflect the integration and convergence across information processing, communications and media and the breaking down of the cultural and technological barriers that have previously separated the telecommunications, media and Information Technology sectors. The overall budget is allocated to four inter-related Key Actions that define specific objectives and research priorities:

- Systems and Services for the Citizen (646 million Euro)
- Multimedia Content and Tools (564 million Euro)
- New Methods of Working and Electronic Commerce (547 million Euro)

- Essential Technologies and Infrastructures (1,363 million Euro).

The Programme will also fund RTD activities of a generic nature covering:

- Future and Emerging Technologies (319 million Euro)
- Research Networking (161 million Euro).

For the purposes of the work programme and the calls, each Key Action is divided into a number of Action Lines. The 1999 version of the work programme has some 75 Action Lines. Proposers may address work covered by several action lines. The Programme's key actions will link new technology and service developments to the specific policy goals of increasing the adaptability and employability of individuals and creating a better climate in which entrepreneurship can flourish. Sectorally, technology developments will be brought together with policy areas such as sustainable transport and tourism, education and training, and convergence and regulation.

The IST Programme differs from its Fourth Framework predecessors – the ACTS, Esprit and Telematics Applications programmes – in many important respects. It features:

- Objective-led, multidisciplinary key actions, linked to other EU policy areas
- A stronger focus on creative content
- Cross-programme themes (such as "integrated application platforms and services", "design for all", "dependability", "new indicators and statistical method", amongst others)
- Socio-economic research is integrated throughout the Programme
- Greater emphasis on user involvement, and on the exploitation of project results
- International cooperation plays a major role.

To find out more:
http://www.cordis.lu/ist
IST info desk: ist@cec.be
Fax: +32 2 296 8388

RESEARCH

5TH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME: THE WORK STARTS NOW

Much more than research for technical goals, this effort aims to solve wide-ranging problems we face – employment, health, environment, mobility

The moment Europe's research and development community – and many companies across the EU – have been waiting for came in late December when the Fifth Framework Programme for research and technological development received its final approval by the Council of EU Research Ministers. This Framework Programme (1999-2002) is the latest in more than a decade of EU research and technological development programmes that have been created to encourage cooperation between European science and industry. Its scope is tightly focused on priority areas defined to produce excellence in market-focused research/industry cooperation – and ultimately a competitive advantage for Europe's industry and economy. While the goal is research and competitivity, its underlying mission illustrates the evolution for research and development thinking over the past ten years. By helping companies meet the challenges of the 21st Century, the programme aims to bring answers to a wide range of issues that are important for European society – such as employment, health, environment, communications and mobility.

Further proof of the Programme's importance on the EU research agenda is the 4.6% budget increase it received – to 14.96 billion Euro over four years – at a time of intense budgetary pressure in business and in the European institutions.

The Programme also pays special attention to the fundamental changes that have touched our society in the past five years. The Information Society, sustainable development and improving people's research potential are major themes. Cooperation with countries outside the EU also has a prominent place on the activities list – with a budget of 475 million Euro. Key actions under the 'User-friendly Information Society' category include: systems and services for the citizen; new work methods and electronic commerce; multimedia content and tools; essential technologies and infrastructures; future and emerging technologies and research networking.

With the planning and legal basis now finalised, the next step is action. There will be no gap between the end of the Fourth and beginning of the Fifth Framework Programmes. Calls for Tender for all categories will be published in the first months of 1999. ∎

THE 5TH 'FFP' AT A GLANCE

First Activity
Theme 1
Quality of Life, Management of Living Resources

Theme 2
User-friendly Information Society

Theme 3
Competitive and sustainable growth

Theme 4
Energy, Environment and Sustainable Development

Second Activity
Confirming the International Role of Research

Third Activity
Promotion of Innovation, Encouragement of Small and Medium-sized Companies.

Fourth Activity
Improving Human Research Potential
Direct Actions
(EU Joint Research Centres)

Direct and Indirect Actions
Nuclear fission, Safety and Decommissioning

For complete details on the activities and budgets point your browser to:
www.cordis.lu

IS AND THE REGIONS

'IS' AS A PATH TO REGENERATION: ONE REGION'S STRATEGY

There are many theories and plans about how the Information Society is the 'new hope' for solving the unemployment problem and bringing new income streams to Europe's depressed regions. France's Nord-Pas de Calais Region is a living example that this theory works… provided it's backed by a clear strategy, hard work and rigorous planning. As a participant in the IRISI programme (see reports in IS News n°s 22 and 27) this region used EU support to learn about the benefits of the Information Society and create a strategy that brings economic advantage to its cities, towns, and businesses.

The first step is planning
In cooperation with the French State government representatives, the Nord-Pas de Calais Regional Council set up a Regional Information Society Steering Group composed of key public and private players; a Regional Information Society Unit (located in the Regional Council) responsible for implementing; and several Working Groups, each led by an expert.

The strategy
These players devised an Information Society strategy that focused on three objectives: to grasp the opportunity of the Information Society, but control the possible; increase the services and use of Information and Communication Technologies (ITCs), and to develop access to ICTs for everyone in the region. The results of this careful planning are 129 ICT-based projects and services, that were started with the support of the EU's Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The project areas covered include: education and training, economic development and SMEs, Electronic Commerce, healthcare, culture, transportation, services to citizens, public access points. There is no real final result, as the projects are ongoing. But there is a measurable impact – thanks to the support from the ERDF these projects have created 480 jobs in 1998 in the ICT sector.

Some examples …
- **The tele-medicine platform:** This is a telediagnosis service for all the hospitals in the region, giving doctors access to Internet-secured medical databases (neurology, cardiology…).
- **Musenor:** the first French regional museum based on digitised paintings,

works of art and collections of the Nord-Pas de Calais museums. Some 4000 works of art have been digitised and many are displayed on the Web site (www.musenor.org). This project was developed by the regional museums of several cities and was supported by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).
- **Transcarte:** This project uses a smart card to replace train bus, car parking tickets and money. Transcarte is used in regional trains between Lille and Valenciennes and for buses and car parks in Valenciennes. This project currently has 7,000 users and runs on the "Socrate" network of the French national railway company. It is the largest smart card service in France. ∎

The Nord-Pas de Calais region participates in many European projects. It was active in the development of the IRISI network, and is involved, as Vice-President, in the promotion and activities of the new European Regional Information Society Association (eris@ - http://eris.epri.org), whose presidency is currently held by Wales

For more information, point your browser to:
http://www.irisi-nordpasdecalais.org

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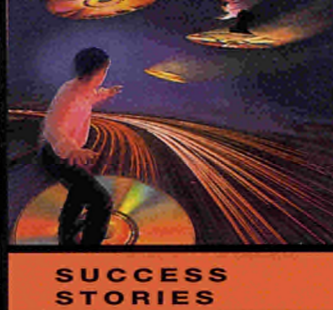
SUCCESS STORIES

EUROPE'S BEST MULTIMEDIA IS WORLD CLASS

When the new EuroPrix MultiMediaArt '98 contest recognised its five winners recently, it revealed a goldmine of hidden talent and content in the European multimedia landscape. If the level of creativity and innovation illustrated by these creators is anything to go by, the European multimedia scene has a very colourful future ahead.

OVERALL WINNER
Ceremony of Innocence – a love story told through 70 interactive postcards, with the participation of Paul McGann, Isabella Rossellini and Ben Kingsley.
www.realworld.on.net

FIVE EUROPRIX CATEGORY WINNERS
Knowledge and Discovery – a thriller murder mystery where the reader has to investigate a murder and prove the innocence...of Socrates.
www.everscreen.com

Valorisation of European Culture – The life and work of Scottish Architect Charles Rennie Macintosh, 540 pages and 700 images tell this two-hour interactive story.
www.wigwamdigital.co.uk

Supporting SMEs in the Marketplace – a talent database of Austrian speakers available for audio-visual production. 132 voices and dialects neatly package on a searchable CD. A real time saver.
www.proidee.at

Improving Democracy with Multimedia – Who's who in Swiss politics; how the parliament works; who represents your

interests in government (MP voting behaviour summaries) …. it's all on this CD, which judges see as a model for other countries.
www.tamedia.ch

First steps in Multimedia – This CD combines three well-known children's stories – Little Red Riding Hood, Snow White, and Hansel and Gretel in a fun and funny game. Only children that really know the stories can win (otherwise Snow White ends up in Hansel and Gretel's Gingerbread house!). A great learning tool for 10-14 year olds.
www.tivola.de

STUDENT'S AWARD
An insightful explanation of stuttering. This CD-ROM explains the fears, shames and experiences of people who stutter.
www.dmc.dit.ie/maimm/98/mcasey

SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENTS
A virtual walk through the modern art exhibition in Wanas Castle, Southern Sweden. The viewer decides from which perspective they'd like to view each piece.
www.informatik.uni-bremen.de

A combination of games, exercises, video material and dialogue situations make this CD-ROM a pleasant and powerful language teacher. It's called Tell Me More.
www.auralog.com

Enter your multimedia creation in EuroPrix '99. All entries must reach the EuroPrix Secretariat by 30 June.

Point your browser to:
http://www.europrix.org for the application form and detailed information

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INTERNET FIESTA

INTERNET FIESTA 19-21 MARCH… EVERYWHERE

The 1999 Internet Fiesta is going pan-European. After its resounding success last year in introducing the benefits of the Information Society across France in 1,000 Internet-based projects and activities, the organisers are now aiming to bring the Fiesta to all of Europe - with an expected 10,000 projects running simultaneously across the European Union and in all other countries wishing to participate.

Primary goal
The Fiesta's primary goal is to bring people practical experience of what the Information Society is an what it can do for them, and to stimulate their interest in the Information Society and demonstrate the Internet's European dimension. Organisers say that this is the first step in building enthusiasm for the creation of new applications for the benefit of users. The Fiesta's initiative is the brainchild of a group of non-governmental organisations active in raising the awareness of the benefits of the Information Society. Their targets are individuals, non-governmental organisations, small and large businesses and local governments.

Build on the enthusiasm
To build on the enthusiasm generated by last year's French Fiesta, the organisers have asked the Information Society Activity Centre (ISAC) of the European Commission to help bring the 1999 Fiesta – and its estimated 10,000 events – to a pan-European audience. The Fiesta is animated and monitored by the Festive Committee, which identifies the main participants, and by ISAC/ISPO – which organises the work of the committee and provides communication and media skills. ∎

Let's hear your ideas. All interested participants are encouraged to propose projects and activities.
www.internet-fiesta.org
info@internet-fiesta.org

EVENTS UPDATE

ESSEN CONFERENCE: ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW...

Partner search, project examples, how to apply

The official launch of the Fifth Framework Programme will be in Essen (Germany) at a special conference on 25/26 February.
Complete information on all aspects of the Programme will be presented.
The accent will be on practical information – such as a detailed explanation of each activity area, how to participate and find partners, and examples of previous successful EU-funded research projects.
Special features of the event include an exhibition, partner networking sessions and presentations of the most successful past research projects, by the companies that ran them.
If you are a current or potential research project coordinator, a representative from science, industry, or an institution concerned with science and technology, you should attend. Do not miss this comprehensive information session. ■

For details, updates and on-line registration, see the conference web site:
http://events.relatech.fi/fp5

5TH FP IS PROJECTS HAVE THEIR OWN INFO DAY

Paris, 22 February

If your specific interest in the 5th Framework Programme is the Information Society Technologies (IST) Programme, then be sure to book the Paris IST Info Day in your agenda. The programme includes a short plenary session to:
- outline the contents of the first Call for Proposals (16 March)
- describe the calendar of calls planned for 1999.
- explain the basic call submission and proposal evaluation procedures
- indicate further information sources in the Commission and elsewhere.

An information fair will be set up with exhibition space filled with booths, one for each action line of the programme and complementary booths for national contact points and other programmes in the Fifth Framework Programme. Partner matchmaking facilities will be available. ■

CNIT – Paris la Défense, 22 February
Info and on-line registration:
www.cordis.lu/ist/infogen.htm
IST InfoDesk: ist@cec.be
Fax: +32 2 296 8388

You will be updated on regular news and developments, and your interest in the programme will be circulated to other potential participants by registering your expression of interest at:
www.cordis.lu/ist/eoi.htm

PUBLICATIONS

HOW THE 'IS' SHAPES OUR WORLD

FAIR project analysis in 50 papers

How is the Information Society changing the way European society lives and works? The FAIR Project, part of the European Commission's ACTS programme, started its quest for the answer to this question in 1996 by analysing emerging socio-economic impacts and alternative evolution scenarios. The results have been published in a series of 50 Working Papers and three annual Summary reports. They give a clear picture of the trends, challenges and problems Europe's facing in the evolution towards the Information Society.

The FAIR 1998 Summary report "*Constructing the European Information Society*" highlights key issues such as the development of Electronic Commerce in Europe and its potential impacts on economic growth, employment and taxation; the diffusion of the networked society in the regions and the role of SMEs; social exclusion problems and the challenges for the ICT industry.
The report attempts to distil this important research into three scenarios for the future and a series of key recommendations. ■

FAIR working papers and reports are located at:
http://www.databank.it/dbc/fair
Contact:
Gabriella Cattaneo
e-mail: cattaneo@dbcons.it
Fax: +39 02 721 07402

CALENDAR

Information Society Technologies (IST) Programme Information Day
22 February
Paris (F)
European Commission, DG XIII
IST Info Desk
Fax: +32 2 2968388
e-mail: ist@cec.be
http://www.cordis.lu/ist/infoday.htm

Conference to launch the EU's Fifth Framework Programme for Research
25-26 February
Essen (D)
Fax: +32 2 2953736
e-mail: 5pc.essen@scic.cec.be
http://events.relatech.fi/fp5/

Media Expo '99
4-7 March
Rome (I)
Tel: +39 06 36001142
Fax: +39 06 36001144
e-mail: publica@mbox.vol.it
www.publica.it

ICTs Strategies for Islands and Small States
17-19 March
Malta
J. Woods
Fax: +356 234337
e-mail: woodco@kemmunet.net.mt
www.comnet.mt/lsiwkshp/smalsts.htm

Computer '99 Information, Telecommunications and Office Technology Fair
22-24 April
Tallinn (Estonia)
Estonian Computer Association
Tel: +372-630 7464
Fax: +372-631 1323
e-mail: expo@afa.ee
www.ee/kompuuter

Euromedia '99
25-28 April
Munich (D)
SCS-Europe
Fax: +32 9 2234941
e-mail: philippe.geril@rug.ac.be

IS&N '99, Sixth International Conference on Intelligence in Services and Networks
27-29 April
Barcelona (E)
Tel: +34 93 4016814
Fax: +34 93 4017055
e-mail: isn99@ac.upc.es
www.ac.upc.es/isn99/

Euro-Regio-Partners '99 The European Co-operation Exchange forICT Companies
24-25 June
Saarbrücken (D)
Carine Messerschmidt
messerschmidtc@zpt.de
Tel: +49-681 9520454/455
http://www.zpt.de/Interprise/engl.htm

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	00800 3212635
Ireland	1800 553224
Italy	1678 76790
Luxembourg	0800 2929
Netherlands	0800 0222086
Portugal	0505 329635
Spain	900 993290
Sweden	020 791635
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