



COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Brussels, 21.8.2009
COM(2009) 432 final

**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

**Final Evaluation of the eEurope 2005 Action Plan and of the multiannual programme
(2003-2006) for the monitoring of eEurope 2005 Action Plan, dissemination of good
practices and the improvement of network and information security (MODINIS)**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	Introduction	3
2.	Background	3
2.1.	eEurope 2005 Action Plan	3
2.2.	MODINIS.....	3
2.3.	i2010.....	4
3.	evaluation results.....	4
3.1.	eEurope 2005 Action Plan	4
3.2.	MODINIS.....	5
4.	Conclusions	7
Annex 1		8
1.	Relevance	8
2.	Efficiency and coherence of eEurope	8
3.	Impact and effectiveness	9
Annex 2		11
Efficiency of MODINIS		11
Effectiveness, impact and relevance of MODINIS		11
Recommendations		12

1. INTRODUCTION

This Communication provides the final evaluation of the eEurope 2005 Action Plan and of the Modinis programme. Article 7.4 of the Modinis Decision (Decision Number 2256/2003/EC) states that at the end of the programme, "the Commission shall submit to the European Parliament, to the Council and to the European Economic and Social Committee an evaluation report on the results obtained in implementing the actions referred to in the programme".

Given the synergy between Modinis and eEurope, it was decided to carry out both evaluations simultaneously and to report jointly on their findings.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1. eEurope 2005 Action Plan

The eEurope Action Plan (2000-2002) was endorsed at the Feira European Council (June 2000) as the information society part of the Lisbon strategy of economic, social and environmental renewal. It defines a number of targets, which were monitored regularly through benchmarking indicators.

However, by the end of 2002 there was little evidence to show that the success in getting Europe online had translated into new jobs and services. Because of this, the Barcelona European Council (March 2002) called on the Commission to draw up an eEurope Action Plan focussing on "the widespread availability and use of broadband networks throughout the Union by 2005 and the development of Internet protocol IPv6 and the security of networks and information, eGovernment, eLearning, eHealth and eBusiness"¹. The subsequent eEurope 2005 Action Plan was endorsed by the European Council of Seville (June 2002).

2.2. MODINIS

Modinis was adopted by Council and Parliament in November 2003, as a "*multi-annual programme for the monitoring of the eEurope 2005 Action Plan, dissemination of good practices and improvement of network and information security*". It followed up "PROMISE", a programme which in its final stage provided funding to the eEurope 2002 Action Plan. Modinis covered a three-year period (2003-2005). It was then extended to 2006 in order to ensure continuity before the entry into effect of the ICT Policy Support Programme (ICT-PSP), part of the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP) adopted in 2006.

Modinis has the following objectives:

- Monitoring the progress of eEurope,
- analysis of eEurope good practices and dissemination of Best Practices and Information Services,
- analysis of economic and societal consequences of the Information Society, and
- preparation of the European Network and Information Security Agency (ENISA).

These objectives are to be achieved through:

- Benchmarking,

¹ Barcelona European Council, Presidency Conclusions, paragraph 40(<http://ue.eu.int/en/Info/eurocouncil/index.htm>)

- studies,
- conferences, and workshops,
- support to strategic analysis and discussion, mainly through the eEurope Advisory Group.

Modinis was implemented through annual work programmes, which were approved by the Modinis Management Committee.

The first work programme, for 2004, had a budget of EUR 12.8 million (including EUR 5.1 million carried over from 2003). The budget was EUR 7.72 million for each of the 2005 and 2006 work programmes. The total budget for Modinis was EUR 28.2 million.

The extension of Modinis in 2006 provided support to the first year of the i2010 initiative.

2.3. i2010

In June 2005, the Commission adopted the initiative ‘i2010: A European information society for growth and employment’. The successor to eEurope, i2010 is a comprehensive strategy for deploying all EU policy instruments to encourage the development of the digital economy. It builds on ICT policies, regulation, and research and innovation to contribute to the Lisbon goals. The key priorities of this policy are: a) promoting a supportive and competitive environment for electronic communications and media services; b) reinforcing research and innovation in ICT and c) ensuring that an inclusive Information society brings benefits to all.

Much progress has been made in the past three years: a new regulatory framework for audiovisual media services is in place; the reform of the regulation of e-communications has been launched²; regulation to create a single market for mobile phone use across borders is in operation; initiatives to boost online content in Europe have been adopted³; major new R&D and innovation funding initiatives are up and running; ground-breaking public private partnerships (Joint Technology Initiatives) have been launched; flagship initiatives on intelligent cars, European Digital Libraries and ICTs for sustainability are on track as are initiatives on eInclusion, eGovernment and eHealth⁴.

3. EVALUATION RESULTS

The evaluations of the eEurope Action Plan policy framework and its associated funding programme, Modinis, were conducted from January 2006 to July 2007 and supported by evaluators contracted for this task⁵.

3.1. eEurope 2005 Action Plan

The Commission welcomes the results of the independent evaluation⁶ and its overall positive findings in terms of the relevance, efficiency and impact of the eEurope 2005 Action Plan.

In terms of relevance, the question was whether the approach of providing an overarching policy framework strategy in a mature and complex policy area was valid and feasible.

The evaluators found the framework approach of the strategy to be useful and relevant. Indeed, they found that eEurope was vital in setting up and maintaining a dialogue across countries with very different cultural and institutional set-ups, levels of performance as well as Information Society (IS) agendas and priorities.

² http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/policy/ecommm/tomorrow/index_en.htm.

³ COM(2007) 836, http://ec.europa.eu/avpolicy/other_actions/content_online/index_en.htm.

⁴ COM(2007) 694, http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/einclusion/index_en.htm.

⁵ Rambøll Management and Technopolis

⁶ See Annex 1

The evaluation identified five types of impact. eEurope can thus be seen as:

- a platform to exert influence
- a major initiator and driver of national IS-policy
- a reference point for national IS-policy
- a push factor for certain areas of IS
- an incentive to better coordinate national IS-policy

These types of impact were found in different combinations in various Member States. The evaluators found that the eEurope 2005 Action Plan was an important factor helping to keep ICT on the political agenda at a time where interest in the subject was waning. eGovernment and eHealth are two examples where, thanks to eEurope, Member States are working towards precise goals underpinned by high-level support.

The eEurope Advisory Group is seen as having played an important role for exchanging experience and enhancing mutual learning on a European level. It helped Member States get a broader overview of the challenges posed by the IS and of the solutions adopted by others.

The evaluators consider, however, that the stakeholders group of the eEurope Advisory group ("second section") did not fulfil its advisory role in a satisfactory manner. Principally this was a standing group which was unable to provide the range of expertise needed for the wide ranging agenda of eEurope.

However it also produced important reports on the digital divide and eInclusion which paved the way for major policy initiatives under i2010 such as the Communication on "Bridging the Broadband Gap"⁷ and the eInclusion Initiative⁸.

To overcome the shortcomings identified by the evaluators, but to retain the benefits of pooling of expertise the second section was replaced by an ad hoc mechanism for stakeholder consultations

3.2. MODINIS

The Commission welcomes the positive assessment⁹ of Modinis as an enabler of the eEurope 2005 Action Plan and the consistency between the policy initiative and the spending programme. The evaluators consider Modinis successful in providing European value added to Member States' activities, in particular through the benchmarking activities, but also through conferences and the preparation for ENISA.

However, they found a lack of clarity in the relation between the Modinis Management Committee and the eEurope Advisory Group, in particular regarding the distribution of responsibilities and coordination between both bodies. The Commission welcomes the fact that the evaluators found that this has been resolved during the extension of Modinis and the establishment of the i2010 High Level Group.

The late adoption of Modinis and the fact that the first work programme had to absorb funds carried over from 2003 created some difficulties in budget execution and the delay of some actions. However, as is recognised by the evaluators, execution of the budget was very close to 100% in 2005 and 2006.

⁷ COM (2006) 129

⁸ COM (2007) 694

⁹ See Annex 2

The Commission acknowledges the evaluations findings that studies financed by Modinis were not sufficiently disseminated and had little visible impact. However, at the time of the evaluation many of the studies had not been finalised. Completed studies are widely available, well publicised and have provided important input to policy development: surveys of ICT use in schools, ICT use by General Practitioners and eGovernment have been presented at high-level conferences. Together with other studies on broadband coverage and access costs, they provide the analytical material for the i2010 Annual reports. Another example is the study on Interactive Content on-line¹⁰, which fed the Commission's Communication on Content on-line¹¹.

Finally, the Commission welcomes and takes note of the recommendations provided by the evaluators on the Modinis programme (see Annex 2 for details). It considers that the recommendations are being implemented in the delivery of the ICT-PSP. The activities covered by Modinis are now part of the "Horizontal Actions" of the ICT-PSP. The recommendations address the following issues:

- a) Relations with the Management Committee
- b) Timely adoption of work programmes
- c) Development of benchmarking indicators
- d) Emphasis on dissemination of best practice

The recommendations have been addressed in the following way:

- a) The role of the Management Committee of the ICT-PSP is to express an opinion on the draft annual work programme, in accordance with Article 47 of the Decision establishing the CIP. At the same time, significant effort has been made to increase and improve communication with the Committee. The i2010 HLG discusses policy orientations and priorities.
- b) The adoption of the first work programme of the ICT-PSP was delayed due partly to the late adoption of the CIP Decision (November 2006). Moreover, the ICT-PSP introduced new instruments and objectives and Member State representatives in the Management Committee felt the need for additional discussion before delivering an opinion on the work programme. This delay also affected the adoption of the 2008 work programme. From 2009 onwards it is expected that the Work Programmes will be operational close to the start of each year.
- c) The i2010 Benchmarking framework adopted in 2006 has guided all the work for benchmarking in continuous cooperation with Member States, mainly through the Eurostat working group. The link with the Lisbon process is ensured by linking the i2010 indicators to the Integrated Guidelines relevant to ICT. Also, the indicators are regularly validated by the Member States through the publication of the Country Profiles in the i2010 Annual Report.
- d) The exchange of good practice has been reinforced, both via web based searchable databases (www.epractice.eu) and the development of thematic networks funded by the ICT-PSP. It has also been extended to new areas such as eInclusion and digital divide (<http://www.broadband-europe.eu>)

¹⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/eeurope/i2010/docs/studies/interactive_content_ec2006.pdf

¹¹ Com (2007) 836 final
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2007:0836:FIN:EN:PDF>

4. CONCLUSIONS

The Commission considers that this is a positive report confirming both the effectiveness and the utility of the eEurope 2005 Action Plan and its main funding programme Modinis. Some weaknesses have been identified but these have not had a major effect on the overall programme implementation. They have been addressed in the follow-up initiative, i2010 and one of its main funding instruments (ICT-PSP).

Annex 1

Final Evaluation of the eEurope 2005 Action Plan

Excerpts from the evaluation report¹²

There were three components to this evaluation of eEurope:

- The relevance of eEurope;
- The efficiency and coherence of eEurope;
- The potential impact from the eEurope Action Plan and its delivery mechanisms.

1. RELEVANCE

In terms of content, the relevance of eEurope is defined in different ways by the various stakeholder groups involved (e.g. policymakers, businesses, academic institutions etc.). For example, the fact that the priorities of eEurope are seen as relevant by policy makers in a particular Member State may not reflect the priorities of businesses in that country.

In terms of the policy approach, the key evaluation question is whether the framework-approach of providing an overarching strategy in a policy area which is becoming more and more mature as well as complex is still valid and feasible.

The results of the evaluation indicate that:

The eEurope 2005 Action Plan was vital in setting up and maintaining a dialogue across countries with very different cultural and institutional set-ups, levels of performance as well as IS agendas and priorities.

The Member States seem to be unified in their view of the relevance of eEurope as an overarching policy framework, or at least as a common approach within Europe. Here the Member States see the need for a unifying and coordinating forum for example for the issues of standards and regulation and other questions related to interoperability. The relevance for eEurope on a Member State level however can be said to vary even though the relevance for EU as such is high. This is due to the different stages of ICT development and different policy needs, where for some Member States the targets of eEurope do not match the general level of Information Society development

2. EFFICIENCY AND COHERENCE OF EEUROPE

The efficiency of eEurope has been assessed by looking at the function of the eEurope Advisory Group and the related subgroups.

The eEurope Advisory Group has played an important role for exchanging experience and enhancing mutual learning on the European level. The meetings of the Advisory Group helped Member States representatives to get a broader overview of the challenges posed by the Information Society and of the solutions adopted by other countries.

However, the role of the Advisory Group in creating impulses in terms of developing Information Society policy actions and in coordinating these policies seems to have been limited so far, due to variable engagement by Member States as well as the lack of

¹² For the full report see:
http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/information_society/evaluation/data/pdf/studies/s2005_01/eEurope2005_final_report.pdf

interactivity in the group. The Advisory Group did not seem to function as intended – acting as a litmus test for IS strategies proposed by the Commission. This seems mainly due to the insufficient decision making level of the Member States’ participants, not being able to represent their countries viewpoints.

The usefulness of the Second Section of the eEurope Advisory Group is highly questionable. Its mandate was unclear from the beginning, and its work had limited influence on the workings of eEurope.

The Second Section of the EAG was constituted of various experts and stakeholders from different policy fields as well as industry sectors. For the participants of the group this seems to have been an enriching meeting forum where opinions could be exchanged and new networks established. However, being so broad in its constitution and without a clear mandate – the discussions did not seem to reach the necessary detail and expertise to be of real influence.

The bulk of the work is conducted in the subgroups. Both the eHealth and the eGovernment subgroups worked well, ensuring discussion and consensus on these important matters.

Nevertheless, the proliferation of subgroups and the lack of coordination between them led to loss of transparency as well as duplication of efforts. In addition, the coordination between eEurope workings groups as well as working groups in other DGs is insufficient.

3. IMPACT AND EFFECTIVENESS

The focus for the impact evaluation has been on the contribution of eEurope to Information Society policy and strategy in the Member States, i.e. the first level of impact. However, wherever possible the evaluation has tried to identify second level impacts on operational policy programmes and measures.

eEurope has led to direct action in the Member States in some cases, be it in the area of operational policy programmes or the improvement of internal coordination.

The eEurope 2005 Action Plan has led to different types of impact in the Member States based on drivers and characteristics for the countries. The evaluation identified five types of impact:

- eEurope as a platform to exert influence
- eEurope as a major initiator and driver of national IS-policy
- eEurope as a reference point for national IS-policy
- eEurope as a push factor for certain area of IS
- eEurope as an incentive to better coordinate national IS-policy

The different types of impact can be found in combinations in various Member States and indicate that eEurope as a public intervention has been successful in influencing the Member States within the policy field of Information Society in many different ways. The evaluation has also showed that the impact of eEurope goes two-way – where eEurope, defined as the consolidated European policy, is sometimes directly influenced by Member States utilising its delivery mechanisms.

eEurope 2005 Action Plan was an important factor helping to keep ICT on the political agenda in a time where interest in the subject was waning, partly due to the (re)emergence of topics which were deemed more important.

There is in many cases a constant struggle in maintaining high level political support for a policy area which does not naturally get on the top of the short-term national political agenda. Here the evaluation indicates that through its delivery mechanisms such as the Advisory Group, Ministerial Conferences and benchmarking activities, eEurope has played a vital role in keeping high level support for ICT-initiatives. This can also be related back to the different types of impact, where the high level support is one of the major enabling factors for many of the impact types. Stimulating high level support, combined with developing and disseminating best practice could therefore be seen as an effective set of tools for enabling the targeted results from policy interventions such as eEurope or i2010.

eEurope has contributed to a move towards common policy goals in the area of the Information Society as embodied in the Action Plans in eGovernment and eHealth which both go beyond general declaration of interests in defining a more precise set of goals.

While the results of the evaluation indicate that eEurope has stimulated high level support and therefore also policy measures in ICT on a national level, the overview of alignment of the Member States' IS-policy targets to that of the eEurope Action Plan also indicates that an emphasis has been put on developing eGovernment and eHealth policies. The contribution of the benchmarking exercise in relation to eGovernment should be highlighted – where the discussions on indicators and the ranking list has at least continuously brought up the policy area on the political agenda in the Member States.

Annex 2

Final Evaluation of Modinis

Excerpts from the Evaluation Report¹³

EFFICIENCY OF MODINIS

When evaluating the efficiency of MODINIS the evaluation has focused on programme management, budget utilisation, the role of the MODINIS management committee, as well as the overall coherence of the work programmes to the eEurope 2005 Action Plan.

The evaluation finds that the role of the management committee has been limited to the function laid out in the management procedure. However, the relationship between the management committee and the EAG (eEurope Advisory Group) has been characterised by an unclear distribution of responsibilities and lack of coordination. Specifically, there was a tension between the formal legal status of the management committee on the one hand and the seniority of the members of the eEurope Advisory Group on the other hand.

The evaluation has found that the role of the MODINIS management committee has been better defined under the umbrella of the i2010. The clearer separation between the High Level Group, financed by the administrative budget of the Commission, and the MODINIS activities, has decreased the previous confusion on how the different meeting forums should interact – shifting the responsibility of coordination to the Member States.

When it comes to utilisation of budget means, the late adoption of the work programme has largely affected the use of the funding for the MODINIS during 2004. The budget spending and commitment of the budget have improved during 2005 and 2006. The underlying structure for adopting work programmes and budgets within the Commission does at present not allow activities for the whole budget year, due to continuous delays in the formal adoption process, where the first quarter is spent on formally accepting the draft budget and programme. This situation compromises the efficiency, in which the budget is spent, and risks the timing and relevance of the activities in the work programmes.

There has also been little focus on communication and information sharing activities in the work programmes, combined with a low budget utilisation for these activities.

Despite this, it is the evaluators' view that the work programmes of MODINIS are coherent and consistent with the targets of MODINIS as a financial support programme to facilitate the eEurope 2005 action plan.

EFFECTIVENESS, IMPACT AND RELEVANCE OF MODINIS

Overall, it can be concluded that the impact of MODINIS varies between action lines and work packages. The most obvious impact is to be found with benchmarking, which was taken seriously by Member States and led to substantial improvements in performance in some cases. Benchmarking is also the area where MODINIS involvement is most visible, in that the programme not only provided the financing for benchmarking exercises, but also provided an input into the development and adaptation of indicators for i2010.

¹³ For the full report see:
http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/information_society/evaluation/data/pdf/studies/s2005_01/modinis_final_report.pdf

Regarding the other three action lines, most activities financed under MODINIS have been useful and generated follow-up activities, as is the case with the conferences or with the preparation of a European Network and Security Agency. The conferences have turned out to be important cornerstones in the focal areas of eEurope and have set impulses for further policy development and provided an input into the development of concrete roadmaps and action plans. The only delivery mechanism that was considered of limited importance was the studies financed under MODINIS. They were not well disseminated and seemed to have little impact in the exchange of information and competence build-up of Member States. The impact that MODINIS had can be viewed as assuring that activities in line with the eEurope targets received financing, and thus were implemented.

MODINIS has no doubt been relevant as an implementation mechanism for eEurope in that it enabled the roll-out of pan-European activities which could not have been implemented or financed by Member States themselves. It has thus had an important effect in providing European value added to activities carried out by Member States.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended to limit the role of the management committee in future similar programmes to adopting the work programmes and allocation of budget. It is, however, necessary for the Commission to improve the process of communication with the committee and to ensure that its role is defined properly.

It is necessary for the Commission to find ways of adopting the work programmes in time, and to match the budget year with the work programme in order to facilitate an effective budget spending.

The benchmarking indicators need to be continuously redefined and adapted to new developments and the entrance of possible new Member States into the Union. Efforts to define new indicators should be maintained and continued. Coherence and cooperation between the various working groups responsible for indicator definition needs to be ensured to avoid duplication of effort and maximise the quality of indicators for i2010.

The exchange of good practice should be strengthened under i2010, as new Member States and new themes require a joint effort in enhancing learning and coherence across the European Union.

The dissemination of good practice via conferences and studies seem today as being insufficient. The evaluation suggests that more efforts and resources be allocated to the dissemination of best practises, for example via searchable web based databases.