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REPORT

drawn up on behalf of the Committee on Regional Policy
and Regional Planning

on the draft Notice from the Commission to Member States
laying down guidelines for operational programmes in the
framework of a Community initiative for regional
development concerning services and networks related to
data communication

(TELEMATIQUE)

(SEC(90) 1610 final - C3-0285/90)

Rapporteur: Mr Rafael CALVO ORTEGA

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A Series: Reports - B Series: Motions for Resolutions, Oral Questions - C Series: Documents received from other Institutions (e.g. Consultations)

* = Consultation procedure requiring a single reading

**II = Cooperation procedure (second reading) which requires the votes of a majority of the current Members of Parliament for rejection or amendment

**I = Cooperation procedure (first reading)

*** = Parliamentary assent which requires the votes of a majority of the current Members of Parliament

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By letter of 2 August 1990 the Commission asked the European Parliament for its opinion on the draft notice from the Commission to Member States laying down guidelines for operational programmes which Member States are invited to establish in the framework of a Community initiative concerning services and networks relating to data communication - TELEMATIQUE.

At the sitting of 10 September 1990 the President of Parliament announced that he had referred this draft notice to the Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning as the committee responsible and to the Committee on Budgets and the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and Industrial Policy for their opinions.

At its meeting of 29 June 1990 the committee decided to draw up a report and appointed Mr Calvo Ortega rapporteur.

At its meeting of 27 September 1990 the committee decided to include in its report the following motion for a resolution which had been referred to it:

- B3-1389/90; author: Mr Waechter; subject: a Community initiative programme, co-financed by the ERDF, to support telecommunications investment in regions covered by Objective No. 1; announced in plenary sitting: 8 October 1990; responsible: Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning; opinions: Committee on Budgets, Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and Industrial Policy, Committee on Energy, Research and Technology.

At its meeting of 30 October 1990 the committee considered the draft report, and adopted the resolution unanimously.

The following were present for the vote: Waechter, chairman; Maher, vice-chairman; Alexandre, vice-chairman; Calvo Ortega, rapporteur; Anger (for Staes), da Cunha Oliveira, Cushnahan, David, Escuder Croft, Ferrer (for Lambrias), Fitzgerald, Izquierdo Rojo, H.F.Köhler, Maibaum, Melis, Onur, Ortiz Climent, Pack and Rosmini.

The opinions of the Committee on Budgets, the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and Industrial Policy and the Committee on Energy, Research and Technology are attached.

The report was tabled on 31 October 1990.

The deadline for tabling amendments will appear on the draft agenda for the part-session at which the report is to be considered.

A

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

on the draft Notice to Member States laying down guidelines for operational programmes in the framework of a Community initiative for regional development concerning services and networks related to data communication (TELEMATIQUE)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the consultation by the Commission on the draft Notice to Member States laying down guidelines for operational programmes in the framework of a Community initiative for regional development concerning services and networks related to data communication (TELEMATIQUE) (SEC (90) 1610 - C3-0285/90)
 - having regard to the motion for a resolution by Mr WAECHTER on a Community initiative programme concerning telecommunications in Objective 1 regions (TELEMATIQUE) (B3-1389/90),
 - having regard to Council Regulation (EEC) No. 4253/88¹ laying down provisions for implementing Regulation (EEC) No. 2052/88², and in particular Article 11 thereof,
 - having regard to Council Regulation (EEC) No. 3300/86 on the STAR programme³,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning and the opinions of the Committee on Budgets, Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and Industrial Policy and the Committee on Energy, Research and Technology (A3-0264/90),
- A. whereas in order to strengthen its economic and social cohesion, as laid down in Article 130a of the Treaty, the Community must in particular aim at reducing disparities between the various regions and the backwardness of the least-favoured regions,
- B. whereas enhanced international data communications and, more specifically, improved data availability and interchange within the Community will constitute a further step towards economic cohesion, since the availability of telecommunications services is essential in the modern, industrialized world in order to offset the disadvantages of remoteness from the centre,

¹ OJ No. L 374, 31.12.88, p. 1

² OJ No. L 185, 15.7.88

³ OJ No. L 305, 31.10.86, p. 1

1. Stresses that research into the regional development impact of expanding and utilizing telecommunications services has demonstrated their importance and value, as well as the advantages for the various users - for the most part businesses and public bodies - of making greater use of such services. The Community's own experience also bears out this view;
2. Welcomes the fact that the programme to which this report relates applies to Objective 1 regions only, which are most in need of investment in telecommunications and telecommunications services;
3. Stresses that the principle of freedom of competition - a genuine mainstay of the Community system - means more than merely removing administrative or commercial barriers to the proper functioning of the market; businesses must be placed on an equal footing to some extent; more particularly it could be said that the greatest need for assistance is to be found in general in firms located in the least favoured regions;
4. Believes that, as far as firms are concerned, it is the small and medium-sized producers which can derive very significant specific benefits from facilitating links with service providers and from the fact that telecommunications services are conducive to cutting costs (e.g. by making it easier for firms to engage in joint purchasing) and to upping earnings, and can contribute towards improved assessment and monitoring of the environmental impact of their economic activities; goods and services can be marketed more quickly and on a more responsive basis;
5. Considers that measures to help SMEs should not be restricted to private enterprises in the production sector, but should also apply to social economy enterprises (associations and cooperatives) and to all spheres of activity: industry, tourism, transport, business services, research centres, laboratories, training centres, etc;
6. Believes, nevertheless, given the limited resources available, that the smallest firms in the SME category should be given preferential treatment, since they are the most commonly found in Objective 1 regions;
7. Calls, as far as eligible public bodies are concerned, for priority to be given to local authorities and to vocational training and research centres;
8. Stresses that, in the medium-term, greater utilization of telecommunications services in a given area or region will benefit employment:
 - (a) firstly, by making firms more competitive and hence more able to cope with unforeseen, untoward developments;
 - (b) secondly, by providing telecommunications infrastructure and the technical and financial wherewithal to make use of telecommunications services, encouragement is given for new businesses to be set up;
 - (c) lastly, because the public sector, which is also eligible for assistance under the programme, can become more efficient, and indeed is becoming so, and this in turn benefits the entire productive sector;
9. Calls for programme implementation to be coordinated, as far as possible, with specific, complementary measures cofinanced and provided for by the

European Social Fund and for the new workforce needed to use the services concerned to receive training and for help to be given in finding employment for any surplus manpower;

10. Calls in turn for the findings from certain research projects (DRIVE, DELTA, RACE, ESPRIT, AIM, IMPACT, etc.) to be utilized in connection with implementing the TELEMATIQUE programme, in order to enhance its impact and benefits in Objective 1 regions;
11. Calls, in view of the fact that the programme is geared to businesses in the Community's least favoured regions, for special efforts to be made to inform these firms of the opportunities offered by the programme; stresses further the importance of cofinancing technical assistance so that businesses can utilize and master new technologies and new facilities and monitor their compatibility with the environment and working conditions;
12. Believes that these promotional efforts and technical assistance must be channelled via the associations which are most closely linked with the producers concerned (SMEs) and are logistically in a position to reach out to a majority of them, e.g. employers' federations, chambers of trade and industry, federations of worker-owned cooperatives, federations of worker-controlled businesses, agricultural organizations and professional associations, environmental and consumer protection associations, etc;
13. Stresses, however, that these activities must be planned and implemented in close collaboration with regional and local authorities;
14. Calls for these promotional efforts and technical assistance to be accompanied by projects demonstrating telecommunications services, in particular for small-scale businessmen with little experience in the field of telecommunications and computing. Demonstration projects must be collaborative efforts involving service sector organizations in areas where demonstrations are to be provided, banks, telecommunications organizations and any more experienced setup;
15. Supports the Commission proposal on the cofinancing of feasibility studies, since this could help to overcome small businessmen's reticence as regards using new technologies;
16. Regrets the fact that tentative funding is no more than 200 m ECU, given the importance of the measures provided for under the programme, and calls on the Commission to take advantage of any under-utilization of the 15% of the ERDF resources earmarked for Community initiatives, appropriations for other programmes or in the context of CSFs;
17. Calls for the implementation of the TELEMATIQUE programme and the other Community programmes, in particular as regards impact in the regions concerned and coordination of the activities financed by the Funds and by borrowing instruments;
18. Calls therefore for the programme's target group to have access to whatever information is needed to make full use of European Investment Bank loans in addition to Regional Fund and Social Fund assistance;
19. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the government of the Member States.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

I. EFFORTS TO PROMOTE TAKE-UP OF THE PROGRAMME

(a) Measures to promote the programme

1. The programme's success in enabling a large number of small and medium-sized producers to become regular telecommunications-service users, will depend on a series of assumptions and factors. It should be borne in mind, however, that the programme is targeted on small and medium-sized enterprises many of which have no access to modern telecommunications facilities and are located in areas where incentives are few and far between. This is an important facet of the programme if the objective is to benefit firms and bodies most in need which, however, for a variety of reasons which cannot be examined here, are not going to take advantage of a measure simply because it is publicized in the Official Journal of the Communities.

2. These promotional efforts must be channelled via associations which are most closely linked with SMEs and are logistically in a position to reach out to a majority of them, e.g. employers' federations, chambers of trade and industry, cooperative federations, labour organizations, agricultural organizations and professional associations. These organizations must be asked to cooperate in publicizing the programme, using their customary channels of communication.

3. Demonstration projects must form the second stage of promotional efforts. It is no easy matter to stimulate demand for telecommunications services if no facilities are available to demonstrate their usefulness to the many small-scale businessmen with little experience in the field of telecommunications and computing. With a view to carrying out demonstration activities, what has to be secured is the collaboration of service sector organizations in areas where demonstrations are to be provided, of banks, of telecommunications organizations and, in general, of any person or setup with more experience of, or an interest in bringing telecommunications services to a wider audience.

(b) Provision of funding for feasibility studies

4. Promotional efforts must also extend to cofinancing or financial assistance in implementing projects, though these are very different approaches. The Commission notice does provide for feasibility studies, though what cofinancing means and what the ceiling for this would be ought to be spelled out. It ought to be borne in mind, as previously indicated, that many potential users will be totally unfamiliar with telecommunications services and that, under normal circumstances, they would hesitate to go ahead with investment involving, as this programme does, considerable initial outlay.

(c) Ad hoc assistance for SME consortia involved in implementing the programme

5. Bringing telecommunications services to small businesses and demonstrating such services to them is going to present considerable organizational difficulties, and collaboration between small businesses in

this regard is also going to be very difficult. To back up this assertion, we might recall what has befallen previous small-business consortia, whether capitalist or cooperative in form, many of which have been plodding outfits constantly shackled because of financial difficulties and often hamstrung because of the structure of their workforces and their skill profiles.

6. If, to sum up, the objective is to encourage collaborative arrangements conducive to publicizing and implementing the programme more effectively, the fact that the Commission is in a position to provide financial help to set up such consortia - by insisting that the Member States cooperate and eliminate any administrative or fiscal barriers that might be encountered - has to be spelled out.

AID PRIORITIES

7. In its Notice to the Member States, the Commission alludes to a number of priority areas, which, to our mind, ought to be expanded on, since this is one of the programme's more interesting political aspects. It should be pointed out that, resources being scarce, the priorities to be set must be highly relevant, socially and economically, and in keeping with the European Community's regional-policy objectives.

8. We take the view that, once a project has been accepted as meeting the Commission's technical and economic requirements, the following political selection criteria must be applied:

9. . PRIORITY to be given to projects which would be implemented in low-GDP regions. It would seem patently obvious and self-evident that relatively impoverished areas should be given priority.

10. . PRIORITY to be given to projects submitted by small businesses in collaborating with medium-sized firms. As repeatedly pointed out in this report, it is the small producers which have had least access to telecommunications services and where, normally, higher productivity increases are achieved.

11. . PRIORITY to be given to local authorities, educational establishments and research centres over other public-sector bodies. These organizations are well placed to exploit and disseminate information acquired and produce a considerable knock-on effect in developmental terms, which is why they deserve to be given priority.

12. . PRIORITY to be given to promoting utilization of telecommunications services and to aid for procuring hardware and software in connection with infrastructure investment. Such investment, which normally involves a high level of expenditure, can be provided for as part of other, better funded programmes and therefore ought not to be given priority under this programme. The scope of the Commission's Notice, which acknowledges that priority should be given to services, should be broadened to include acquisition of equipment for SMEs, local authorities, educational establishments and research centres.

LOCAL, PROVINCIAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITY INVOLVEMENT

13. We have already pointed out that promotional efforts will help to make the programme a success. Obviously, this is an area where these authorities have a major role to play. The Commission should therefore send information on the programme directly to local and provincial authorities and ask them for their comments, with a view to making the programme more effective.

FUNDING

14. The funding forecast in the Commission Notice totals 200 m ECU.

To our mind, this amount is patently inadequate, given that the success of other programmes to which reference has been made in this report is ultimately conditional upon programme findings being disseminated, studied and utilized via data communications services. Nor is it adequate to meet the requirements of Objective 1 regions, whose productive sector (SMEs in particular) is seriously deficient in telecommunications facilities, as the Commission acknowledges. Lastly, funding for the programme bears no relation to that for the STAR programme (without, of course, playing down the differences between the two programmes). In order to eliminate uncertainties, the standard cofinancing percentage rate and the possible ceiling in special cases should be clearly set out.

INFORMATION FOR AND MONITORING BY THE COMMITTEE ON REGIONAL POLICY AND REGIONAL PLANNING

15. In view of the programmes's special features, it would appear fitting for the Commission to submit an annual progress report on the programme to the Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning, thus enabling the latter to help to publicize the programme, make any comments it deems appropriate to make the programme more successful, and help to ensure that it is properly implemented.

16. To sum up, arguments have been adduced above to substantiate the usefulness and aptness of the programme (regardless of the comments made subsequently). It has been said - and this is true - that remoteness and distance from the centre are neither here nor there in today's world, whereas service access and availability is essential. This programme is designed to substantiate what is an accurate and encouraging claim.

13 August 1990

SERIES B

DOCUMENT B3-1389/90

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

by **Mr WAECHTER**

pursuant to Rule 63 of the Rules of Procedure

on a **Community initiative programme, co-financed by the ERDF, to support telecommunications investment in regions covered by Objective No. 1**

The European Parliament,

- A. having regard to the reform of the structural Funds and, in particular, the framework Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2052/88 of 24 June 1988 on the structural Funds, Council Regulation (EEC) No. 4253/88 of 19 December 1988 on the coordination of the activities of the structural Funds and Council Regulation (EEC) No. 4254/88 of 19 December 1988 laying down provisions for implementing the ERDF Regulation,
- B. whereas 15% of ERDF resources are earmarked for Community initiatives,
- C. whereas the regions covered by Objective No. 1 are seriously underdeveloped, not least in the area of telecommunications,
1. Proposes to the Commission of the European Communities the speedy framing of a Community initiative programme to co-finance, mainly via the ERDF, the completion and optimum management of telecommunications networks and the promotion of new services for public and private users in regions covered by Objective No. 1.

(PE 141.985)
Or. FR

OPINION
of the Committee on Budgets

Letter from the chairman of the committee to Mr WAECHTER, chairman of the Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning

Brussels, 19 October 1990

Subject: Opinion of the Committee on Budgets on the draft notice from the Commission to Member States laying down guidelines for operational programmes which Member States are invited to establish in the framework of a Community initiative for regional development concerning services and networks related to data communication (TELEMATIQUE) - SEC(90) 1610 final - C3-285/90

Dear Mr Waechter,

At its meeting of 17 October 1990 the Committee on Budgets considered the above subject.

The committee established that this initiative would involve budgetary expenditure in the order of 200 million ECU to be entered against the European Regional Development Fund.

The Committee on Budgets gave a favourable opinion on the draft notice.

Yours sincerely,

(sgd) Thomas von der Vring

The following were present: von der Vring, chairman; Cornelissen, vice-chairman; Arias Cañete, Cochet, Colom i Naval, Cot, Desama, Elles, Goedmakers, Holzfuss, Langes, Lo Giudice, Miranda da Silva, Onur (for Hory), Pasty, Samland and Wynn.

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

OPINION

of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and Industrial Policy

Letter from the Chairman of the Committee to Mr WAECHTER, Chairman of the Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning

Brussels,

1990

Subject: Draft Notices from the Commission to Member States laying down guidelines for:

- a) operational programmes which Member States are invited to establish in the framework of a Community initiative concerning the preparation of business for the Single Market (PRISMA);
- b) operational programmes in the framework of a Community initiative for regional development concerning services and networks related to data communication (TELEMATIQUE).

SEC(90) 1610 final - C3-285/90

Dear Mr Waechter,

At its meeting of 29-30 October 1990, the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and Industrial Policy considered the above subjects and wished to make the following observations.

The two initiatives: PRISMA and TELEMATIQUE should be considered as integral parts of Council Regulation (EEC) No. 4253/88¹ on the provisions for implementing Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2052/88² on the tasks of coordination of Structural Funds and other financial instruments; in fact the two notices on guidelines are based on Article 11 of the first Regulation. In this respect the two notices should be seen as implementing an area in need of further action in completing the internal market taking into account of Parliament's position on opening-up of public procurement,³ a policy for Community certification and standardization and the measures taken within the meaning of Article 115 of the Rome Treaty.

17 October 1990

¹ OJ No. L 374, 31.12.1988, p. 1

² OJ No. L 185, 15.7.1988, p. 8

³ see Resolution of 22 November 1989 (OJ C 323, 27.12.1989) based on the BEUMER report (A3-59/89) and Resolution of 16.5.1990 (OJ C 149, 18.6.1990) based on the HERMAN report (A3-85/90)

As long as the implementation of the PRISMA initiative promotes the harmonisation of technical standards or the creation of specific criteria in meeting quality standards and the TELEMATIQUE initiative enables the wider utilization and diffusion of data in objective 1 regions, they would enable both the small and medium sized enterprises in exploiting a larger market and, through the activities of SMEs, the integration of peripheral regions in a Single Market.

A second aspect, mainly of the PRISMA initiative but connected with the completion of the Single Market, is the participation by SMEs in public procurement. However the fact that SMEs are located in peripheral regions which suffer from an insufficient quality and availability of telecommunication services, creates less favourable conditions for inward investment in these regions.

The TELEMATIQUE initiative, in expanding the efforts pursued in the STAR programme, could give a fresh impetus to SMEs by linking the services of SMEs to advanced telecommunications systems while the latter are linked to a larger market and by this way, internalisation of economies of scale inherent in such markets would be realised. Introduction of data communication services in the public sector and the link of networks within the regions and between them or with the rest of the Community would create favourable conditions for enterprises since the cost of location would be minimised and remoteness would have no adverse effects on new investment initiatives.

The six months period allowed by both notices for the submission of detailed proposals eligible for Community financing is perhaps insufficient. The public administrations of objective 1 regions could hardly be able, within six months of the date of publication of the operational measures, to submit appropriate projects. The 200 million ECU under TELEMATIQUE and the 100 million ECU under PRISMA drawn from the European Regional Fund might not be used up not because of lack of a need of such projects but because of lack of sufficient time to prepare eligible projects for the period 1991 to 1993.

The Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and Industrial Policy, subject to the above remarks, supports the two initiatives of the Commission.

Yours sincerely,

Bouke BEUMER

Members present:

OPINION

(Rule 120 of the Rules of Procedure)

of the Committee on Energy, Research and Technology
for the Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning
Draftsman: Mr Filippos PIERROS

At its meeting of 17-19 September 1990 the Committee on Energy, Research and Technology appointed Mr PIERROS draftsman.

At its meeting of 16/17 October 1990 it considered the draft opinion.

At the latter meeting it adopted the conclusions unanimously.

The following took part in the vote: La Pergola, chairman; Lannoye, vice-chairman; Pierros, draftsman; Chiabrande, Falqui (for Breyer), Garcia Arias, Gasoliba i Böhm, Gerlach (for Desama), Larive, Linkohr, Mayer, Porrizzini, Quisthoudt-Rowohl, Regge, Robles Piquer, Roving, Sälzer, Sanz Fernandez and Seligman.

O P I N I O N

1. The Commission has drafted a notice pursuant to Article 11 of Council Regulation (EEC) No. 4253/88 of 19 December 1988 concerning a Community initiative entitled TELEMATIQUE for the development of data communication in Objective 1 regions (regions whose development is lagging behind).
2. Given the utmost importance of access to advanced telecommunications services, in particular with the completion of the internal market by the end of 1992 in view, this initiative aims to encourage the use of advanced telecommunications services in the less-developed regions. It thus acknowledges the vital role of information in the development of intra-Community trade, the consolidation of Europe's economy, the economic and social cohesion of the Community, the interlocking of economic activity, the development of the disadvantaged regions and the enhancement of their potential for playing an effective part in the new division of labour in Europe.
3. In brief, the new Community initiative encourages small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to make wider use of the services linked to advanced telecommunications systems or to initiate and develop these services. At the same time, it aims to promote datacommunication development in the public sector, which is expected to have a decisive influence on regional development. Finally, the Community initiative seeks to develop networks of advanced telecommunications services within Objective 1 regions and between these regions and the rest of the European Community.
4. Without going into detail, it is worth noting that this initiative represents a typical form of positive action designed to encourage data communication 'dialogue' and the transparency and flow of information both within the disadvantaged regions and with the more developed regions. It thus seeks to broaden the scope for initiative and flexibility among SMEs and the public sector in economic development. It also seeks to maximize the benefits of European economic integration while laying the foundations for a more equitable division of those benefits.
5. In terms of its objectives and its wider ambitions, the new Community initiative complements the Community's STAR programme¹ while broadening its scope and developing its focus. This is the basis of the initiative and the context within which it operates, primarily emphasizing advanced telecommunications services, and, in particular, their application, giving much less attention to investment in infrastructure which is the basic objective of the STAR programme. Essentially then, TELEMATIQUE is the logical, and inevitable, next step after STAR and seeks to complement its objectives by developing operational infrastructures. At the same time, the authors indirectly but clearly express their wish to link up the initiative, on a creative and productive level, with related programmes, in particular SPRINT² (the Strategic Programme for Innovation and

¹ Council Regulation (EEC) No. 3300/86 of 27.10.86, OJ No. L 306 p.1, 31.10.86

² Decision 89/286/EEC, of 17.4.1989, OJ No. L 112 p.12, 25.4.89

Technology Transfer), IMPACT³ (pilot and demonstration projects with a view to establishing a Community information services market) and PRISMA⁴ (Community initiative concerning the preparation of businesses for the Single Market).

6. Despite the close interrelationship that there would seem to be at first sight between TELEMATIQUE and the abovementioned programmes, particular attention should be paid to achieving better coordination of the projects involved and, consequently, better application of their results. Duplication of effort and squandering of precious resources must be avoided. There must be a concentrated and targeted channelling of the resources available rather than a fragmented and therefore ineffective approach.

Particular mention should be made of the common topics which, in part, link the STAR programme to the new Community initiative. The objectives set out in Article 4(2) of Regulation (EEC) No. 3300/86 (STAR), in particular, are reiterated in large part in TELEMATIQUE, which raises legitimate questions. In view of this efforts should be made to ensure that, at the application stage, the two Community initiatives respect the principle of complementarity and avoid needless and possibly wasteful duplication of effort.

7. As the preamble to Regulation (EEC) No. 3300/86 (STAR) correctly notes, access to advanced telecommunications services presupposes the setting up of the requisite telecommunications infrastructure in the disadvantaged regions (major links for the regions to the new networks, digitalization to promote more rapid introduction of integrated-services digital networks, advanced land and underwater telecommunications systems based on the use of optical fibres, integrated radiotelephony cellular networks compatible with the coordinated introduction of a future pan-European radiotelephony cellular digital system). Given the somewhat limited results of the STAR programme in this area, we might justifiably ask what the chances are of the Community initiative being a success. Obviously, an essential condition for the success of TELEMATIQUE is the rigorous and systematic pursuit of the Community's policy of supporting telecommunications infrastructure in the disadvantaged regions. This policy must be broadened and taken to its conclusion. It is also the surest way of achieving economic and social cohesion.
8. Of the measures provided for under the TELEMATIQUE programme, particular emphasis is placed on feasibility studies concerning applications of advanced telecommunications services by SMEs, either individually or in groups. Emphasis is also given to studies to evaluate the contribution to regional development of the use of public sector services linked to advanced telecommunications systems. These studies should aim to take into account the perspectives, priorities and socio-economic development programmes in respect of the disadvantaged regions. In other words, local and regional socio-economic priorities should constitute key criteria in selecting from among the programmes submitted. On the other hand, it should not be the sole objective of TELEMATIQUE and related

³ Decision 88/524/EEC of 26.7.1988, OJ No. L 288 p.39, 21.10.88

⁴ SEC(90) 1610 final, 31.8.1990

Community programmes to integrate the regions concerned smoothly and efficiently into the Community market; it should also aim to promote flexibility and self-sufficiency in research and technology in the telecommunications sector.

In particular, the use of advanced telecommunications systems in the public sector should as far as possible contribute towards achieving the development and strategic objectives set by the operational programmes under the Community support frameworks.

In this context, the proposal in the STAR programme to set up regional or local programmes with a view to coordinated use of advanced telecommunications services is a particularly useful one for operations and development under the TELEMATIQUE programme.

9. In attempting to encourage the use of advanced telecommunications services in the public sector, it would be both expedient and useful to focus on the regional and, especially, the local authorities. The disadvantaged and remote regions of the less-developed Member States above all are suffering from 'information isolation syndrome' which has a marked adverse effect on the rest of their economic and social development.

Given that the telecommunications facilities have the capacity to cover the distances involved, local authorities must be given help to get involved. This would help obviate the hitherto prevailing situation in which there has been excessive concentration of information and it would allow more leeway for fruitful participation by the most remote regions in the Community in the new European division of labour. Beyond general theoretical considerations, a positive Community regional policy should have a clear priority planning dimension.

10. The new Community initiative should give particular emphasis, among other things, to plans for intra-Community transfer of innovative applications for advanced telecommunications services, pilot projects, demonstration projects and innovations in general. This particular form of technology and expertise transfer would help to promote understanding and the exchange of experience between the Member States and, consequently, encourage the dissemination of the positive results and experience gained from the TELEMATIQUE programme. It would thus be possible to convert the bilateral and consequently limited model whereby the Commission gives assistance to SMEs and the public sector into a multilateral operational framework with immense feedback potential offering enormous mutual benefit.

With this objective in view, a European system for the monitoring and assessment of advanced telecommunication services would act as an invaluable data bank for the widest possible range of transfer and application of significant experience gained from the use of advanced services. The SPRINT programme has already provided for something similar and there is no reason why the TELEMATIQUE programme should not do the same as there is clearly an equally urgent need for it.

11. TELEMATIQUE is without a doubt a laudable and positive endeavour. It will not only contribute towards the practical completion of the European market but also promote regional development. Most importantly, however, it should have a multiplier effect in regard to the regional economic organizations (both private and public), providing them with invaluable information and incorporating them within local, regional or even pan-European data exchange networks, without underestimating the tremendous importance of financial support for the purchase of data communications software and hardware.

TELEMATIQUE represents a strategic instrument for economic and regional development which we should make due use of. Both the Community and the less-developed Member States should now demonstrate that economic and social cohesion is a genuine objective and not simply a pious statement devoid of any real substance.