

European Community

News Release

ESPRIT: EC LAUNCHES EXTENSIVE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY PROGRAMME ■

The European Strategic Programme for Research & Development in Information Technology - ESPRIT - was formally approved by the European Communities on 28 February.

The fundamental aim of the programme is to mount a «technological push » across the Community to achieve parity with if not superiority over American and Japanese competitors, within the next 10 years.

The programme was set up after extensive consultations with industry, small and medium sized companies, universities and Member States administrations.

Electronics is one of the world's fastest-growing major industries. Information technology also conditions the competitiveness of other industries. But European companies command scarcely 10% of the world information technology market and less than 40% of the Community information technology market itself. From a positive information technology trade balance in the 1970s, the Community has moved into an increasing deficit. Europe needs its own new generation of information technology to be competitive in the world.

ESPRIT is a response to this challenge. It offers a Community-wide approach, to create new technology and new cooperation across national frontiers.

The programme sets out 5 key areas for action: advanced microelectronics, advanced information processing, software technology. These three technologies are central: their mastery is the key to make the strategy succeed. Two other areas are specific applications: office automation and computer integrated manufacturing.

A first 5-year phase was allocated a global financial support of approximately 1.5 billion CAD dollars, financed on a 50%-50% basis by the Community budget on the one hand and industry on the other.

« Today's decision to launch the ESPRIT programme signifies not only major research and development initiatives, but at the same time a return to competitiveness in Europe » stated Mr. Étienne Davignon, EC Commission Vice-president responsible for research and science.

For further information please contact
Darlene Nowlan, Press Officer.

NR (84) 01
29 February 1984

 **Delegation of the Commission
of the European Communities**
Press and Information Service