

**MLIS PROGRAMME**

## DOING GLOBAL BUSINESS.... IN ANY LANGUAGE

HOW THE MLIS PROGRAMME WILL PRESERVE LOCAL CULTURE AND ENCOURAGE GLOBAL BUSINESS CONTACTS

Europe's rich heritage - with 40 different languages and a host of regional cultures - has the potential to make a unique contribution to the emerging Single

European Market. One of the final hurdles in creating open and equal trading between companies of all sizes in all Europe's regions is the question of different local cultures, business practices and trading customs. And this comes back to the fundamental question of language.



The European Union, through its recently-created Multilingual Information Society Programme (MLIS), is addressing this issue by encouraging companies and regions to create - and use! - new tools for multilingual communication through the computer databases and data networks on the Internet. This initiative will have the combined impact of preserving each European region's cultural and linguistic diversity, while encouraging local businesses to link with partners and business associates anywhere in the world ... with each user working in their own language.

The MLIS Programme is based on a vision of Europe in which every citizen has full and equal access to information services using their own language, and that language barriers do not inhibit anyone's successful use of the Information Society for commercial, political or social purposes.

But this effort is far more than 'lip service' to the ideal 'European Way'. The programme was created through an EU Council Decision, as a way to showing citizens that it is serious about 'full multilinguality' as a practical working tool, and a right for every European citizen.

Accordingly, the Programme focuses directly on the needs of citizens. Its aims are to mobilise industry and the public sector to rapidly create ways for equal access to

information in all European languages. By facilitating communication between citizens and businesses in all European languages, this 'transparency of information' will build a smoothly-functioning European market, with stronger economic and social cohesion. One important benefit, the Commission highlights, will be direct and simple contact between all Europe's regions - with each player dealing in their own language.

But how will this be achieved? Over the coming three years the MLIS Programme will allocate some 15 MECU to further the following objectives: (i) Encourage publishers and other suppliers of dictionaries, authoring and translation services and tools for a range of languages to make them available via computer networks. (ii) Increase the awareness for business to be responsive to the language characteristics of their markets in Europe and abroad, and to allow for citizens to ask for services in their own languages. The MLIS Programme will aim to achieve these objectives by building on current European initiatives and stimulating collaboration among relevant constituencies. It will focus on: supporting the construction of a cooperative service network for European language resources; exploiting language technology, standards and resources; and promoting the use of advanced language tools and services in the public sector.

Obviously, the nature and size of the problems are such that 3 years and the budget allocated will only mark the beginning of a serious and sustained long-term effort to overcome a major dilemma of our times: how to enjoy and nourish our various cultures and languages while acting and communicating globally.

### CALLS FOR PROPOSALS

The first Call for Proposals for suppliers is likely to be issued towards the end of 1996, and will have a tight focus on developing services in the translation sector, and on language use in the business environment.

- Translation companies and related services will be invited to submit proposals that will drive innovation in areas such as working practices, the use of translation tools, teleworking and the use of technologies, improve the quality and efficiency in translation. The Commission will select for funding the proposals that promise the greatest impact on the translation industry. Funding will be focused on contributing to the cost of the innovation process.

*Project results will be compiled and presented as examples of best practice, that can be used by the wider community of translation companies.*

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This newsletter is also available on the ISPO Web: <http://www.ispo.cec.be>



**PEOPLE FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD**

The digital age will revolutionise the way we live and work. It has great potential advantages, but there are also dangers. Indeed, for many people the Information Society is a threatening process.

Citizens face new, uncomfortable visions of the future. Jobs are not so secure; there is a never-ending process of education and retraining; we have to adjust to new ways of socialising, whether in politics, culture or commerce.

We already look through a kaleidoscope of culture, in which variety and choices, largely determined by market forces across the Atlantic, intrude upon our long-established notions of community, language and society.

If we are to take full advantage of the Information Society we must make choices which will empower citizens to embrace the future with confidence. We must build upon the richness and variety of Europe's many different cultures. We must do nothing to reinforce or to exacerbate existing social inequalities.

The management of change in our transition to the digital era needs to be made according to the needs of public interest and citizenship. At the moment, there is a fear that the market-driven approach to the Information Society will endanger social cohesion and our sense of culture.

While technology and the market have been the dynamic force for change we must ensure that the Information Society becomes more people-centred. That requires greater investment and commitment to activities which reach those parts of society which are in danger of being excluded.

Unless we put the interests of people first, second and third on our list of priorities by promoting awareness, inclusiveness and tolerance, many European citizens may be marginalised in the process of change. That will only inspire ignorance and fear and lead to a very uncertain future indeed. ■

**Aidan WHITE**  
General Secretary of the European Federation of Journalists and Chairman of the Information Society Forum Working Group on Social and Democratic Values.

**IS  
FORUM**

# IS FORUM: A NEW BOARD AND FRESH WORKPLAN FOR 1997

As the Information Society Forum enters its second year, it has elected a new board to oversee its upcoming activities. The board members are - chairman: Claudio Carrelli, of Telecom Italia (STET Group); vice-chairman: Caroline Kerstiens of the European Bureau of Consumer Unions (BEUC); and vice-chairman: Fritz Pleitgen of the Westdeutscher Rundfunk (WDR), a broadcasting organisation. The Forum's chairman for the first year, Birgitta Carlson of Telia AB, has been named honorary chairman.

Assuming his function as chairman, Mr. Carrelli, announced that as a next step the Forum will be involved in the preparation and the follow-up of the new Action Plan for the Information Society which the European Commission will present by the end of 1996.

The goals defined by the IS Forum for its second year cover three areas:

- **Advice on current EU activities.** To offer advice and to act as a sounding board for the Commission's activities that are currently underway - such as the 5th Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development and response to the Commission's Communications, specific programmes or Green Papers.
- **Strategic vision.** To continue to give its medium and long term strategic overview of the Information society's development (as specified in the Forum's first annual report).
- **Information Society Awareness.** To promote public awareness of the issues of the Information Society, in cooperation with present and planned national, regional and local activities.

The Information Society Forum is a 'think tank' of top level people representing European industry, academia, social partners and the European Institutions. It was created as a 128 member group by the European Commission last year to provide an authoritative source of reflection, debate and advice on the issues raised by today's rapidly evolving digital technologies. ■

## NEW IS FORUM WORKING PARTIES

- Employment and job creation
- Social and democratic value: culture and the future of new services and the media
- Universal access and consumer protection and support
- Sustainability in an information society
- Public services: bringing administrations closer to citizens
- Lifelong learning

For more information, please contact the IS Forum Secretariat  
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## EDUCATION

# ACCELERATING THE ENTRY OF SCHOOLS INTO THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

## "LEARNING IN THE INFORMATION SOCIETY" ACTION PLAN AIMS TO SPEED IMPLEMENTATION OF INFORMATION SERVICES.

Europe's schools and educational ministries have learned their lesson. They have recognised that the Information Society must be integrated into the educational fabric of every European Union Member State.

The next step is rapid implementation of initiatives that bring new information tools to all students, in every school in the Union. Networking is of the essence, believe the drivers of the Learning in the Information Society Initiative -

Commissars Edith Cresson (research, education and training), Martin Bangemann (industry, telecommu- nications, information technologies), and Pdraig Flynn (Social Affairs). Unless information services are made available to all pupils rapidly - to allow them to develop new, flexible and interactive forms of learning - the commissioners say that tomorrow's jobs will be lost through the failure to act today.

The Learning in the Information Society Action Plan specifies four action lines to drive progress forward in this area. Its primary focus is on the 'weak links' in the educational chain - primary and secondary schools:

**Encouraging the interconnection of schools,** to create links between local, regional, national networks at the Community level.

**Stimulating the development and dissemination** of teaching content that can be shared across European countries, cultures and educational systems.

**Offering training and support for teachers,** to encourage them to integrate these new technologies into their teaching methods.

**To encourage the exchange of information** about teaching opportunities afforded by these new technologies, through on-line fora and other promotional actions. ■

A full copy of the Action Plan is available at: <http://europa.eu.int/en/comm/dg22/planen.html>

## MLIS PROGRAMME

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- The Call will address all authorities with a regional focus - such as regional authorities, chambers of commerce and other related organisations. They will be invited to organise campaigns in their region to mobilise business and promote the creation of a language support infrastructure. Initially the MLIS Programme will select a limited number of regions to participate in

a pilot phase. Modest financial support will be offered through the programme; the aim of this funding will be to create a 'start-up package' of best practice, that is based on concrete experience. ■

For more information,

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<http://www.echo.lu/mlis/mlishome.html>





## SUCCESS STORIES

### MULTIMEDIA AS PORTABLE AS A NEWSPAPER

Many say that the newspaper and magazine format will never be fully replaced by electronic information for one simple reason - because you can't easily read your laptop computer on the subway...or in the bath.

But the NewsPAD technology - a portable multimedia viewer developed by the 'Open Microprocessor Systems' initiative of the Esprit Programme - is set to prove this theory wrong.

The NewsPAD is a small very light portable viewer, roughly the size of an A4 sheet of paper. It can display all types of electronically-published documents, including full-motion video with sound. News selection is by personal preselection. The unit can be easily read, using a Touch Screen with an attached computer. The NewsPAD is now ready for mass production. ■

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### PUBLIC TRANSPORT: DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOUR CUSTOMERS ARE?

Why is it that some buses, trains and trams are nearly empty, and others are always

overcrowded. This is the main challenge of public transport authorities the world over in their "drive" toward increased efficiency. How can this imbalance be countered?

Public transport companies have difficulties in reacting to customer habits and in allocating their resources (vehicles and drivers) in the best way.

Under the European Commission's Esprit Programme, a Passenger Demand Measuring system (SCP) was created and linked to a resource allocation software tool (MAREC) which allows public transport authorities to know their travellers commuting habits, and apply the right resources in the right place at the right time to keep the city mobile. These tools use novel techniques - such as footprint counting in buses - to keep track of people's movements, more accurate than previous techniques.

In practice, SCP collects information on traveller demand and transmits this data to MAREC, where the schedules for buses are developed as the working day progresses. The system's 'invisibility' is a positive point, as there are no barriers or checkpoints for passengers to pass through. The software allows managers to visualise several different traffic management scenarios, to anticipate and deal with transport bottlenecks. ■

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## EVENTS UPDATE

# SPECIAL REPORT: EUROPEAN TELEWORK WEEK

### HOW CAN WE WORK CLOSER TOGETHER - WHILE WORKING APART?

In the true telework spirit, the European Telework Week, an initiative of DG XII under the patronage of Martin Bangemann, took place as a series of 30 parallel events, all held one after the other across the EU. While it is too early to assess the impact of the Week's events, it is clear that telework is of interest to many people in Europe. One significant change was registered: the debate has evolved from last year's discussion of whether or not telework is beneficial, to examine how people can benefit from the inevitable impact that telework will have on their lives. All of the week's events focused on the issues raised in the Green Paper: Living and Working in the Information Society, which was published last September, and in the Action Plan towards the Information Society.

The European Telework Week started in Vienna (4 - 6 November) with the *European Assembly of Telework and New Ways of Working*. More than 350 participants examined topics such as: *Getting People to Work*, *Training for Life in the Information Society*, and *Working Toward Sustainability* under the patronage of the Austrian President, Mr. Thomas Kleistl. Tele-contributions were made from Vienna, San Francisco, Stockholm, Paris and London through live video links.

The London conference, Telework UK '96, picked up where the Vienna conference stopped: from 6-8 November. It featured 46 speakers covering strategic and practical aspects of telework. Entitled *'Tomorrow's Workplace Today'* the conference focused on the business benefits of telework and had three streams running in parallel, IT, Human Resources and the Built Environment.

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## INTERNET

# THE INTERNET CHALLENGE: HOW TO GUARANTEE FREE EXPRESSION AND RESPECT FOR MINORS AND HUMAN DIGNITY

Commission Communication and Green Paper creates momentum for policy decisions on Internet content. Self-regulation is a likely first step.

With every day that the Information Society develops, the potential for new information services and commercial opportunities grows. And with this comes the potential for the use of this new medium for services which are illegal or an affront to human dignity.

The challenge for information providers, national governments and the European Institutions is to ensure the free exchange of information and the healthy expansion of the European information services markets, while putting in place the necessary policy measures to address content which may be illegal or harmful to minors. Addressing these challenges, the European Commission recently approved a Communication on harmful and illegal content on the Internet, and issued a Green Paper on the protection of minors and of human dignity in the context of electronic services.

The Communication gives policy options for immediate action to fight against harmful and illegal content, and concentrates on the

Internet. The Green Paper takes a horizontal approach, and will initiate a medium and long-term reflection on the issue across all electronic media.

Both documents advocate a closer cooperation between Member States and on an international level; the use of filtering software and rating systems; and an encouragement to self-regulation to access-providers. These initiatives follow the resolution adopted last September 27 on illegal content on the Internet, in particular child pornography. The Council invited the Commission to present practical measures in time for the next Telecommunications Council on 28 November, 1996.

The two documents proposed at the initiative of Martin Bangemann, Commissioner for Information Technologies and Telecommunications and Marcelino Oreja, Commissioner in charge of cultural and Audiovisual Affairs, are fully complementary - both as regards timing and scope. ■

More information and the full text of both documents are available at:  
<http://www.echo.lu/legal/en/labhome.html>  
Fax: +352 4301 33190 (Communication)  
Fax: +32 2 2999201 (Green Paper)



**EVENTS  
UPDATE**

# PREPARING REGIONS FOR THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

## CONFERENCE ON REGIONS AND THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

It has been said many times in the past 18 months, and it's worth repeating: the potential to be gained by Europe's companies is enormous. In parallel with these advantages comes a set of new concerns - that we risk creating a society of information 'haves' and 'have-nots', as not all European regions are equally equipped to grasp these opportunities because of geographical, social and economic reasons.

To address these issues - and encourage cooperation between regional authorities - a conference, called Regions in the Information Society, is planned in Brussels on January 30-31, 1997.

The goal of the conference is to encourage constructive dialogue between the people responsible for the Information Society in regional development. This includes local and regional decision-makers, economic actors, telecom operators and service providers, and the authorities responsible for the structural funds. The Conference is intended to discuss the ways in which the Information Society can be better incorporated in policy action, and particularly in the Structural Funds.

At the conference, this new topic will be examined through the lessons learned from a broad range of regional initiatives that have been launched within and outside the Structural Funds framework, and through the experience of those countries and regions which have already integrated the Information Society into their Structural Funds programmes.

The outcome of the Conference will be an ongoing debate on the future of structural interventions.

On a shorter time perspective, it will constitute an important input to the review (due by mid 1997) of the programmes financed by the Structural Funds in the less favoured regions of the Union.

The Conference is organised in three sessions:

- Discussions on key questions, such as: the relation between the Information Society and regions' economic performance; the emerging competitive environment for infrastructure provision; the role that regional and local authorities may play in this process; the effects on employment, and related topics. A panel discussion will close the first half-day.
- An overview of what the Information Society means in practice, how certain regions have implemented it, what results they have achieved.
- An assessment of what must be done to better equip regions to benefit from the Information Society, and reduce the risks it may bring, with a particular focus on the Structural Funds mechanisms.

In parallel to the Conference, participants will have the opportunity to visit an exhibition of some practical examples of what Information Society can offer them. A conference room will also be available on the first day for delegates to present their initiatives, exchange ideas and discuss innovative practices. ■

For further information, *Regions and the Information Society*  
Palais de Congres, Brussels  
30-31 January 1997  
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**EVENTS  
UPDATE**

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Next came Telework Deutschland, which was held in Bonn on 11-13 November. This meeting was kicked off by the German Minister of Science, Dr. Gunther Rexrodt, and it focused on the introduction of telework, and telework in practice.

In the Netherlands the National Telework Award was awarded to the Lochem Teleservice Centre, which demonstrated a commercially-viable and socially-attractive environment.

The 'Grand Reception' in Brussels, hosted by Belgian Prime Minister, Jean-Luc

Dehaene, featured a speech by Belgian Minister of Economic Affairs, Mr. Elio Di Rupo. Jan Lamers, of the Belgian economic daily newspaper *De Financieel Economische Tijd*, commented on the national and European initiatives towards the Information Society.

Next year's European Telework Assembly, will be held in Stockholm (24-26 September 1997). If you can't be there....simply log-on. ■

For more information on ETW and updates on the finalised events, go to: <http://www.eto.org.uk>

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## CALENDAR

### Second European Digital Cities Conference

Strasbourg (F)  
12-13 December 1996  
Telecities  
Fax: +32 2 5520889  
e-mail: [telecities@mcr1.poptel.org.uk](mailto:telecities@mcr1.poptel.org.uk)  
<http://www.edc.org.uk/index.html>

### DLM Forum - Electronic records

Brussels (B)  
18-20 December 1996  
Fax: +32 2 2961095  
e-mail: [dlm-forum@sg.cec.be](mailto:dlm-forum@sg.cec.be)  
<http://www.ispo.cec.be/infosoc/promo/dlmfor1.html>

### Regions and the Information Society

Brussels (B)  
30-31 January 1997  
European Commission - DG XVI/A/3  
Fax: +32 2 2963271  
e-mail: "Nicola.De Michelis"@dg16.cec.be

### JENC8 - 8th Joint European Networking Conference

Edinburgh (GB)  
12-15 May 1997  
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