

## IS AND COHESION

# BRIDGING THE REGIONAL INFORMATION SOCIETY GAP

### EU Structural Funds refused to include an 'IS' priority

Since the concept of the Information Society (IS) was introduced by the European Commission two years ago, one of the key concerns has been equal access to these emerging information resources for every person in society.

Discussions in international government/industry/institution groups have called for vigilance, to ensure that no person or country is excluded, and to guard against a 'two track' Information Society, of information 'have's' and 'have-nots'. A major concern is the potentially unbridgable IS gap which risks being created between the industrialised and developing worlds. The World Bank's Infodev Programme, for example, was created to fund projects which will bring developing countries into the IS as rapidly as possible (see *ISPO News* N° 10).

But the real danger of exclusion from the IS is much closer to home. It lies in the vast gaps in levels of telecom technologies, services and infrastructure between various European Member States and regions. Recognising this, the European Commission is reacting by taking action in several areas, including defining or reforming policies, through new programmes, and forthcoming legislation. The most significant progress by

the Commission is the recent priority given to the Information Society within the Structural Funds Actions.

The Structural Funds are the European Commission's primary 'cohesion tool'. They make funds available to help disadvantaged regions improve their infrastructure and raise the competitiveness of the regional productive tissue, SMEs in particular, in order to modernise and diversify the economies of the less favoured regions. They also make funding available for the training of individuals in order to help people enter or remain in the labour market. By extending this policy to include the IS, the Structural Funds can now be used to further address social questions, protection of consumer interests and the improvement of the quality of public sector services with the use of Information and Communication Technologies.

Some of the other advances encouraged by the Commission in this area are:

- The launch of IS pilot projects for the first time, under the ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) and the European Social Fund (ESF). The priority for these efforts, which run from 1995-1999, is to translate the 'Information Society' concept into real life in the regions, by demonstrating innovative applications and services (<http://www.aeidl.be/art10/>)
- The definition of a Regional Information Society Initiative (RISI), that has two elements: to develop a regional partnership to elaborate a regional IS strategy and action plan; and to launch regional pilot applications for demonstrating best practice in the regional deployment of the IS (<http://www.risi.lu/>)
- The *Information Society and Cohesion Communication*, which was recently adopted by the Commission, highlights the significant differences that remain in the levels of development within the European Union (<http://www.ispo.cec.be/infosoc/legreg/docs/cohes1.html>).

All of these efforts address the central issue that faces Europe's rapidly advancing integration of the IS. How can the developments in IS and telecommunication policies be combined with the role to be played by structural cohesion tools, to rapidly reduce all disparities? This is precisely the challenge that the reform of the Structural Funds is addressing. ■

## WHERE'S THE GAP?

### New statistics highlight the areas of greatest divergence

A recently-published European Commission study on the Information Society pinpoints the areas of greatest regional divergence in today's Information Society, and highlights some misconceptions on what this type of statistics do and do not show.

For example: in 1993 the proportion of all households served by cable TV networks (which indicates the future potential for rapid deployment of local loop competition and broad band services) was about 97% of the Belgian population and 84% of the Dutch population compared to 0% in Italy and Greece, 2% in Portugal and 8% in Spain. *Continued on page 3*



Editorial by Johanna Boogerd-Quaak, MEP

### AN INFORMATION SOCIETY WITH A HUMAN FACE

The economic interest of the Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) is evident. Today it contributes to some five percent of the

worldwide GNP. This figure is expected to double by the year 2000. Despite the efforts already made by the European Union, Europe still lags behind the United States and Japan in the development of Information Society enthusiasm and practical applications. Compared to Europe, both of these countries have the advantage of a common legal framework and one nationwide language. These disadvantages alone make it essential that the EU adopts a favourable policy for ICT activities. Liberalisation of the European telecommunication sector in 1998, financial support of (small) ICT enterprises and specific ICT research programmes are examples of how European Union policies contribute to the creation of a European ICT market.

But perhaps the biggest obstacle is Europe's lagging human interest of the Information Society. Its creation and expansion depends solely on the enthusiasm of people who adapt their lives and work habits to embrace these new knowledge-based tools. How can we ensure that citizens' access to ICTs is secured? And how can we prevent a split in society between the 'have's' and 'have-nots' of information technology? This is why emphasising the human aspects of the Information Society is paramount to the uptake of the Information by all citizens. The European Commission and the European Parliament have addressed this concern in the Green Paper "Living and Working in the Information Society: People first". Both the Commission and Parliament stressed that ICTs are there for people, not vice versa!

The Information Society uncovers a fundamental dilemma. On the one hand it offers enormous possibilities for a better provision of services and a higher standard of living. On the other it threatens specific forms of employment and increases the gap between in- and outsiders. Member States must take innovative steps to tackle this dilemma. For example by reforming social security systems so that they take account of new forms of employment (teleworking). The possibilities for life-long learning will also be important in giving every member of society a chance to keep in step with technological developments. A European population which is based on the concept of permanent (re)education and the existence of a social security system which takes into account new ways of employment will be tremendous weapons of competition for the Europe on the future. This is today's challenge for European Member States - to include a more social dimension in the Information Society. ■

Mrs. Boogerd-Quaak is rapporteur for the European Parliament of the "Rolling Action Plan: Europe at the forefront of the Global Information Society". Full details at: <http://www.greenvalley.nl/europe@2001>

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



**FIFTH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME**

# COMMISSION PROPOSES FIFTH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME

**PRIMARY FOCUS IS USER BENEFITS, FLEXIBILITY AND BUILDING COMPETITIVENESS**

Four special research areas aim to build 'user-friendly Information Society'.

The draft for the EU's Fifth Framework Programme has been adopted by the European Commission and discussed in the research council of 15 May.

The Fifth European Research Framework Programme is markedly different from its predecessors in several key ways: its concentration on just six topics; its emphasis on coordination between the various actions and greater flexibility in management; and the fact that it combines information and communications technologies in a common research area for the first time.

The Fifth Framework Programme is divided into six major research areas.

**Three "thematic" programmes**  
Discovering resources of the living world and the ecosystem; developing a user-friendly Information Society; promoting competitive and sustainable growth (for example, research activities on clean and smart products and processes that bring high added value and a competitive edge). Each thematic programme will be divided into key actions which focus on a specific topic, considered to be of major economic and social importance to the European Union - such as health and food, water management and quality, electronic trade and new methods of working, or tomorrow's city.

**Three "horizontal" programmes**  
Stressing the international role of European research; innovating and involving SMEs; and increasing human potential (i.e. the quality of researchers, engineers and technicians). These programmes will ensure coordination of all the Framework Programme's activities in connection with their objectives.

**The Framework Programme's Information Society Programme**  
Outlining its new Information Society Programme, the Fifth Framework Programme proposal stresses that it will pay special attention to funding projects that are user friendly and bring a direct benefit to society in the areas of:

- systems and services for citizens

- electronic trade and new methods of work
- multimedia content
- essential technologies and infrastructures.

**Systems and services for the citizen**

Projects in these areas will cover the development of technologies and services that are interoperable and will focus on education and training, health and the elderly, public authorities, the environment, and transport. Particular attention will be given to the integration of these applications and their validation in wired sites, towns or regions.

**Electronic trade and new methods of work**

Systems of remote payment and management, the field of security, and particularly protection of citizens' private life and individual property rights are covered in this area. Flexible, mobile and remote working methods both for individuals, and for cooperative- and group-working are a second field of the key action.

**Multimedia content**

This area covers amongst others electronic publishing and the personalised distribution of publishing products. Education and training (technologies with a high degree of interactivity), technologies for languages or for access to and management of information are preferred together with projects which facilitate the use of multimedia.

**Essential technologies and infrastructures**

This is the 'systems and their applications' aspects of the Information Society, including: information technology; architecture; communications and networks. A special focus will be on projects which improve the quality of software and engineering - including communications and mobile and personal systems, services relating to satellites, interfaces, peripherals, sub-systems and microsystems and micro-electronics.

In addition work undertaken from a "visionary" perspective, connected with all the key actions and intended to ensure a continuous flow of ideas from laboratories to industry will be supported. ■

For full details of the Fifth Framework Programme point your browser to: <http://www.cordis.lu/fifth/home.html>

**SUCCESS STORY**

# CREATING EUROPE'S VIRTUAL R&D LABORATORY

Without its own high-speed data infrastructure linking all countries, the European research community cannot become a full player in the Information Society. The EU co-funded TEN-34 project is making this a reality.

As global competition heats up, companies are realising that there is a direct link between rapid access to research resources and their ability to outsmart competitors in the marketplace. Europe's weak link in the research/industry/consumer innovation chain is the slow speed of electronic 'gateways' between the national research networks

The TEN-34 project - which is supported by the European Union's Telematics Applications and ESPRIT programmes - has changed this, by putting in place the missing high-speed network links that

give Europe its own trans-European research information superhighway.

Through these new inter-network links researchers across Europe can exchange information and participate in a new 'virtual European research laboratory' that exists thanks to the exchange of text, voice and video, over high speed network links.

Like many of the rapidly-emerging trends and new work methods being pushed forward by the Information Society, the creation of a high-speed European research infrastructure is not an option. It's a requirement

**BANGEMANN CHALLENGE**

# TAKE YOUR MARKS ....

The Global Bangemann Challenge awaits at least 500 projects from 100 cities and regions around the world. What do you have that's outstanding? What's the best way to make use of the Information Society for citizens in cities and regions worldwide; and to get them actively involved in offering the best possible electronic services? The Global Bangemann Challenge, of course - the only worldwide competition for cities and regions in the Information Society. After three months of planning and preparation, the Global Bangemann Challenge is now ready for your city's best entries. When the Global Challenge was officially launched on May 27, this competition reached beyond Europe to challenge at least 100 cities worldwide to put their best Information Society projects forward (see *IS News April 1997*).

The field is now opened to receive entries from any city or region in the world with more than 400,000 inhabitants. All types of electronic services can be entered, provided they are running and implemented when the jury starts its evaluation work in October 1998. Public or private companies or organisations can also compete, provided they are hosted by a city or region. Competing projects are requested in the following areas: new business structures; information technology for small



Official launch of the TEN-34 network by Dr. Howard E. Davies in the video presence of Robert Verrue, Director General of DG XIII on 20 May 1997

to stay in business, says Dr. Howard E. Davies, General Manager, of DANTE, the UK-based coordinating body of the TEN-34 project. He explains: "The creation of TEN-34 gives us a European research network, and ensures that all developments in this area are not US-dominated, as was the case with the Internet. From Europe's point of view, the previous situation was clearly undesirable, but it is difficult for 15 governments to agree on a single infrastructure concept. We were able to move forward because we have a central organisation that promotes a common concept. Only the European Commission can provide this".

Looking back at the challenges faced by the DANTE team, Davies cites the high cost of European telecommunications as the single most important obstacle to the establishment of high-speed research links in Europe. "The new network

guards against the previous situation where it was often cheaper for a European user to connect to the United States than to another European country. This is a totally crazy situation because the actual cost of providing a trans-Atlantic submarine link is higher than crossing a terrestrial border within Europe," he comments.

Today, nearly every western European country has a national high speed research network. Most have a capacity of 34 Mbp/s. Some - such as Britain's SuperJANET or Germany's B-WIN - offer throughput of up to 155 Mbp/s. The TEN-34 backbone network is upgrading the 2 Mbit/s international links between these national networks to 34 Mbit/s. Most European countries are currently linked through TEN-34, and the remaining connections are being progressively completed. Not all countries enjoy a 34 Mbp/s connection. Some countries require

higher access capacities than they are actually subscribing for but are limited as a result of budgetary constraints combined with prices charged by the telecommunications operators.

The TEN-34 consortium has partners in all EU countries as well as the Czech Republic, Hungary, Norway, Slovenia and Switzerland. The coordinating partner is DANTE, a non-profit organisation set up in 1993 by a group of national research networks based in Cambridge, United Kingdom. ■

For further information about TEN-34, please contact: Dr. Howard E. Davies, General Manager DANTE, Francis House, 112 Hills Road, Cambridge CB2 1PH, UK  
Tel: +44 1223 302992  
Fax: +44 1223 303005  
e-mail: h.e.davies@dante.org.uk  
<http://www.dante.net/ten-34>

Jean-Pierre Euzen, Head of Sector EC DG XIII, Telematic Applications Programme, Research Networks  
Tel: +32 2 2963447  
e-mail: Jean-Pierre.Euzen@bxl.dg13.cec.be



and medium-sized enterprises; electronic commerce; information technology in all forms of education; lifelong

learning; public services and democracy; health and community care; culture and media; supporting the environment; equal access to networking; and improving traffic and transport. Evaluation criteria will focus on the positive impact that the competing services have on citizens and society. Projects that seek to eliminate segregation, promote gender equality or give easy access to the use of information technology for the elderly and disabled, will be favourably considered. Services that have a positive impact on regional development - by supporting SMEs or that bring technology applications to developing countries are also encouraged. ■

For full details, ask for your entrance form, located in the Global Bangemann brochure  
Tel: +46 8 50829151  
Fax: +46 8 6501640  
e-mail: [bangemann@challenge.stockholm.se](mailto:bangemann@challenge.stockholm.se)  
Or by pointing your browser to the Global Bangemann Challenge web site: <http://www.challenge.stockholm.se>

## ONE SIMPLE GOAL: DIRECT BENEFITS FOR ALL CITIZENS

The Global Bangemann Challenge has one simple goal: to encourage the creation of practical information technology projects that are of direct benefit to people and communities. The competition's mission is to:

- Present the very best information technology projects that cities or regions have created.
- Reach at least 100 cities or regions and 500 projects worldwide, in 11 different categories.
- Build new networks between cities and projects, and strengthen existing networks.
- Create social and technological links between cities and people.

## IS AND COHESION

*Where's the gap?* Continued from page 1

Another example concerns the cost of using Information Society services: at the beginning of 1996, the residential installation of a telephone line costs respectively on average 32.5% more in cohesion regions than in the European core; 65.0% more in Ireland and 76.0% more in Greece.

Averages can hide major differences within countries. In Portugal, for example, 62 main telephone lines per 100 inhabitants were available in Lisbon against 29 in the rest of the country and 18 in the Azores; in Spain, Madrid had 45.2 lines against 36 in the rest of the country and 22 in Estremadura; and in Greece, 52 lines were available in the Athens region against only 27 in Anatoliki/Macedonia.

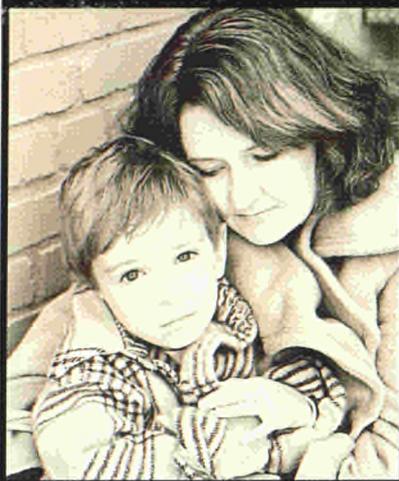
These new statistics indicate that the Information Society presents new challenges and opportunities for a whole variety of social groups. Reflection is now under way on how to address these needs through the provision of ICT based services and applications.

Basic facts on Information Society developments in Member States are available on: <http://www.ispo.cec.be/esis/>

### KEY POINTS FROM THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION COMMUNICATION

*"The implications of the Information Society for EU policies: preparing the next steps"*

- One of the key factors for access to the Information Society is the availability of telecommunications infrastructure. While European telecom services are converging in many ways, significant differences in levels of infrastructure development among Member States and regions remain or may even be newly created.
- Liberalisation will increase the quality of services and will drive prices down. The obligation of 'universal service' will ensure a basic telephone service which already includes access to on-line services at affordable prices. But because private infrastructure investments are demand driven, access to the new and advanced services will be introduced at different speeds and conditions in the EU.
- To reduce the risks, local, regional and national initiatives are needed, not only to attract infrastructure investments but also to stimulate the demand for new information services. The transfer of experiences and best practice already developed by advanced regions could help in this respect - for example, in strategy development, in tele-education, in teleworking).
- Local, regional and national initiatives to develop telecom infrastructure and the IS are underway in many areas, but there is still a great reluctance and lack of awareness on behalf of the regions. Rural areas and less-favoured regions need to develop specific initiatives to encourage private-public or cross-regional partnerships, elaborate regional strategies and launch pilot applications. ■



**ISPO CORNER**

**BRINGING THE DISADVANTAGED INTO THE INFORMATION SOCIETY**

The ISPO-supported Herzogsägmühle On-line Service Centre is an information resource for socially disadvantaged users. This project is implemented by Herzogsägmühle in Germany - a social village of the Lutheran diocese, and has project partners in Ireland and Northern Ireland. The project's objective is to develop a broad base of information and services designed specifically for the needs of socially disadvantaged users. This is being done through an intensive research effort and close contact with users so as to determine their precise needs. The final result of this project will be the publication of the Herzogsägmühle Web Guide, a catalogue of on-line services - in German-speaking countries and Europe-wide. An on-line help desk along with 'in-person' advice will be available to all users, to help them deal with any information or operational problems. The project has a parallel set

of education goals. These are to evaluate the abilities and requirements of socially disadvantaged and disabled people to access on-line information services by themselves. Part of the project is a sociological research process, that will result in the creation of a curriculum for the training of this user group to use these new media. During an eight month analysis phase a socio-pedagogical specialist will observe the information processes within the centre, evaluate it using sociological methods - under the guidance of the social matters sector of the Munich polytechnic school. The results of this investigation will form the basis of a future curriculum. The results of this work will be presented at an international conference, where the lessons learned through this centre will be open for use by similar projects and authorities across Europe. ■

*For more information contact: Andreas Kurz, Herzogsägmühle, EU-Büro, Von Kahl-Straße 4, D-86971 Peiting Fax: +49 8861 219122 e-mail: info@herzogsaegmuehle.de http://www.herzogsaegmuehle.de*

**EVENTS UPDATE**

**THIRD EU-CEEC FORUM ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY**

The third meeting on the Information Society between the European Union and 13 countries from Central and Eastern Europe (CEEC) will be held in Brussels on 9-10 October. The Forum is being prepared by the work of four panels on:

- How can EU and CEEC policy making best be coordinated; to consider the information needs of governments, including the harmonisation of statistical data on the IS (chair: Hungary).
- Implementation of demonstrations, pilot trials and projects and other actions

designed to raise awareness of the potential of the Information Society in CEECs; recommendations and search for sponsors (chair: Slovenia).

- Education and training (chair: Estonia).
- Information and Communications Technologies in public administrations (chair: Czech Republic). ■

*The Forum will be open by invitation only. Further information on the conference: Mrs. Grazyna Wojcieszko DG XIII/IS2 - International aspects of Information Society and Telecommunications Tel: +32 2 2958357 Fax: +32 2 2968970 e-mail: grazyna.wojcieszko@dg13.cec.be*

**Information Society News** is available free of charge. For a free subscription to the magazine write with full details to: EUR-OP (*Information Society News*) 2, rue Mercier (MER 193-195) L-2985 Luxembourg

**For any subscription amendments** please return to EUR-OP the address enclosed with your newsletter, or quote your subscriber number (8 figures printed on the left next to your name and address) on your correspondence.

**Please note:** EUR-OP regrets it cannot acknowledge receipt of your request or enter into correspondence about subscriptions.

**To receive back copies of the magazine** (if still available), and any other enquiries, please write to: ISPO, BU 24 2/78, rue de la Loi 200, B-1049 Brussels e-mail: ispo@ispo.cec.be

**This newsletter and previous issues are also available on the web at:** <http://www.ispo.cec.be/ispo/newsletter/index.html>

**CALENDAR**

**11th European Conference of the International Association of Science Parks**  
Madeira (PT)  
18-19 September 1997  
Tel: +351 91 741253  
Fax: +351 91 741293  
e-mail: oto@dragoeiro.uma.pt

**Role of Universities in the Future Information Society**  
Prague (CZ)  
24-27 September  
Karel Kveton  
Tel: +42 2 24310369  
Fax: +42 2 3117529  
e-mail: rufis-call@mail.vc.cvut.cz  
<http://www.cvut.cz/cp1250/cc/icsc/Nil/index.html>

**Public Electronic Trade and Commerce '97**  
Stockholm (S)  
1-2 October  
Swedish Local Authorities  
Sara Goldberger  
Tel: +46 8 7724224  
Fax: +46 8 7724352  
e-mail: sara.goldberger@svekom.se

**Building the Global Information Society for the 21st Century**  
Brussels (B)  
1-3 October 1997  
EC DG III - Industry  
with the support of CEN/EWOS  
Tel: +32 2 5117455  
Fax: +32 2 5118723  
e-mail: glstdconf@dg3.cec.be  
<http://www.ispo.cec.be/standards/conf97>

**Online Educa Berlin International conference on technology in distance learning**  
Berlin (DE)  
29-31 October  
ICEF  
Tel: +49 30 3249833  
e-mail: 100770.3137@compuserve.com

**European IT Conference & Exhibition EITC 97**  
Brussels (B)  
24-26 November  
EC DG III - ESPRIT  
Tel: +32 2 2991926  
e-mail: eitc97@dg3.cec.be  
<http://www.cordis.lu/esprit/src/eitc97.htm>

**3rd European digital Cities Conference**  
Berlin (D)  
1-2 December 1997  
Eric Mino  
EDC project coordination office  
Tel: +32 2 5520889  
e-mail: telecities@mcr1.poptel.org.uk  
<http://www.edc.eu.int>

*Information Society News (IS News) is published under the responsibility of ISPO. Neither the European Commission nor any person acting on its behalf is responsible for the use which might be made of the information in this Newsletter.*

**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	060 222086
Portugal	0505 329635
Spain	900 993290
Sweden	020 791635
United Kingdom	0800 962114

**Payphone:** +32 2 2968800  
or +32 2 2968900

**Fax:** +32 2 2994170  
or +32 2 2994180

**e-mail:** [ispo@ispo.cec.be](mailto:ispo@ispo.cec.be)

**World Wide Web:** <http://www.ispo.cec.be>

**Mail:** Information Society Project Office  
BU 24 0/74, rue de la Loi 200,  
B-1049 Brussels