

INFO2000

NOW IS THE TIME FOR EUROPEAN COMPANIES TO SEIZE THEIR OPPORTUNITIES

The Information Society will create an estimated six million jobs in the European Union by 2010. To tap into the lucrative and fast-developing information content and multimedia markets the EU and European companies must strategically position themselves today.

With its broad cultural spectrum and innovative publishing and Information Technology sectors, Europe is in a prime position to become a leading producer of high quality multimedia content. But today, as the Information Society is in full expansion, potential European multimedia content producers are not grasping this opportunity.

This lag occurs primarily because Europe faces a series of logistical and practical obstacles, such as fragmented markets, dispersed source material, rapidly changing technology, complexities in the tracing of intellectual property rights, and restricted access to venture capital for smaller companies.

To help remedy this situation, the European Commission has launched the INFO2000 programme. Its primary aim is to overcome these obstacles, by stimulating Europe's emerging multimedia content industry to recognise and jump on these new business opportunities. INFO2000 aims to develop a spirit of innovation in the information content sector that will make Europe a leader in multimedia for the Global Information Society. A leadership position in multimedia sector will be a new source of economic power for Europe. Other benefits will be increased competitiveness and employment and new opportunities

for individual, professional, social, and cultural development.

The first step forward for INFO2000 is the co-funding of innovative projects proposed by European companies. A first call for proposals was published in June 1996 for projects focusing on cultural, geographic, business or scientific/technical information. Industry responded with 477 proposals out of which 80 projects were selected to receive support of up to 100,000 ECU each, covering 50% of their development costs, during 1997. Of these, 29 projects were chosen for further funding of up to 500,000 ECU through 1998 and 1999. The topics covered include:

- multimedia presentations of different eras of history - from the Crusades to the events of 1968
- the supply of a wide choice of artworks and photographs for commercial exploitation, including full intellectual property right coverage
- combined CD-ROMs and Internet sites on trademarks, documentary credits, industrial location opportunities and agricultural machinery
- advances in the supply of pan-European topographical data and improved access to geographic information
- an 'electronic book' on surgery and a presentation of biodiversity and ecosystems.

New Calls for Proposals in end 1997 will attract projects in two key areas: exploiting the resources of Europe's public sector, and trading intellectual property rights for multimedia production. Some 9.2 MECU in funding has been allocated.

Strategic planning

INFO2000 is also active in supporting strategic planning by industry and public authorities and has commissioned a new study called: "Content-driven strategies in global networking", which will produce its conclusions in October 1998. A communication on illegal and harmful content on the Internet has now been followed up with a new Action Plan on promoting safe use of the Internet. INFO2000 is also promoting the improved access to information held by the public sector and it is intended to publish a Green Paper on this subject shortly. Finally, a Communication to the European Council: Towards a European Policy Formulation for Geographic Information (GI2000), is currently being finalized. ■

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Editorial by Pasqual Maragall i Mira President of the Committee of the Regions

THE REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE IS A PEOPLE'S PERSPECTIVE

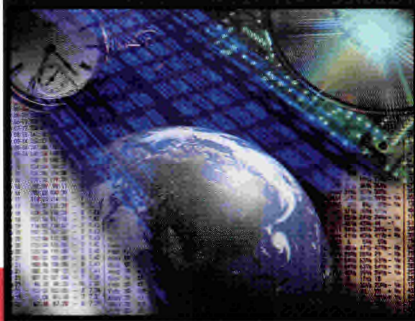
Bring the Information Society closer to the Citizen

The Committee of the Regions (COR) started its work on the Information Society in early 1995, with the adoption of an initial opinion on the European Commission's action plan. This opinion was of fundamental importance for the COR. It was the first statement on this topic from a local and regional perspective; a 'citizen's perspective'. At the G7 summit in February 1995 a range of principles were adopted, which relate to the global Information Society. It established a comprehensive regulatory framework at the global level, but completely ignored the local and regional dimension. And yet the Information Society is a network society, it exists as a system of flows between existing spots or not at all. This made the COR's mission to publish its opinion in good time for the G7 summit in Brussels all the more urgent, so that the stance of local and regional authorities could be presented, with substantial effect, to a wider public. The three conclusions voiced by the COR were:

- Liberalisation must be dependent on the effective guarantee of universal service, in strict compliance with the principle of economic and social cohesion.
- A rigorous study should be made of the impact of applications in the social, economic and cultural spheres so that the transition to the Information Society is socially acceptable.
- The COR offers itself as a potential reference for the development of an information network connecting the local and regional governments of Europe, and promoting the understanding of information systems.

A next step was the Committee's reaction to the key European Commission communications that were conceived to shape Europe's Information Society policy - *From Corfu to Dublin: the new emerging priorities*; and *The implications of the information society for EU policies: Preparing the next steps*. Given the importance of these Communications, the COR decided - rather than adopt an opinion - to draw up a political resolution, which was addressed to both Presidents of the European Institutions, and to all Heads of State or Government across the European Union. The essence of the COR's message of imperatives for the Information Society focused the following topics: the importance of a strong backbone of education, training and lifelong learning; the importance of regional and local authorities' involvement in promoting education; and the importance of providing citizens with know-how and training to use these new technologies and practical and financial access to them.

In its effort to guide European Union Information Society policy toward citizens' needs, the COR has produced five opinions on the Information Society to date, and a further six on the important and related areas



TEN-TELECOM

IS SURVEY

HOW TEN-TELECOM BUILDS TRANS EUROPEAN INFORMATION SERVICES

Trans-European Networks for Telecom (TEN-Telecom) is the most recent addition to the list of European Union initiatives aimed at bringing the Information Society to all citizens.

This programme's primary focus is on stimulating the creation of "networks of innovative, economically viable, demand-driven applications that match the socio-economic needs of citizens and SMEs". Its target areas are public interest, such as teleservices for health, distance education and training, access to Europe's cultural heritage, services for SMEs, mobility, environment and emergency management, city and regional information highways.

TEN-Telecom also supports generic services. These are usually Internet-based, and provide common tools for the development and implementation of applications between user groups in different European locations.

A final and very important objective of TEN-Telecom is to assess strategic development and interoperation of infrastructure networks, either fixed, mobile or satellite, in the context of the emergence of global communication networks.

TEN-TELECOM operates through yearly Calls for Proposals for the funding of feasibility studies and validation measures. It also funds the cost of project deployment by subsidising interest on loans, contributing towards fees for guarantees for loans, or in some cases through direct grants. Project funding is used to reduce the financial risk due to uncertainties on the short-term commercial viability of innovative telecom services, and to help them launch trans-European coverage as public-private partnerships. For feasibility studies and validation measures the financial contribution can total 50% of their cost. For project deployment the total EU funding cannot exceed 10% of the overall planned investment cost. Some 30 million ECU per year will be granted to TEN-Telecom projects until 2001.

Today's projects

Ten projects have been selected from the 1996 Call for Proposals. The INFOCITIES project is a good example of the type of innovative ideas TEN-Telecom is looking for. The goal of INFOCITIES is to integrate a range of telecom services offered by eight European cities – the

Hague, Antwerp, Barcelona, Helsinki, Liege, Manchester and Nice – which are associated with more than 30 companies, using common infrastructures and standards. The INFOCITIES will allow the participants to share information and applications in the areas of education, health, transport, culture, electronic commerce, and city information. Target users are residents, tourists and companies. The current two-year feasibility phase (January 1997 to January 1999) addresses interoperability of services, selection of applications, and business planning. In Phase 2, ten new local and regional authorities will join the project, services bringing the number of target users to 2.5 million individual and collective customers.

For full details about INFOCITIES, go to: <http://www.infocities.eu.int>

Some 12 projects have been retained at the last TEN-Telecom Call for Proposals.

MELIC is a good example. MELIC integrates several projects currently funded by the Telematics Applications Programme in the health care area (BEAM, CATCH, INFOCARE, SEAHORSE, TESEMED). It develops multimedia telematic services providing European citizens with information on health-related lifestyles, disease prevention, self-care and health care services. The project plans to establish pan-European telematic channels of information, and to produce common hardware and software platforms to make health related information available to citizens. These services will be installed on a trial basis in health care centres, community pharmacies, libraries, schools, insurance companies, and also at home. The project is also preparing a business plan for the large-scale dissemination of these information services.

A Call for Proposals is planned for mid-January on basic networks. Another Call is planned for March 1998 on telecommunication applications, related generic services, and programme support measures. ■

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For up-to-date information you can consult the TEN-Telecom Web page at: <http://www2.echo.lu/tentelecom/en/1thome.html>

WHO WANTS WHAT IN THE INFORMATION SOCIETY?

EUROPE-WIDE ISPO SURVEY TELLS ALL

We know that the Information Society is set to fundamentally change the way many of us work and live. But exactly who's using what, and what are the trends to watch out for? This is precisely what the 1997 ISPO Information Society Survey set out to learn. The survey provides a unique snapshot of Europe's Information Society today. The data gathered through more than 15,000 face-to-face interviews across the 15 Member States provides one of the very first comparative views of the Information Society market trends in Europe. Here are some of the key findings:

The satellite market in Europe offers an extremely interesting potential. Some 16.4% of the Europeans interviewed this year, use a satellite reception antenna at home. 23.2% of the overall sample (which is equivalent to more than 65,000,000 Europeans, almost one out of four interviewees) declared they were interested in satellite technology.

Personal computer users. Some 27.8% of all Europeans interviewed use a PC at home, and 40% of them use similar equipment in the office. More than 20% of the Europeans interviewed (an equivalent of roughly 60,000,000 people) said they were interested in using a PC at home; more than 10% (which represents

roughly 30,000,000 people) said they are interested in using a PC at work.

Internet awareness levels.

The Internet has profited enormously of the awareness campaigns on the Information Society over the past two years. In 1995 43.5% of the Europeans interviewed did not know what the Internet was. This year this figure has been reduced of 40%: only 3% of the sample seemed not to fully understand the meaning of the question. The number of Europeans who say they are interested in the Internet has also increased: from 15.6% to 23.8% at home (16.2% in the workplace). The figures of the actual users are (on average): 4.4% of those interviewed use it at home; 8.8% of the sample use it in their businesses.

The potential Internet community.

The potential European Internet community – as suggested by the interviews carried out this year – show two distinct groups of users. One ranging between 63,000,000 and 77,000,000 people (interested in using the Internet at home); the other ranging between 44,600,000 and 55,600,000 people interested in using it in the workplace).

Socio-demographic findings.

Highly educated men, aged between 25 and 54, are the primary users. Women seem to use it less and to be less interested in new Information and Communication Technologies. Satellite technology is a clear example of this divide between the sexes:

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of the liberalisation of the telecommunications market. Other debates launched by the COR cover the topics of media concentration, liberalisation of postal services and the provision of universal service. The most recent – and most topical – area of the COR's consultative remit relates to the issue of cohesion and the Information Society. For the first time the European Commission examines the link

between the Information Society and economic and social cohesion in the European Union. The communication is important for the COR, as it reflects the regional aspects of the Information Society which the Committee has highlighted in a number of previous opinions. The COR put its vision of improved communication links between local and regional authorities into practice by



A WINDOW ON THE WORLD OF RESEARCH RESULTS...

...AND HOW THEY'RE USED BY INDUSTRY

Introducing PROSOMA

Finding out about IT research and development results in the EU has never been easier, thanks to PROSOMA, a new electronic information service on industrial IT innovation. Through the PROSOMA Internet site or a multimedia CD-ROM, users can have direct access to the results of all Esprit projects. PROSOMA's showcase demonstrates R&D results in the form of multimedia presentations, summaries and detailed technical descriptions. It also offers links to the growing network of Internet sites that provide information on how research results are applied to products, and on the terms and conditions for their exploitation. Presentations include video footage, still images, animation, interviews, demonstrations and access to the www home pages of the respective result owner. Additional publications are available for specific target groups and industrial sectors, and presentations can be tailor-made for specific groups of end-users. ■

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18% of the men interviewed use a satellite antenna at home against 14.9% of European women. 27.8% of the male sample (against 19% of the female sample) said they were interested in using satellite technology. Users' level of education seems to be directly related to the use of all computer-related technologies. But television and related technologies are less sensitive to this correlation. The group that makes most use of satellite equipment is those who finished their studies at age 16-19; 'manual workers' are the largest group of satellite (22.3%) and TV decoder users (16.5%).

Who wants ICT applications/services?

The survey suggests that millions of Europeans are willing to pay 10 ECU/month for tangible and concrete applications, that address the most urgent and serious issues of daily life, such as on-line medicine, cultural and entertainment services, professional training, political and government dialogue, etc. Download now on the Measuring Information Society Survey 97 web pages, the first pan-European estimates about the dimension of the potential market for networks supported applications! ■

To retrieve the complete data set of the Information Society Eurobarometer "Measuring Information Society" survey and a document that facilitates the understanding of the results, point your browser to:
http://www.ispo.cec.be/info_soc/promo/pubs/measure.html

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organising a ground breaking virtual meeting on this subject in Brussels on September 25, 1997. During the meeting COR Members from cohesion and peripheral areas made their views heard via an ISDN audio-visual link-up. The Committee of the Regions plans to go on using the most modern communication tools in order to bring the European Union closer to its citizens. More than this: The COR is bound to become

the first European institution which is virtual as much as real in the sense of having to make telematics the main means of communication. Given the fact that regional representatives and city mayors are on the spot authorities, they cannot and should not become permanent dwellers in Brussels. Their strength is flexibility. Networking is a crucial need for them to relate to each other without losing contact with local realities. ■

G7 PILOT PROJECTS

CAN WE TAKE THE PAPER OUT OF BUREAUCRACY?

Through 'Government on-line' more than 20 countries are trying

The governments of more than 20 countries have come together to discuss one simple question, which will have an earth-shaking impact on administrations and the way they interact with their communities: how can administrations use Information Society tools to streamline their internal work and to provide better services for citizens? This is the goal of the Government on-line (GOL) project. It is a forum where participating countries are working on a number of problem-solving, information sharing and best practice in initiatives. The objective of the GOL partners' work is to:

- Replace paper-based mail by electronic mail, within government and with the public.
- Provide fully interactive, on-line services for more complex transactions, allowing the public both to obtain and provide information from a variety of locations, including at home.
- Develop on-line transaction processing to support the delivery of routine services.

More than 20 countries actively participate in the GOL project and similar number have expressed an interest in participating.

Hot topics

The GOL partners identified a list of 'hot topics' for the recent meeting.

Benchmarking: Preliminary work has taken place in identifying possible criteria which enables the status of each country's progress in implementing information services to be tracked.

Analysis of Information Society strategies and policies: many countries have published statements, plans and policies about their development within the



Information Society. This activity is to exchange information to chart each country's objectives and progress.

On-line government forms: many governments are putting electronic versions of their paper forms on the Internet. A summary of the current mechanisms in use is being produced.

Public Access to Information: GOL partners sharing experiences on the ways of improving public access to information. A summary of 'information kiosk projects' is being produced.

Government intranets: sharing experiences in the provision of Intranet facilities.

Other 'Hot Topics' will be identified for discussion at the next meeting. In addition to this, the GOL countries have defined a list of sub-projects: Existing sub-projects are Information sharing and re-use; Directory services; On-line support for democracy; Permits and licences; Charging for services and information; Year 2000 issues; International Government Information (IT) Directory, Multipurpose Community Centres and the Application of Card Technology. New sub-projects identified are Best Practices and Case Studies in Electronic Governments, GO Frontier IT (improved access for the disabled) and Public Key Infrastructures. ■

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A NETWORK FOR MULTIMEDIA INFORMATION

In parallel to the above actions (see INFO2000 page 1), INFO2000 has also created MIDAS-NET (Multimedia Information, Demonstration and Support Network), a network of 23 nodes representing 106 organisations located in 17 countries of the European Economic Area. Each node is carrying out local awareness and demonstration activities for the use of innovative multimedia products, in particular by SMEs.

Services offered by MIDAS-NET to SMEs, and citizens via libraries, include human and electronic help desk facilities, awareness seminars, specialised workshops, access to national and European catalogues, examples of best practice, brochures and other information material, state-of-the-art multimedia training facilities and assistance with partner-finding. In this framework, the MIDAS-NET nodes also operate Internet Web servers in their national languages, with the support of the central server of INFO2000, I* M Europe. ■ (<http://www.echo.lu>)



ISPO CORNER

GIVING YOUNG PEOPLE THE MAGIC TOUCH

TARDIS, an Anglo/Spanish ISPO project is bringing the wonderful world of Internet to underprivileged 16-24 year-olds. A series of Infokiosks are hitting the streets in Manchester and Barcelona. Their goal: to give homeless people, the unemployed, 16-24 year olds, and the elderly in these cities' underprivileged communities access to useful information, through these 'street corner Internet links'. By mixing public sector information with commercial information, TARDIS (short for Targeted Delivery of Information and Services) aims to increase the take-up and repeat use of public access terminals. The system uses 'intelligent agent' technology to help users get directly to the information they need. In Barcelona, the TARDIS team has joined forces with Barcelona City Council and is concentrating on the delivery of drug-related information. In Manchester, the project is concentrating on bringing information to community groups. It has forged strong links with Manchester Community Information Network (MCIN).

Officially launched as 'MagicTouch' last July, the Manchester TARDIS service registered more than 700 users in its first two months in operation. Today's user community totals more than 1000 registered users. The most popular information (as logged by the system) appears to be news, jobs and of course - sports. In Spain, the project has just started. The Spanish team is now working closely with Barcelona City Council to determine the exact requirements for a drugs information service. The team will re-use some of the software developed in the UK trial and adapt it for use in Spain. ■

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transport, health, multimedia, users and the scientific community. The Conference will be a discussion forum for:

Demonstrating the achievements, results and impact of the Telematics Applications Programme.

Exploring future visions for telematics applications in everyday life; explaining the role of the 5th Framework R&D Programme (1998-2002) in realising these visions.

Sharing expertise and project experience on state-of-the-art telematics technologies and applications. ■

For full details, point your browser to:
<http://concord.cscdc.be>
 (updated version of full programme of the conference)
 e-mail: conference@cscdc.be

EVENTS UPDATE

TELEMATICS APPLICATION CONFERENCE: A DECADE OF ACHIEVEMENT

Barcelona, February 4-7

The European Union's Telematics Applications Programme is holding a four-day conference and exhibition in Barcelona on February 4-7. The meeting will focus on the achievements of the 10 years of research in Telematics Applications, and will also discuss the future in the 5th Framework Research Programme. Attending the conference will be participants in Telematics Programme projects, decision-makers, industry representatives - in the areas of informatics, telecommunications,

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