



COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Brussels, 14.05.1996
COM(96) 188 final

95/0156 (CNS)

Amended proposal for a

COUNCIL DECISION

**adopting a multi-annual Community programme
to stimulate the development of a European multimedia content industry
and to encourage the use of multimedia content
in the merging information society
(INFO 2000)**

(presented by the Commission pursuant to Article 189 a (2)
of the EC-Treaty)

Explanatory memorandum

1. Introduction

- 1.1 On 30 June 1995 the Commission adopted a proposal for a Council Decision adopting a multi-annual Community programme to stimulate the development of a European multimedia content industry and to encourage the use of this multimedia content in the emerging information society (INFO 2000) (COM(95) 149 final). This proposal was transmitted to the Council on 30 June 1995.
- 1.2 The Council reached a political agreement on this proposal on 27 November 1995.
- 1.3 The ESC delivered its opinion at the meeting on 20-21 December 1995 (ESC(95) 1455).
- 1.4 The European Parliament adopted its opinion on 28 March 1996. That opinion contains 52 amendments to the original text presented by the Commission.
- 1.5 The Commission can accept 24 of these amendments, of which 16 in whole and 8 in part. It cannot accept the remaining 28 amendments.
- 1.6 The reasons for which the Commission has adopted this position on the amendments are set out in paragraph 3 below. The text of the amended proposal is given in Annex 1 (right-hand column) as compared with the text of the original proposal (left-hand column).

2. Object of the proposal

The proposal concerns the establishment of a multi-annual Community programme, called INFO 2000, aimed at stimulating the development of a European multimedia content industry and encouraging the use of this multimedia content in the emerging information society.

The three long-term strategic objectives of the programme are:

- to facilitate the development of the European information content industry;
- to optimise the contribution of new information services to growth, competitiveness and employment in Europe;
- to optimise the contribution of the advanced information services to the professional, social and cultural development of the citizens of Europe.

3. Position of the Commission on the amendments presented by the European Parliament

3.1 Amendments accepted as they stand

The Commission accepts Amendments 4, 6, 8, 9, 15, 17, 20, 22, 27, 28, 33, 34, 39, 44, 47 and 51.

Amendment 4 adds a new recital rightly underlining respect for linguistic pluralism.

Amendment 6 is useful in that it adds a new recital to the effect that the measures under the programme must help, in particular, to reduce the risks of exclusion.

Amendment 8 specifies that cinema and television are included in the audiovisual sector.

Amendment 9 stresses the synergy to be achieved between the INFO 2000 programme and other Community programmes or initiatives.

Amendment 15 extends the Commission's responsibility to the granting of financial aid.

Amendment 17 redefines the field of application of the comitology procedure set out in Article 5, by deleting the breakdown of the budgetary expenditure and introducing a more precise wording as regards the participation of bodies from third countries or international organisations.

Amendment 20 is a technical improvement to the wording employed.

Amendment 22 is useful in pointing out that the organisations entrusted with awareness and information campaigns work in a European and international network.

Amendment 27 is an improvement to the title of Action Line 2 (Multimedia exploitation of public sector information).

Amendment 28 adds some useful remarks on public sector information.

Amendment 33 specifies the fields concerned by the pilot projects conducted under activity 2.2.

Amendment 34 improves upon the wording of the original text to express the same idea.

Amendment 39 rightly reiterates the importance of the coordinated approach adopted in the pilot projects conducted under the IMPACT programme.

Amendment 44 rightly insists on particular encouragement for the development of multimedia services for SMEs amongst the measures aimed at developing and exchanging good practice.

Amendment 47 rightly points out that education must devote more attention to Europe's cultural and linguistic heritage and to the multimedia aspect.

Amendment 51 improves upon the wording.

3.2 Amendments which the Commission can accept in part or subject to modification.

This concerns Amendments 1, 5, 7, 21, 30, 37, 38 and 50.

Amendment 1 makes a useful addition in the form of a new recital reiterating the principles of equality, accessibility and low cost, with regard to certain basic services, which must be respected in the provision of multimedia services. The Commission cannot, however, accept the words "and in some cases free provision", which it regards as too all-embracing.

Amendment 5 can be accepted in principle, in that the interests of the public certainly merit special attention. Nevertheless, in order to preserve the consistency of the text of the recitals, it is preferable to add the words "and the interests of the public" at the end of recital 11.

It is not within the remit of INFO 2000 to settle the questions raised by Amendment 7. Nevertheless, the Commission agrees with the spirit of the proposed recital and will devote particular attention to the level of implementation of the programme, so as to ensure that the measures taken under the programme are compatible with the policy guidelines expressed by Parliament. The amendment is therefore acceptable if reworded as follows: "Whereas it is necessary to devote particular attention, at the level of implementation of the programme, to the risks of abuse of multimedia content in such pernicious areas as racism, illegal pornography and other criminal activities;"

Amendment 21 is acceptable as regards the first two parts, in that it makes useful additions. In the third part, however, while the remarks about encouraging the development of demand amongst certain user groups is acceptable, the reference to certain categories (women, the disabled, associations, NGOs) is too specific in this context.

Amendment 30 is acceptable except for the first point ("and the potential offered by women in the subsequent development of such technologies") and the last point ("The Commission will assist the Member States ..."). The first point confuses the general and the particular and makes it difficult to grasp the real imperatives of the Green Paper. The last point seems hardly compatible with the principle of subsidiarity and would require financial resources not provided for in the proposed budget.

Amendment 37 is acceptable provided the specific reference to the United States is deleted.

The first two parts of Amendment 38 provide useful rewordings and additions. As regards the second last change (development of new software packages), the Commission cannot accept this addition for the reasons set out for Amendment 45. Lastly, in the case of the final change, the proposed measure duplicates the measures taken under the Green Paper on copyright and neighbouring rights in the information society.

Amendment 50 is welcome, in that it proposes that the support received for the products emanating from a project receiving financial support should be acknowledged. The inclusion of the European Union flag, however, is not acceptable, since it could create ambiguity by giving the impression of a quality label.

3.3 Amendments which the Commission cannot accept:

This concerns Amendments 2, 3, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 18, 19, 23, 24, 25, 26, 29, 31, 32, 35, 36, 40, 41, 42, 43, 45, 46, 48, 49 and 52.

Amendment 2 raises the risk of duplication with other programmes, in particular the Telematics Applications programme, in that it states that the actions should support the development of applications serving the purposes of health, education, training and regional planning.

A new recital giving special treatment to associations and NGOs, as proposed in Amendment 3, is not justified in the light of the general nature of the recitals.

Contrary to Amendment 10, the Commission considers that adapting the individual projects to developments in the market is essentially a matter for the partners in each project. On the other hand, the Commission must ensure that the proposed programme adapts to developments in the market, in particular by updating the criteria for calls for proposals.

Amendment 11, which lays down a principle of strict reciprocity in implementing the programme in cooperation with third countries or international organisations, seems too specific. There is no such statement in other Community programmes.

Amendment 12 is unacceptable to the Commission as the proposed text is not in line with the standard text set out in Annex II, point 2.A, of the Joint Declaration of the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission of 6 March 1995 concerning the incorporation of financial provisions into legislative acts. However, the Commission accepts the introduction of a recital and a provision adapted to and in conformity with the aforementioned Declaration.

Amendment 13 is not in line with the Commission's general policy on the point in question.

Amendment 14 increases the annual budgetary resources by reducing the duration of the programme. The Commission shares the view that the programme requires substantial

budgetary resources in order to achieve its objectives. However, the budgetary consequences of the proposed amendment are incompatible with the overall financial planning and conflict with the financial outlook in heading 3. For these reasons the Commission cannot accept the amendment. The Commission nevertheless welcomes the support it demonstrates for its position vis-à-vis the Council on the budget for the programme.

Amendment 16 does not appear to introduce any additional elements over and above what is already provided for in the financial statement and Annex 3. At the technical level, it would also be preferable to make a general reference to the Financial Regulation (instead of the specific reference to Article 57) and to bring the terminology of the amendment into line with that used in Article 57 of the Financial Regulation.

Amendment 18 does not introduce any new element over and above the current practice and regulations.

Amendment 19, setting 30 September 1997 as the date for submission of the evaluation report, is undesirable. The deadline is too short and will reduce the value of the mid-stage evaluation report, as it will take into consideration only the results obtained over the first twelve months, and that is an inadequate reference period. Moreover, because of their procedural complexity, there is a risk that the arrangements for appointing the independent experts will result in a further reduction in the reference period.

Amendment 23 adds a function which lies outside the tasks of the organisations in the network and which is largely undertaken through other channels.

Amendment 24 adds nothing useful, since the present wording does not exclude the organisations mentioned.

Amendment 25 makes a statement which concerns action 4.3 rather than action 1.1. Although the Commission largely welcomes the substance of the amendment, it considers that this aspect is covered by the present wording of action 4.3.

The Commission considers that action 1.2 must be maintained, in contrast to the objective of Amendment 26. Its proposed deletion appears to be inspired more by budget considerations than by genuine reasons of justification or problems of implementation.

The Commission considers the elements of Amendment 29 of relevance to the debate which will take place on the Green Paper on access to, dissemination and exploitation of public-sector information. However, it would be better not to be too prescriptive as regards the Green Paper.

Amendment 31, concerning an information system on information, adds a statement which is of little use, as it is already included in the notion of a directory.

Amendment 32 proposes a wording which is too specific as regards women's interests and too restrictive as regards the concept of an electronic public space (virtual reality), which should not be limited to the directories aspect.

The new wording of the title of Action Line 3.1, as proposed by Amendment 35, is not fundamentally different from that proposed by the Commission. The Commission prefers to retain the initial wording for reasons of consistency with its position on Amendments 38, 40 and 45.

Amendment 36 is redundant in relation to Amendment 8 and makes a superfluous and unbalanced statement.

Amendment 40 deletes the three fields identified as being of strategic importance, in which the production of multimedia information content must be stimulated. Coordination structures are already covered by action 1.2. Finally, the emphasis placed on multimedia products which are easily adaptable from one Member State to the other is already adequately expressed in the wording of section 3.1 (multilingual and multicultural European approach).

The first change (risk of diversity in the range of products) introduced by Amendment 41 relates more to the discussions of the public or private information circles. The second element (particular attention to be devoted to small producers) seems largely redundant in view of the preceding sentence in the text of point 3.1.

Amendment 42 proposes a mechanism which the Commission cannot accept for the implementation of Action Line 3.1. However, the Commission considers the idea interesting and worthy of a more detailed study which can be undertaken under the proposed Action Line 4.1.

The Commission considers that the particular attention to be devoted to the legal conditions for transferring information public sector information to the private sector, as set out in Amendment 43, should be dealt with under Action Line 2 and not at the specific level of Action Line 3.2.

Amendment 45 aims to establish a new Action Line 3 relating to the development of new software packages. This measure is not part of INFO 2000, since it is covered by the fourth framework programme of research and development (IT, ACTS, Telematics).

Amendment 46 is not acceptable, as the text of the preamble is not in line with the proposed measures.

Amendment 48 proposes a new breakdown of the budget which the Commission cannot accept. The Commission is aware of the need to increase the resources for Action Line 3 at the expense of Action Line 1 and can agree with the thrust of the proposed change. However, the Commission considers that the proposed percentage spread is too restrictive. The Commission therefore proposes the following breakdown:

- ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
- action line 1 (stimulating demand and raising awareness): 20-30%,
 - action line 2 (exploiting Europe's public sector information): 18-23%,
 - action line 3 (triggering European multimedia potential): 43-55%,
 - action line 4 (support actions): 7-12%.

Amendment 49 cannot be accepted for the following reasons. It is not desirable to replace "call for proposals" with "call for tender" in point 3 of Annex III, since this point concerns shared-cost projects for which the Community's financial contribution will not be more than 50% of the cost of the project. As regards point 4, the Commission's text aims to allow the cofinancing of projects submitted in the form of unsolicited proposals, outside the formal framework of a call for proposals. The amendment does not cover this eventuality and should be rejected.

Amendment 52 introduces an unacceptable procedural complexity.

4. Conclusion

The Commission recommends that the Council approve the amended proposal contained in Annex .

Original proposal

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community, and in particular Article 130 paragraph 3 thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the Commission (1),

Having regard to the opinion of the European Parliament (2),

Having regard to the opinion of the Economic and Social Committee (3)

Whereas the European content industry can make a significant contribution to the stimulation of growth, to the strengthening of competitiveness and to the development of employment in the Community, as indicated in the White Paper on "Growth, competitiveness, employment - The challenges and ways forward into the 21st century" (4),

Whereas the European Council at Brussels on 10-11 December 1993 decided, on the basis of that White Paper, to implement an action plan, consisting of concrete measures at both Union and Member States level, notably with respect to information infrastructures and new applications, for which new content is required;

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- (1) OJ N°
(2) OJ N°
(3) OJ N°
(4) 'Growth, competitiveness, employment - The challenges and ways forward into the 21st century', COM(93)700 final of 5.12.1993, Chapter 5A 'The information society'.

Modified proposal

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community, and in particular Article 130 paragraph 3 thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the Commission (1),

Having regard to the opinion of the European Parliament (2),

Having regard to the opinion of the Economic and Social Committee (3)

Whereas the European content industry can make a significant contribution to the stimulation of growth, to the strengthening of competitiveness and to the development of employment in the Community, as indicated in the White Paper on "Growth, competitiveness, employment - The challenges and ways forward into the 21st century"(4),

Whereas the European Council at Brussels on 10-11 December 1993 decided, on the basis of that White Paper, to implement an action plan, consisting of concrete measures at both Union and Member States level, notably with respect to information infrastructures and new applications, for which new content is required;

- (1) OJ N° C 250 , 26.9.1995, p.4
(2) OJ N°
(3) OJ N°C 82, 19.3.1996, p. 36
(4) 'Growth, competitiveness, employment - The challenges and ways forward into the 21st century', COM(93)700 final of 5.12.1993, Chapter 5A 'The information society'.

Whereas the European Council at Corfu on 24-25 June 1994 took note of the Recommendations of the High Level Group on the information society as presented in the report "Europe and the global information society"⁽⁵⁾; and underlined that the Community and Member States have an important role to play in bringing about the information society by giving political impetus, by creating a clear and stable regulatory and legal framework and by setting an example in areas which come under their aegis;

Whereas the Commission's action plan " Europe's Way to the Information Society - An Action Plan"⁽⁶⁾ recognises the importance of content and stipulates that the Commission will propose ways to stimulate the creation of favourable conditions for content providers to adapt their skills and products to the new multimedia environment and to stimulate increased usage of new information services;

Whereas the Council on 28 September 1994 ⁽⁷⁾ underlined the particular urgency of the need to enhance the global competitiveness of the European content industry, taking account of the cultural diversity and of the impact of these products on society;

Whereas the European Council at Essen on 9-10 December 1994 underlined the importance of content in bringing about the information society;

Whereas the Council Resolution on Culture and Multimedia ⁽⁸⁾ on 3-4 April 1995 underlined the importance of multimedia for facilitating the development of the content industry and improving access of citizens to cultural heritage, as well as the catalysing role of Member States and the Union in the creation, production and distribution of high quality cultural multimedia programmes;

(5) 'Europe and the global information society - Recommendations to the European Council', Brussels, 26 May 1994.

(6) COM(94)347 final of 19 July 1994 ' Europe's Way to the Information Society - An Action Plan' .

(7) Conclusions of the 1787th Council meeting 9561/94 (Press 197), 28 September 1994.

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(6) COM(94)347 final of 19 July 1994 ' Europe's Way to the Information Society - An Action Plan' .

(7) Conclusions of the 1787th Council meeting 9561/94 (Press 197), 28 September 1994.

Whereas the three long-term strategic objectives of the Union's content policy shall be to facilitate the development of the European content industry; to optimise the contribution of new information services to growth, competitiveness and employment in Europe; and to maximise the contribution of advanced information services to the professional, social and cultural development of the citizens of Europe;

Whereas there are numerous barriers to the development of a European multimedia content industry and market, which are hindering the transition towards an information society;

Whereas the Community needs to build on the strong competitive position it has in some content sectors and whereas its competitive position needs to be strengthened in other content sectors;

Whereas the needs of users of information services, particularly in small and medium-sized enterprises and in the less favoured regions of the Community, merit special attention;

Whereas provision should be made for measures to encourage the participation of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in this programme;

Whereas the different rates of development in the provision and use of information services in the Member States deserve special consideration, having regard to the internal cohesion of the Community and the risks associated with a two-tier information society;

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Whereas there are numerous barriers to the development of a European multimedia content industry and market, which are hindering the transition towards an information society;

Whereas the Community needs to build on the strong competitive position it has in some content sectors and whereas its competitive position needs to be strengthened in other content sectors;

Whereas the needs of users of information services, particularly in small and medium-sized enterprises and in the less favoured regions of the Community, and the public and their interests merit special attention;

Whereas the provision of multimedia services should respect the principles of equal access and the low cost of certain basic services and should contribute to the cohesion of, in particular, the geographically disadvantaged regions of Europe;

Whereas provision should be made for measures to encourage the participation of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in this programme;

Whereas the different rates of development in the provision and use of information services in the Member States deserve special consideration, having regard to the internal cohesion of the Community and the risks associated with a two-tier information society;

Whereas Community actions undertaken concerning the content of information should respect the Union's multilingual character and encourage initiatives to adapt the content of multimedia information in the languages of the Member States;

Whereas the measures under the programme must help to reduce the risks of exclusion of unskilled or underskilled workers, the emergence of a dual society, the widening of disparities between regions and the increased isolation of the individual;

Whereas particular attention should be paid, when implementing the programme, to the risk of abuse of multimedia content in such pernicious areas as racism, illegal pornography and other criminal activities;

Whereas policy actions under this programme aiming at strengthening the position of the European content industry will be complementary to other content actions, particularly those related to the audiovisual sector (9);

Whereas policy actions under this programme aiming at strengthening the position of the European content industry will be complementary to other content actions, particularly those related to the audiovisual sector (9);

Whereas any content policy actions must be complementary to other ongoing national and Community initiatives, as outlined notably in the Commission's action plan "Europe's Way to the Information Society - An Action Plan", and shall be performed in synergy with the Commission's education (10), training (11), RDT (12) and SME (13) policies and initiatives;

Whereas any content policy actions must be complementary to other ongoing national and Community initiatives, as outlined notably in the Commission's action plan 'Europe's way to the information society - an action plan', and shall be performed in synergy with programmes in the Fourth Framework Programme (10) (programmes concerned with advanced technology, technology, advanced communications services and telematics) and with the Commission's education (11), training (12), cultural and SME (13) policies and initiatives, and with the Structural Funds;

(9) Council Decision 93/424/EEC of 22 July 1993 on an action plan for the introduction of advanced television services in Europe; COM(94)523 of 8 February 1995 'Politique Audio-visuelle. Créer un environnement favorable à l'essor des entreprises de l'industrie européenne des programmes (MEDIA2 1996-2000)'; Council Directive 89/552/EEC of 3 October 1989 'Television without frontiers' (OJ N° L 298, 17.10.1989, p.15).

(9) Council Decision 93/424/EEC of 22 July 1993 on an action plan for the introduction of advanced television services in Europe; COM(94)523 of 8 February 1995 'Politique Audio-visuelle. Créer un environnement favorable à l'essor des entreprises de l'industrie européenne des programmes (MEDIA2 1996-2000)'; Council Directive 89/552/EEC of 3 October 1989 'Television without frontiers' (OJ N° L 298, 17.10.1989, p.15).

(10) COM(93)708 final of 3 February 1994.

(10) Fourth Framework Programme of the European Community activities in the field of research and technological development and demonstration (1994 to 1998), adopted by the Decision N° 1110/94/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 April 1994 (OJ N° L 126, 18.5.1994, p.1)

(11) Council Decision of 6 December 1994 (OJ N° L 340, 29.12.1994, p.8).

(11) COM(93)708 final du 3 février 1994.

Whereas progress of this programme should be continuously and systematically monitored with a view to adapting it, where appropriate, to developments in the multimedia content market; whereas in due course there should be an independent evaluation of the progress of the programme so as to provide the background information needed in order to determine the objectives for subsequent content policy actions; whereas at the end of this programme there shall be a final evaluation of results obtained compared with the objectives set out in this Decision;

Whereas the actions in this programme will not in any way prejudice the competition rules of the Community;

Whereas it may be appropriate to engage in international co-operation activities with international organisations and third countries for the purpose of implementing this programme;

Whereas it is necessary to fix the duration of the programme;

HAS ADOPTED THIS DECISION :

Whereas progress of this programme should be continuously and systematically monitored with a view to adapting it, where appropriate, to developments in the multimedia content market; whereas in due course there should be an independent evaluation of the progress of the programme so as to provide the background information needed in order to determine the objectives for subsequent content policy actions; whereas at the end of this programme there shall be a final evaluation of results obtained compared with the objectives set out in this Decision;

Whereas the actions in this programme will not in any way prejudice the competition rules of the Community;

Whereas the activities which may prove useful in international cooperation with international organizations and third countries for the purpose of implementing this programme should be undertaken with due regard to the criterion of mutual advantage;

Whereas it is necessary to fix the duration of the programme;

HAS ADOPTED THIS DECISION :

(12) Fourth Framework Programme of the European Community activities in the field of research and technological development and demonstration (1994 to 1998), adopted by the Decision N° 1110/94/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 April 1994 (OJ N° L 126, 18.5.1994, p.1)

(13) COM(94) 207 final of 3 June 1994

(12) Council Decision of 6 December 1994 (OJ N° L 340, 29.12.1994, p.8).

(13) COM(94) 207 final of 3 June 1994

Article 1

A programme is hereby adopted with the following objectives:

- Stimulate demand for, and use of, multimedia content,
- Create favourable conditions for the development of the European multimedia content industry,
- Contribute to the professional, social and cultural development of the citizens of Europe.

Article 2

In order to attain the objectives referred to in Article 1, the following actions shall be undertaken under the guidance of the Commission, in accordance with the action lines in Annex I and the detailed implementation arrangements set out in Annex III:

- stimulating demand and raising awareness,
- exploiting Europe's public sector information,
- triggering European multimedia potential,
- support actions.

Article 3

The programme shall cover a period of four years from 1 January 1996 to 31 December 1999.

Article 4

1. The Commission shall be responsible for the implementation of the programme.

2. The procedure laid down in Article 5 shall apply to:

- the work programme,
- the breakdown of the budgetary expenditure,
- the content of calls for proposals,
- the measures for programme evaluation,
- any departure from the rules set out in Annex III,
- participation in any project by legal entities from third countries and international organisations.

Article 5

1. The Commission shall be assisted by a committee of an advisory nature composed of the representatives of the Member States and chaired by the representative of the Commission.

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A programme is hereby adopted with the following objectives:

- Stimulate demand for, and use of, multimedia content,
- Create favourable conditions for the development of the European multimedia content industry,
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Article 2

In order to attain the objectives referred to in Article 1, the following actions shall be undertaken under the guidance of the Commission, in accordance with the action lines in Annex I and the detailed implementation arrangements set out in Annex III:

- stimulating demand and raising awareness,
- making good use by the multimedia industry of information held by the public sector,
- triggering European multimedia potential,
- support actions.

Article 3

The programme shall cover a period of four years from 1 January 1996 to 31 December 1999.

Article 4

1. The Commission shall be responsible for the implementation of the programme and for the decisions to grant Community financial aid to the projects selected.

2. The procedure laid down in Article 5 shall apply to:

- the work programme,
- the content of calls for proposals,
- the measures for programme evaluation,
- any departure from the rules set out in Annex III,
- consideration of the objective information facilitating the participation in any project by legal entities from third countries and international organizations.

Article 5

1. The Commission shall be assisted by a committee of an advisory nature composed of the representatives of the Member States and chaired by the representative of the Commission.

2. The Commission representative shall submit to the committee a draft of measures to be taken. The committee shall deliver its opinion on the draft within a time limit which the chairman may lay down according to the urgency of the matter concerned, if necessary by taking a vote.

3. The opinion shall be recorded in the minutes; in addition, each Member State shall have the right to ask to have its position recorded in the minutes.

4. The Commission shall take the utmost account of the opinion delivered by the committee. It shall inform the committee of the manner in which its opinion has been taken into account.

Article 6

At the mid-term and at the end of the programme, the Commission shall submit to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, once the committee referred to in Article 5 has examined it, an evaluation report drawn up by independent experts on the results obtained in implementing the action lines referred to in Article 2. The Commission may present, on the basis of those results, proposals for adjusting the orientation of the programme.

Article 7

Participation in this programme may be open, normally without financial support by the Community, to legal entities established in third countries and to international organisations, where such participation contributes effectively to the implementation of the programme and taking into account the principle of mutual benefit.

Article 8

This Decision is addressed to the Member States.

Done at Brussels,
For the Council

The President

2. The Commission representative shall submit to the committee a draft of measures to be taken. The committee shall deliver its opinion on the draft within a time limit which the chairman may lay down according to the urgency of the matter concerned, if necessary by taking a vote.

3. The opinion shall be recorded in the minutes; in addition, each Member State shall have the right to ask to have its position recorded in the minutes.

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At the mid-term and at the end of the programme, the Commission shall submit to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, once the committee referred to in Article 5 has examined it, an evaluation report drawn up by independent experts on the results obtained in implementing the action lines referred to in Article 2. The Commission may present, on the basis of those results, proposals for adjusting the orientation of the programme.

Article 7

Participation in the programme may be open, without financial support from the Union budget, to legal entities established in third countries and to international organizations, where such participation contributes effectively to the implementation of the programme and taking into account the principle of mutual benefit.

Article 8

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ANNEX I

ACTION LINES FOR INFO2000

ACTION LINE 1: Stimulating demand and raising awareness

Lack of awareness of the potential of the new multimedia information products and services is an important factor constraining demand. This action line contributes to redressing that situation by adding a European dimension to awareness and user-group activities taking place at the national or regional level. Specific attention will be given to favouring demand development in less-favoured and peripheral regions of the Union.

1.1. Creating new markets by raising awareness at the European level with specific user groups

Under the IMPACT programme a network of organisations in the Member States has been created that have a responsibility for conducting awareness and information campaigns in relation to new information services. In different Member States this role is performed by different organisations like chambers of commerce, professional organisations or public bodies. By working in a European network these organisations are able to add a European dimension to their activities.

Under INFO2000 this successful formula will be continued and extended. The involvement of the Community in the network as a catalyst and a co-ordinator adds value to the individual activities and puts these activities in a clear European context. Apart from financial support for specific activities with a European dimension the Commission will encourage the exchange of know-how and experience, the use of common communication and information facilities, and co-operation between the various organisations in joint projects.

The organisations in the network will perform the following tasks:

- provide access to information collections and catalogues across the European Union;
- demonstrate and facilitate access to the European information highways;
- advise users on the possible sources for satisfying their multimedia content needs, both nationally and internationally;

ANNEX I

ACTION LINES FOR INFO2000

ACTION LINE 1: Stimulating demand and raising awareness

Lack of awareness of the potential of the new multimedia information products and services is an important factor constraining demand. This action line contributes to redressing that situation by adding a European dimension to awareness and user-group activities taking place at the national or regional level. These awareness-raising activities must also extend to members of the public who could easily be sidelined on account of their personal or social circumstances. Specific attention will be given to encouraging demand development with certain user groups and in less-favoured and peripheral regions of the Union.

1.1. Creating new markets by raising awareness at the European level with specific user groups

Under the IMPACT programme a network of organisations in the Member States has been created that have a responsibility for conducting awareness and information campaigns in relation to new information services. In different Member States this role is performed by different organisations like chambers of commerce, professional organisations or public bodies. By working in a European/international network these organisations are able to add a European/international dimension to their activities.

Under INFO2000 this successful formula will be continued and extended. The involvement of the Community in the network as a catalyst and a co-ordinator adds value to the individual activities and puts these activities in a clear European context. Apart from financial support for specific activities with a European dimension the Commission will encourage the exchange of know-how and experience, the use of common communication and information facilities, and co-operation between the various organisations in joint projects.

The organisations in the network will perform the following tasks:

- provide access to information collections and catalogues across the European Union;
- demonstrate and facilitate access to the European information highways;
- advise users on the possible sources for satisfying their multimedia content needs, both nationally and internationally;

- organise co-ordinated European awareness campaigns at the national or regional level;
- stimulate the training of users.

The main target groups for the actions will be small and medium-sized companies and libraries. The actual selection of specific target groups will be left to the national and regional organisations concerned, since they are closest to the target groups.

Following a call for proposals a total of 30 to 50 organisations will be selected to participate in the network. Selection criteria will include knowledge of the local information market, affinity with the target groups foreseen and readiness to work in a European network. Actions which aim to stimulate women's interests in new information services are encouraged.

The network will co-operate with other relevant national organisations. It will liaise closely with other EU supported bodies and networks that have a complementary mission, such as the Information Society Project Office (ISPO), the European Information Centres (EICs), the Business Co-operation Network (BC-NET), the Value Relay Centres and the University Enterprise Training Partnerships (UETPs). Organisations from these networks could be selected in the call for proposals. Efforts will be made to avoid parallel or overlapping networks. Synergy and spin-offs will be sought with other awareness activities performed under the 4th Framework research programme such as the Advanced Communication Technologies and Services and Telematics applications programmes.

1.2. Encouraging clusters of pan-European users

A flourishing demand side is important for the development of a healthy market for advanced information products and services such as multimedia. In view of the rapid changes taking place in the information market, regular dialogue between suppliers and users can smooth the transition process. In general the supply side tends to be better organised than the user side, both at the national and at the European level. In two of the three sectors that compose the multimedia industry - information technology and telecommunications - the user side is increasingly organising itself both at the national and at the European level.

- organise co-ordinated European awareness campaigns at the national or regional level;
- stimulate the training of users.

The main target groups for the actions will be small and medium-sized companies, libraries, documentation centres and contact points and information desks. On the basis of these criteria, the national and regional organizations concerned, since they are closest to these target groups, will carry out the actual selection.

Following a call for proposals a total of 30 to 50 organisations will be selected to participate in the network. Selection criteria will include knowledge of the local information market, affinity with the target groups foreseen and readiness to work in a European network. Actions which aim to stimulate women's interests in new information services are encouraged.

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In the third sector of the multimedia industry - the content industry - the demand side is much less organised and is fragmented. Historically, the relationship between the content providers and the users has been indirect, i.e. through intermediaries. However, under the influence of the new communication networks this situation is changing. The need to develop direct relations between suppliers and users is increasingly being felt in the content sector also. At the national level, professional organisations and industry sector organisations are beginning to address the issue. However, for a successful development of the European multimedia content market it is important that groupings of users also emerge at the European level.

The actions foreseen under INFO2000 aim to stimulate this process by providing incentives for co-operation and exchange of experience between national user groups, thereby encouraging the emergence of European groupings. Specific measures will be tailored to address key user problems, for example quality assurance and questions of liability. The network of awareness organisations will be used to analyse the situation in individual Member States and will play a catalytic role in bringing about pan-European user groups.

ACTION LINE 2: Exploiting Europe's public sector information

Europe's public sector information is a hidden resource to be exploited. The public sector collects and produces vast amounts of information, much of which is of interest to individuals and businesses, and which can be the raw material for value-added information services produced by the private sector content industry. Official statistical services either at regional, national or European level are an example.

Three sets of actions will be particularly helpful in supporting this public sector role and in exploiting its potential at European level:

- developing policies to access and exploit public sector information,
- linking directories of European public sector information,
- making use of content resources in the public sector.

Particular attention will be given to improving access from the peripheral regions of the Union.

2.1. Developing policies to access and exploit European public sector information

In the third sector of the multimedia industry - the content industry - the demand side is much less organised and is fragmented. Historically, the relationship between the content providers and the users has been indirect, i.e. through intermediaries. However, under the influence of the new communication networks this situation is changing. The need to develop direct relations between suppliers and users is increasingly being felt in the content sector also. At the national level, professional organisations and industry sector organisations are beginning to address the issue. However, for a successful development of the European multimedia content market it is important that groupings of users also emerge at the European level.

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ACTION LINE 2: Making good use by the multimedia industry of information held by the public sector

Europe's public sector information is a substantial resource to be made use of by the multimedia industry. The public sector collects and produces vast amounts of information, which can be the raw material for value-added information services for the benefit of individuals and businesses. Official statistical services either at regional, national or European level are an example.

Three sets of actions will be particularly helpful in supporting this public sector role and in exploiting its potential at European level:

- developing policies to access and exploit public sector information,
- linking directories of European public sector information,
- making use of content resources in the public sector.

Particular attention will be given to improving access from the peripheral regions of the Union.

2.1. Developing policies to access and exploit European public sector information

In the Member States, rules for access to public sector information are very different or in some cases do not exist at all. As the transition to the information society progresses, this situation could become a barrier to full participation by individuals and businesses across Europe and may become the cause of unevenly distributed opportunities. Therefore, initiatives need to be taken at the European level to develop policies which facilitate access to and exploitation of public sector held information, in particular as regards information resources of European interest.

The Commission will produce, in close collaboration with Member States and market actors, a Green Paper analysing the situation in the different Member States, the relative position of the EU in a global context and the various possibilities for convergence of national approaches. To lay the foundations for this Green Paper, studies comparing national situations will be undertaken and exchanges of national experience will be encouraged.

2.2. Linking directories of European public sector information

In a number of Member States practical initiatives are being taken to improve access to public sector information. In the European information society it must be ensured that the relevant public sector information becomes more easily accessible to all European individuals and businesses that may have an interest in such information.

The Commission will support initiatives to produce directories of European public sector information to a common format, so that they can be interlinked and easily accessed from any point in Europe.

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The Commission will produce, in close collaboration with the Member States and market actors, a Green Paper analysing the situation in the different Member States, the relative position of the EU in a global context and the various possibilities for convergence of national approaches. To lay the foundations for this Green Paper, studies comparing national situations will be undertaken and exchanges of experience will be encouraged. In this context, the experience that emerges following the Commission Communication on universal service should be taken into account.

On the basis of the Green Paper, the Commission will submit proposals to ensure the convergence of national proposals and to strengthen the rules governing access to public sector information.

It should be noted that the development of the information systems of libraries and information services will promote the use of content, since these services themselves produce important information about information (secondary information) by recording the materials produced in a variety of areas.

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In a number of Member States practical initiatives are being taken to improve access to public sector information. In the European information society it must be ensured that the relevant public sector information becomes more easily accessible to all European individuals and businesses that may have an interest in such information.

The Commission will support initiatives to produce directories of European public sector information to a common format, so that they can be interlinked and easily accessed from any point in Europe.

Following a call for proposals, pilot projects for the production of information directories that incorporate the above characteristics will be supported. These pilot projects may address the transnational interconnection of existing national or regional information directories as well as the collaborative production of new directories. Pilot projects based on public/private partnerships and applying multilingual solutions will be particularly encouraged.

2.3. Making use of content resources in the public sector

Europe is blessed with a rich stock of what might be called "information collections" under public sector control, for instance in museums, libraries, copyright and patent deposit systems, educational and training bodies, historical archives and architectural and industrial objects. These information collections need to be exploited if Europe is to build on these cultural and economic assets commercially and if Europe is to realise the potential of advanced technologies in support of public sector services. They are central to the Union's strength in the global information society and their commercial and strategic potential has already been underlined by a series of deals transferring control over some of them to private companies, not all of which have been European.

Most of these information collections are still in analogue form but they are increasingly being digitised. The INFO2000 programme aims at mobilising these digital collections for exploitation by the private sector.

To this end the Commission will support the creation of European inventories of digital information collections and stimulate their interconnection across the EU. This involves defining a common standard format for such inventories as well as integrating them with intellectual property rights trading systems. Support for the creation of inventories and their integration with intellectual property rights trading systems will be provided on the basis of calls for proposals. Related standards and specifications will be developed through studies and through task groups composed of the actors involved.

ACTION LINE 3: Triggering European multimedia potential

Following a call for proposals, pilot projects for the production of information directories that incorporate the above characteristics will be supported. These pilot projects shall make it a priority to address the transnational interconnection of existing national or regional information directories and the collaborative production of new directories, depending particularly on their degree of economic and social usefulness. Pilot projects applying multilingual solutions will be particularly encouraged.

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The INFO2000 programme aims to facilitate the transfer of these information collections to digital form as well as their valorisation and exploitation.

To this end the Commission will support the creation of European inventories of digital information collections and stimulate their interconnection across the EU. This involves defining a common standard format for such inventories as well as integrating them with intellectual property rights trading systems. Support for the creation of inventories and their integration with intellectual property rights trading systems will be provided on the basis of calls for proposals. Related standards and specifications will be developed through studies and through task groups composed of the actors involved.

ACTION LINE 3: Triggering European multimedia potential

The transition from "scribe to screen" is rapidly and fundamentally changing the structure of the content industry and the roles of the different players within it. Internationalisation and multimedia are key words in this respect. Content itself and new ways of creating, packaging, distributing and marketing it are increasingly becoming the key drivers behind these changes.

Coping with these changes and exploiting the opportunities that emerge is primarily the responsibility of the industries concerned. However, apart from a limited number of large corporations that operate on a global scale, the present day content sector in Europe is mainly made up of small and medium size companies. These have difficulty in dealing with a rapidly developing international multimedia market and the speed with which the changes take place. In addition the initial cost of producing high quality multimedia titles is high and the European market fragmented through cultural and linguistic barriers. The critical mass needed to recoup initial investments is therefore much more difficult to reach.

This puts European multimedia publishers, traditionally used to operating in a national or regional setting, at a disadvantage compared with their competitors from other parts of the world. Exploitation of the single market potential will become vital for global competitiveness.

This action line aims at mitigating these comparative disadvantages for European producers in the emerging multimedia market by:

- catalysing high quality European multimedia content,
- favouring a practical approach to trading multimedia rights
- developing and exchanging best business practice

The transition from "scribe to screen" is rapidly and fundamentally changing the structure of the content industry and the roles of the different players within it. Internationalisation and multimedia are key words in this respect. Content itself and new ways of creating, packaging, distributing and marketing it are increasingly becoming the key drivers behind these changes. The development of new software packages and new computerized resources, in conjunction with the Community programmes on information technologies, is essential if multimedia authors are to create attractive and user-friendly products in the best possible conditions of productivity which make full use of the true potential of the multimedia industry.

The rich cultural and linguistic diversity of Europe can be used as a means of strengthening European competitiveness.

Coping with these changes and exploiting the opportunities that emerge is primarily the responsibility of the industries concerned. The present-day content sector is made up not only of large corporations that operate on a global scale and are expected to play a determining role in the development of the multimedia industry but also of a large number of small and medium-sized companies which are often inventive and dynamic but often have limited financial resources for the high initial investment needed to produce and distribute high-quality multimedia titles.

Hence the purpose of INFO2000 is to establish the conditions to achieve real synergy in industrial terms between the large multimedia corporations and small businesses. This industrial policy must also seek to meet the specific needs of a culturally and linguistically fragmented European multimedia market.

This puts European multimedia publishers, traditionally used to operating in a national or regional setting, at a disadvantage compared with their competitors from other parts of the world. Exploitation of the single market potential will become vital for global competitiveness.

This action line aims at creating the best possible environment to favour the development of the multimedia industry in Europe and mitigate the comparative disadvantages of the European market by:

- stimulating the production of European multimedia products, incorporating the specific characteristics of language and culture,
- favouring a practical approach to trading multimedia rights
- developing and exchanging best business practice

3.1 Catalysing high quality European multimedia content

The production of high quality European multimedia content will be stimulated in three strategic areas: economic exploitation of Europe's cultural heritage, business services for SMEs, and geographic information. Under the IMPACT programme pilot actions in these areas have illustrated the problems connected with a pan-European approach and have laid the foundations for further actions under INFO2000.

Multilingual interactive multimedia products can build on the wealth of available European content, while overcoming language barriers and other limitations of national and regional markets. Apart from the economic benefits, strong European business activity in this area is likely to contribute to the safeguarding of cultural identity and linguistic diversity. It will also increase the public's understanding of European cultural diversity across the Member States and regions.

In the areas indicated above - European cultural heritage, business services for SMEs and geographic information - calls for proposals will be launched to provide support to the initial and pre-commercial phases of pan-European multimedia content developments. The support given should help the companies concerned overcome the specific barriers with respect to multilingual and multicultural (re)use of content and to trans-national co-operation. These initial phases would include product definition, partner identification, cross-licensing negotiation, planning of co-operative distribution etc. up to and including the production of a prototype.

Support will be given to projects that demonstrate the feasibility of a trans-European multilingual and multicultural approach, contain a risk element, exert a strong catalytic effect on the market and imply substantial user involvement. Special add-on incentives can be provided to encourage participation by small and medium sized companies and organisations from less favoured and peripheral regions.

The calls for proposals will be co-ordinated closely with the Community programmes RAPHAËL and the Integrated Programme in favour of SMEs and the craft sector, as well as with the sectoral policy actions⁴ in the areas of Trade, Tourism and Social Economics.

3.2. Trading multimedia intellectual property rights

3.1 Stimulating the production of European multimedia products, incorporating the specific characteristics of language and culture

The production of high quality European multimedia content will be stimulated in three strategic areas: economic exploitation of Europe's cultural heritage, business services for SMEs, and geographic information. Pilot actions under the Impact programme have revealed the importance of a co-ordinated approach to implementing these objectives in a pan-European context.

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The Info 2000 programme will promote the development of multimedia products that are easily adaptable from one Member State to the other, in both linguistic and cultural terms. Support will be given to projects that demonstrate the feasibility of a trans-European multilingual and multicultural approach, contain a risk element, exert a strong catalytic effect on the market and imply substantial user involvement. Special add-on incentives can be provided to encourage participation by small and medium sized companies and organisations from less favoured and peripheral regions.

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3.2. Trading multimedia intellectual property rights

Historically, the management of rights is organised by sector (text, sound, image, video etc.) and by country. With the dawning of the multimedia age this situation is increasingly becoming a barrier to the development of multimedia content markets, as the time and effort that has to be spent on identifying and acquiring the different rights increases steeply with the number of data types involved and the number of countries where right holders are located. Small companies and new media start-ups suffer most from the present system as they may wish to re-use existing material.

The development of pan-European multimedia content often requires input from various Member States. Effective and efficient mechanisms for trading multimedia rights at the European level are therefore essential for the development of the European multimedia content industry.

A call for proposals will be launched inviting proposals for pilot projects that lay the foundations for cross-border trading of multimedia rights electronically. In addition, studies will be launched to determine how different intellectual property rights trading systems for multimedia in Europe can work together. As an aid to small and medium sized companies practical tools will be developed on best practices to acquire, exploit and protect multimedia rights. The actions will build on the relevant research and technological development activities under the Fourth Framework Programme.

Although the difficulty of reaching consensus should not be underestimated, in the longer term, harmonisation and rationalisation of legal requirements may be necessary.

3.3. Developing and exchanging best practice

Actions will be supported that aim at developing and exchanging best business practice in the multimedia content industry at the European level. Such actions will include descriptions of business processes and models relevant to the content industry, such as procedures for intellectual property acquisition and content asset valuation and management, and exchange of experiences with multimedia consumer panels to test and evaluate multimedia products and services.

These activities will be implemented by means of a combination of studies, workshops, seminars and publications. The relevant organisations in the European content industry will be closely involved.

4. Support actions

Historically, the management of rights is organised by sector (text, sound, image, video etc.) and by country. With the dawning of the multimedia age this situation is increasingly becoming a barrier to the development of multimedia content markets, as the time and effort that has to be spent on identifying and acquiring the different rights increases steeply with the number of data types involved and the number of countries where right holders are located. Small companies and new media start-ups suffer most from the present system as they may wish to re-use existing material.

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3.3. Developing and exchanging best practice

Actions will be supported that aim at developing and exchanging best business practice in the multimedia content industry at the European level. In particular, the development of multimedia services which could support the operations of SMEs should be promoted. Such actions will include descriptions of business processes and models relevant to the content industry, such as procedures for intellectual property acquisition and content asset valuation and management, and exchange of experiences with multimedia consumer panels to test and evaluate multimedia products and services.

These activities will be implemented by means of a combination of studies, workshops, seminars and publications. The relevant organisations in the European content industry will be closely involved.

4. Support actions

The programme support actions aim at amplifying the effects of the core actions of the programme by addressing a number of horizontal issues relevant for the programme as a whole.

4.1. Observing and analysing the multimedia content market

At regular intervals senior experts from the content industry, from user communities and from Member States will be convened to monitor, analyse and discuss the impact of multimedia on the content industry and on the different actors in the information value chain. When organising these meetings modern multimedia information and communication facilities will be used where possible.

The composition of the meetings will reflect the various segments of content creation, distribution and use within the European Union, as well as the many regulatory aspects (e.g. personal data protection) affecting the content dimension. They will thus serve as a focus for discussion, exchange of experience and co-operation between the various sectors of the content industry, between European and national policy makers, and between the supply and user sides of the content market.

The meetings will focus on:

- long-term scenarios, updated whenever justified by major international developments in markets, technologies, industries and policies
- key issues of common interest to market actors from different sectors and from different Member States, such as legal aspects and quality assurance
- obstacles to market development and recommendations to the industries, administrations and users to overcome them
- the execution of INFO2000, making recommendations on orientations and priorities.

Studies will be carried out to monitor changes in the European and global content markets and provide in-depth analysis of key issues.

4.2. Spreading the use of multimedia content standards

Standards for the structuring and presentation of information, and standards for content encoding, including terminology, are essential in order to facilitate the exchange of documents and publications, and to enable the exploitation, access, maintenance and re-use of content.

The programme support actions aim to underpin the core goals of the programme and to reinforce the effects of its principal measures. These measures take account of the importance of developing a legislative context that encourages harmonization and standardization.

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4.2. Spreading the use of multimedia content standards

Harmonization of standards is particularly relevant to the provision of advanced information services to European end-users. Standards for the structuring and presentation of information, and standards for content encoding, including terminology, are essential in order to facilitate the exchange of documents and publications, and to enable the exploitation, access, maintenance and re-use of content.

The work started in this domain under the IMPACT programme will be continued and extended. Actions will be supported that raise awareness of and stimulate the use of existing content standards through workshops and electronic fora and by publishing reports on paper and electronically.

4.3. Encouraging skills development at European level

In order to stimulate skills development, the relevant European associations will be encouraged to develop and implement measures to equip the European content providers with the necessary skills to enter the age of multimedia and interactivity. Actions to be supported will normally be based on a three-staged approach:

- identification of the most urgent training needs
- development of pilot courses to test the effectiveness and efficiency of the proposed actions
- launching of the activities in the relevant parts of the content industry and in the educational and training systems.

The first two steps could be supported under INFO2000. The third step would fall within the remit of programmes like SOCRATES and LEONARDO, thus achieving important multiplier effects.

The content industry will be extensively consulted in order to identify urgent needs and key areas. Representatives of universities and vocational training establishments will be closely associated with these initiatives. The role of the Community will mainly consist of stimulating, co-ordinating and enabling this process.

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4.3. Encouraging skills development at European level

In order to stimulate skills development, the relevant European associations will be encouraged to develop and implement measures to equip the European content providers with the necessary skills to enter the age of multimedia and inter-activity. In education too, greater attention must be devoted to the European cultural and linguistic heritage, so that at a later stage more use can be made of products and services provided by the content industry. In European technological education greater attention must be devoted to multi-media aspects. Actions to be supported will normally be based on a three-staged approach:

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ANNEX II

**INDICATIVE BREAKDOWN OF
EXPENDITURE**

1. Stimulating demand and raising awareness 30-40%
2. Exploiting Europe's public sector information 18-23%
3. Triggering European multimedia potential 33-45%
4. Support actions 7-12%

Total 100%

This breakdown does not exclude the fact that a project could relate to several activities.

ANNEX II

**INDICATIVE BREAKDOWN OF
EXPENDITURE**

1. Stimulating demand and raising awareness 20-30%
2. Making good use by the multimedia industry of information held by the public sector 18-23%
3. Triggering European multimedia potential 43-55%
4. Support actions 7-12%

Total 100%

This breakdown does not exclude the fact that a project could relate to several activities.

ANNEX III

THE MEANS FOR IMPLEMENTING INFO2000

1. The Commission will implement the programme in accordance with the technical content specified in Annex I.
2. The programme will be executed through indirect action and wherever possible on a shared-cost basis. The Community's financial contribution for shared-cost projects shall normally not exceed 50% of the cost of the project, with progressively lower participation the nearer the project is to the market place. Special add-on incentives can be provided to encourage participation by SMEs and less favoured regions.
3. The selection of shared-cost projects will normally be based on the usual procedure of calls for proposals published in the Official Journal of the European Communities. The content of the calls for proposals will be defined in close consultation with the relevant experts and according to the procedure referred to in Article 5 of the Decision. The main criterion for supporting projects through calls for proposals will be their potential contribution to achieving the objectives of the programme. Implementation procedures will accommodate the interests of all kinds of market operators and facilitate their participation in the programme.
4. The Commission may also implement a more flexible funding scheme than the call for proposals in order to provide incentives for the creation of partnerships, in particular involving SMEs and organisations in less favoured regions, or for other exploratory activities in different segments of the multimedia content market. This scheme might be operated on a permanent basis.
5. The Commission will make provision for considering in exceptional cases unsolicited project proposals which involve a particularly promising and significant multimedia market development, a highly innovative approach or an exceptional technology or methodology, and which cannot be submitted within the normal call for proposals procedure. The objective of avoiding market distortion will be maintained.
6. The detailed arrangements for the procedures referred to under points 4 and 5 will be implemented through the consultative committee procedure (type I) and in accordance with the Commission's financial regulations. They will be published in the Official Journal of the European Communities.

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3. The selection of shared-cost projects will normally be based on the usual procedure of calls for proposals published in the Official Journal of the European Communities. The content of the calls for proposals will be defined in close consultation with the relevant experts and according to the procedure referred to in Article 5 of the Decision. The main criterion for supporting projects through calls for proposals will be their potential contribution to achieving the objectives of the programme. Implementation procedures will accommodate the interests of all kinds of market operators and facilitate their participation in the programme.
4. The Commission may also implement a more flexible funding scheme than the call for proposals in order to provide incentives for the creation of partnerships, in particular involving SMEs and organisations in less favoured regions, or for other exploratory activities in different segments of the multimedia content market. This scheme might be operated on a permanent basis.
5. The Commission will make provision for considering in exceptional cases unsolicited project proposals which involve a particularly promising and significant multimedia market development, a highly innovative approach or an exceptional technology or methodology, and which cannot be submitted within the normal call for proposals procedure. The objective of avoiding market distortion will be maintained.
6. The detailed arrangements for the procedures referred to under points 4 and 5 will be implemented through the consultative committee procedure (type I) and in accordance with the Commission's financial regulations. They will be published in the Official Journal of the European Communities.

7. Projects fully financed by the Commission within the framework of study and services contracts will be implemented through calls for tenders in accordance with the Commission's Financial Regulations. Transparency will be achieved by publishing the work programme and circulating it to trade associations and other interested bodies.

8. For the implementation of the programme the Commission will also undertake preparatory, accompanying and support activities designed to achieve the general objectives of the programme and the specific aims of each action line. This includes activities such as: studies and consultancy in support of this programme; preliminary actions in preparation of future activities; measures aimed at facilitating participation in the programme as well as facilitating access to the results produced under the programme; publications and activities for the dissemination, promotion and exploitation of results; analysis of possible socio-economic consequences associated with the programme; and support activities such as observation and analysis of the multimedia content market, spreading the use of multimedia content standards, and encouraging skills development at European level.

9. Participation in this programme by international organisations may be financed, in exceptional cases, on the same basis as that of legal entities established in the Community.

7. Projects fully financed by the Commission within the framework of study and services contracts will be implemented through calls for tenders in accordance with the current financial provisions. Transparency will be achieved by publishing the work programme and circulating it to trade associations and other interested bodies.

8. For the implementation of the programme the Commission will also undertake preparatory, accompanying and support activities designed to achieve the general objectives of the programme and the specific aims of each action line. This includes activities such as: studies and consultancy in support of this programme; preliminary actions in preparation of future activities; measures aimed at facilitating participation in the programme as well as facilitating access to the results produced under the programme; publications and activities for the dissemination, promotion and exploitation of results; analysis of possible socio-economic consequences associated with the programme; and support activities such as observation and analysis of the multimedia content market, spreading the use of multimedia content standards, and encouraging skills development at European level.

9. Participation in this programme by international organisations may be financed, in exceptional cases, on the same basis as that of legal entities established in the Community.

10. All projects receiving financial support under the INFO2000 programme will be required to display an acknowledgement of the funding received.

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