

eEurope 2005

Executive summary

The objective of this Action Plan is to provide a favourable environment for private investment and for the creation of new jobs, to boost productivity, to modernise public services, and to give everyone the opportunity to participate in the global information society. eEurope 2005 therefore aims to **stimulate secure services, applications and content based on a widely available broadband infrastructure.**

I.

The Barcelona European Council called on the Commission to draw up an eEurope action plan focussing on *“the widespread availability and use of broadband networks throughout the Union by 2005 and the development of Internet protocol IPv6 and the security of networks and information, eGovernment, eLearning, eHealth and eBusiness”*¹

This action plan will succeed the eEurope 2002 action plan endorsed by the Feira European Council in June 2000. eEurope is part of the Lisbon strategy to make the European Union the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy with improved employment and social cohesion by 2010.

eEurope 2002, with the joint effort of all stakeholders, has already delivered major changes and has increased the number of citizens and businesses connected to the Internet. It has reshaped the regulatory environment for communications networks and services and for e-commerce and opened the door to new generations of mobile and multimedia services. It is providing opportunities for people to participate in society and helping the workforce to acquire the skills needed in a knowledge-driven economy. It is bringing computers and the Internet into schools across the Union, bringing governments on-line and focusing attention on the need to ensure a safer on-line world.

II.

The information society has much untapped potential to improve productivity and the quality of life. This potential is growing due to the technological developments of broadband and multi-platform access, i.e. the possibility to connect to the Internet via other means than the PC, such as digital TV and 3G. These developments are opening up significant economic and social opportunities. New services, applications and content will create new markets and provide the means to increase productivity and hence growth and employment throughout the economy. They will also provide citizens with more convenient access to information and communication tools.

Most services are provided by the market. Developing new services needs significant investment, most of it from the private sector. But there is a problem: funding more

¹ Barcelona European Council, Presidency Conclusions, paragraph 40(<http://ue.eu.int/en/Info/eurocouncil/index.htm>)

advanced multimedia services depends on the availability of broadband for these service to run on, while funding broadband infrastructure depends on the availability of new services to use it. Action is needed to stimulate services and infrastructure to create the dynamic where one side develops from the growth of the other. Both developing services and building infrastructures are mainly tasks for the private sector and *eEurope* will create a favourable environment for private investment. This means not only developing an investment friendly legal framework but also taking action that stimulates demand and so reduces uncertainty to private investors.

eEurope 2005 applies a number of measures to address both sides of the equation simultaneously. On the demand side, actions on e-government, e-health, e-learning and e-business are designed to foster the development of new services. In addition to providing both better and cheaper services to citizens, public authorities can use their purchasing power to aggregate demand and provide a crucial pull for new networks. On the supply side, actions on broadband and security should advance the roll-out of infrastructure.

The Lisbon strategy is not just about productivity and growth but also about employment and social cohesion. *eEurope* 2005 puts users at the centre. It will improve participation, open up opportunities for everyone and enhance skills. *eEurope* contains measures regarding e-inclusion in all action lines. One important tool to achieve this is to ensure multi-platform provision of services. It is generally accepted that not everyone will want to have a PC. Making sure that services, especially online public services, are available over different terminals such as TV sets or mobile phones is crucial to ensuring the inclusion of all citizens.

III.

The *eEurope* action plan is based on two groups of actions which reinforce each other. On the one hand, it aims to stimulate **services, applications and content**, covering both online public services and e-business; on the other hand it addresses the underlying **broadband infrastructure and security matters**.

By 2005, Europe should have:

- modern online public services
 - e-government
 - e-learning services
 - e-health services
 - a dynamic e-business environment
- and, as an enabler for these
- widespread availability of broadband access at competitive prices
 - a secure information infrastructure

The action plan comprises four separate but interlinked tools

Firstly, **policy measures** to review and adapt legislation at national and European level; to ensure legislation does not unnecessarily hamper new services; to strengthen competition and interoperability; to improve access to a variety of networks; and, to demonstrate political leadership. *eEurope 2005* identifies those areas where public policy can provide an added value and therefore focuses on a limited set of actions in priority areas. Some key targets are:

- Connecting public administrations, schools, health care to broadband
- Interactive public services, accessible for all, and offered on multiple platforms
- Provide online health services
- Removal of obstacles to the deployment of broadband networks
- Review of legislation affecting e-business
- Creation of a Cyber Security Task Force

Secondly, *eEurope* will facilitate the exchange of experience, of **good practices** and demonstration projects, but also of sharing the lessons from failures. Projects will be launched to accelerate the roll-out of leading edge applications and infrastructure.

Thirdly, policy measures will be monitored and better focussed by **benchmarking** of the progress made in achieving the objectives and of the policies in support of the objectives.

Fourthly, **an overall co-ordination of existing policies** will bring out synergies between proposed actions. A steering group will provide a better overview of policy developments and ensure a good information exchange between national and European policy makers and the private sector. This steering group would also make an early participation of candidate countries possible.

IV.

This action plan is a proposal to Member States to take some far-reaching commitments. It is an invitation to the private sector to work with the Commission and Member States to realise the eEurope objectives. It sets out the initiatives the Commission will or is willing to take. Overall the action plan sets the scene for a coordinated European policy approach on information society issues. The eEurope action plan should be confirmed as a key element in the Lisbon strategy. If successful, this plan will have a significant impact on growth and productivity, employment and social cohesion in Europe.

The European Council in Sevilla is expected to endorse an Action Plan and invite Council and Parliament to adopt as quickly as possible the necessary legal and budgetary instruments to implement it.