

IS NEWS

COUNTDOWN TO 98



THE EU'S LATEST MOVES TOWARD LIBERALISATION

The primary motivation behind the liberalisation of Europe's telecommunications markets (set for January 1, 1998) is to bring more benefits to more users – whether they are individuals, small and medium-sized companies or large corporations. The competition generated by this new, open market will bring lower prices, more choice and a higher quality of service. By January 1, 1998, telecommunications services and infrastructure will be fully liberalised in the European Union (Luxembourg has a derogation until 2001 and Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain until 2003). Political agreement amongst Member States on this issue was reached thanks to the impulse of the European Commission. By the end of 1995, the Commission had submitted to the Council of Ministers and Parliament all legislative proposals required to liberalise the telecommunications sector and set up a new regulatory environment that will ensure that the market operates smoothly across the Union. The Union's commitment to achieve liberalisation was reinforced on March 13 with the adoption by the Commission under article 90 of the Treaty, which allows it to directly adopt measures in the field of competition, of a Directive writing down into Community law the political commitment amongst Member States to meet the 1998 deadline. This Directive also reinforces the liberalisation of the telecommunications sector ahead of 1998. While mobile communications, satellite services and the use of cable television networks have already been liberalised, the Directive decides to lift by July 1, 1996 the remaining restrictions on the provision of services other than voice telephony over networks established by the providers of the telecommunications services and over infrastructures provided by third parties such as public water, energy and railway utilities. To emphasise social and regional cohesion, the Commission adopted on March 13 a Communication calling for the preservation and consolidation of universal service, a concept that guarantees that all European citizens, wherever they live, can enjoy basic telecommunications service such as voice telephony, fax and electronic data at an affordable price. (See "A Countdown to liberalisation")

INTRODUCING ISPO

ENTRY POINT TO THE COMMISSION

To promote and support your initiatives in the Information Society

Where can a French multimedia company locate partners to develop educational material targeted at school children?

How can a Dutch citizens' association studying the impact of the Information Society on Women best promote an exchange of experiences across Europe? What is the best way for a Spanish organisation to identify the appropriate EU funding instruments for the development of new information services for SMEs? These people and other organisations active in the Information Society may not yet know that the common denominator to each of their queries is ISPO – the Information Society Project Office.

(Please turn to page 2 for the full story)



A COUNTDOWN TO LIBERALISATION

- Early 1990s Liberalisation of terminal equipment, value added services, corporate networks, data communications and satellite communications.
- Jan 1996 Liberalisation of the use of cable TV networks for liberalised telecommunications services; full liberalisation of mobile communications (services and infrastructures).
- July 1996 Service providers allowed to use third party infrastructure for liberalised services.
- Jan 1998 Full liberalisation of services (in particular voice telephony) and infrastructures.

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



The Information Society has left the starting blocks. Awareness of technological change is widespread. Each day news on strategic alliances, new product ideas and innovative applications are broadcast. The market for Information and Communication Technologies has become a driving force for economic growth and has surpassed that for traditional products.

The key question is whether Europe will take up the new opportunities for its future proactively. If we don't succeed in creating a new service mentality in Europe we are in danger of losing, because due to the increased productivity, jobs in the traditional sector will undoubtedly further decrease.

Every month *IS News* will report on how the Commission evaluates the economic, societal and social changes in the Information Society, and the measures it is taking to facilitate the transition from the Industrial Society to the Information Society.

The objective of *IS News* is to pick the most important points from this ocean of information and present them in a concise form. *IS News* will give a more coherent picture of the Commission's activities and decisions. ISPO was conceived as interface between the European Commission and those undertaking initiatives in the area of Information Society. *IS News* is another and hopefully successful step to this end.

Martin Bangemann

BUSINESS UPDATE

BELGACOM OPTS FOR PARTIAL PRIVATISATION

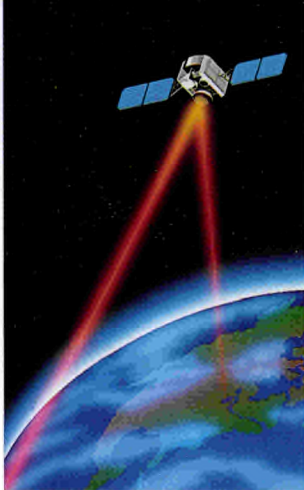
In preparation for the post-1998 liberalised telecommunications environment, several European countries have opted for the partial privatisation of their national telecommunications operators. The most recent strategic alliance of a public operator approved by the European Commission's competition directorate is the partnership between the Belgian national operator, Belgacom, and ADSB, an international consortium comprising Ameritech of the United States, the Danish national operator Tele Danmark and Singapore Telecoms. The Belgian state retains a 50% majority stake in Belgacom.



PRIVATE RAIL NETWORKS GO PAN-EUROPEAN WITH FIBRE OPTICS

A consortium of Europe's rail companies has received the green light from the European Commission to go ahead with plans to deploy a pan-European fibre optic network. Hermes Railtel Europe brings together the resources of the railways networks from Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland; with the American Global Telesystems Group and Britain's Rascal BRT, the British Rail network operator.

The partners have pooled their telecommunications networks resources to become a new key player on the European market.



WHAT IS ISPO?

ISPO has been created specifically to guide the European public through the tools and choices available to them from the rapidly-emerging Information Society.

The main services offered by ISPO are the ISPO World Wide Web Site, the ISPO Infodesk and a range of communication initiatives targeted at its key audiences:

- Citizens and user associations.
- Schools and cultural institutions.
- Local and regional public administrations.
- Small and medium-sized companies.

Each of these groups is ideally placed to benefit from the Information Society because telematics and information tools give the potential to improve quality of life, to offer services, or open up new business and professional contacts across Europe at a very low cost.

ISPO is also in charge of the development of a number of Information Society related inventories, among which, in particular, the Global Inventory Project (one of the 11 projects adopted by the G7 countries at their 1995 Inter-Ministerial Conference in Brussels) and the European Survey of projects and actions in each of the Member States.

To find out more about how ISPO can help you please contact us on:

Web: <http://www.ispo.cec.be>

(where a wealth of information, discussion groups and opportunities to generate new contacts are provided)

Fax: +32 2 299 41 80

e-mail: ispo@ispo.cec.be

WHY IS 'UNIVERSAL SERVICE' IMPORTANT?

Universal service for telecommunications today means guaranteeing all European citizens, wherever they live, access at an affordable price to a voice telephony service over a line allowing them to use a fax machine or to hook up to a computer. This definition, which is due to evolve over time, already allows citizens to participate in the information society by providing a connection that enables them to access on-line services or the Internet. It also means that users must be offered operator assistance, emergency and directory inquiry services and that public payphones are widely available.



SUCCESS STORIES

HELLO! THIS IS YOUR PC SPEAKING



Thanks to a new software programme called Phoneware, you can transform your personal computer into a sophisticated voice mail and feature-phone system.

Phoneware is developed by German technology company Tedas, and supported by funding from the ESPRIT Programme of the European Commission.

Using Phoneware's advanced speech recognition functions users can retrieve and store all messages from any telephone network in their PC, including mobile phone connections.

The system is protected by a user password which is - naturally - voice activated.

Contact:

Tedas GmbH, D-35037, Germany

Tel: +49 6421 91020

Fax: +49 6421 910299

LIBRARIES: MOVING CLOSER TO INSTANT DOCUMENT RETRIEVAL

More than 20 universities and libraries from Belgium, Germany, Greece, Ireland and Spain combined with software and document processing companies to produce two innovative new library and documentalist tools, each funded by the Telematics Programme of the European Commission.

The Sprintel project succeeded in developing a voice-activated quick reference service for library users. This frees the staff from the constant burden of conducting long lists of bibliographic research for users. For users the benefit is rapid access to the information they require, and the possibility to access the service 24 hours' every day.

The Fastdoc project has created a database and document search system which is capable of answering users' fax queries in maximum five minutes to any destination in Europe. The system was created for users interested in chemical industry publications. When completed, it will contain some 30 years worth of published material, including high quality scanned graphics.

Contacts:

Sprintel

Jan Van Vaerenbergh

Fax: +32 16 234006

e-mail: sprintel@cunel.be

Fastdoc

Reinhard Ecker

Fax: +49 69 7917699





100 SUGGESTIONS FOR A SOCIAL APPROACH TO THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

High-level Expert Group proposes a 'European Model'

As it develops, the Information Society has an important role to play in all aspects of daily life. The European citizens should be equipped to benefit from its challenges and opportunities.

This is the key message presented by the High-Level Group of Experts to Employment and Social Affairs Commissioner Pdraig Flynn. The group's primary goal is to ensure that Europe's social and societal aspects are an integral part of the Information Society. A major concern is indeed that the welfare of European citizens is cared for as this new social model may change the way many of us live and work.

In its preliminary report – which is an interim statement of the group's work to date – the group offers more than 100 initial policy suggestions discussing how social and societal aspects of the Information Society can be addressed. The report argues that the social and societal aspects must be given as much importance as its technical, industrial and economic aspects. It argues in favour of a European Model of Information Society that is based on a strong foundation of social solidarity. It points out the need to create a Learning Society, and not just an Information Society.

Key opportunities emphasised in the document concern:

- **employment**, where a major challenge is to identify how new sectors, which are creators of new jobs, can grow rapidly
- **work organisation**, as new forms are emerging (for example teleworking), with potentially great advantages but also the need for adequate protection of workers
- **social cohesion**, provided that the European Information Society is relevant and open to ordinary people and adapted to their real needs
- **health services**, where great hopes are promised by the new technologies for services which are both more cost effective and of a higher quality.

The final report, complete with recommendations and some 100 suggestions, will be presented to Commissioner Flynn in December. A summary of the Report will be published in an upcoming issue of *IS News*.

THE MARKET

WHERE ARE ALL THE USERS?

Europe's rapidly expanding ICT market

Worldwide 100 million personal computers (PCs) are estimated to be in use. At the end of 1995, 5.5 million people used interactive Internet services in Europe. In the last quarter of 1995 almost 100,000 new hosts connected to the Internet each month. In all networks 40 million users can exchange data worldwide. Figures recently released by the European Information Technology Observatory show that in Western Europe the density of PCs installed was 72 per 100 white collar workers. In Japan the density is 24 PCs per 100 white collar workers, in the USA 104, in the Netherlands 80, in Germany 76, in France 62 and 42 in Greece. The growth of Information Technologies markets (IT) is strongest in countries with the highest IT penetration. The countries with the greatest momentum towards information technology use are still accelerating.

This trend is also mirrored in the density of telephone lines across Europe. Spain, Portugal and Ireland have less than 40 exchange lines per 100 inhabitants, whereas Sweden and Denmark lead the pack with up to 68 exchange lines per 100 inhabitants.

These figures also highlight a similar trend in European countries' per capita expenditures in Information Technology. They indicate that an already high level of information and communication equipment is stimulating further investment. While Denmark invested ECU 624 the Greek investment was ECU 47 and Portugal's was ECU 82, against a Western European average of ECU 347. In Japan the figure is ECU 563 and ECU 681 in the USA.

EUROPEAN ICT: THE MARKET AT A GLANCE

Total market value	ECU 304 Billion
Average national per capita investment in Western Europe	ECU 347
Highest investors (per capita) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Switzerland * • Denmark 	ECU 844 ECU 624
Lowest investors (per capita) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greece • Portugal 	ECU 47 ECU 82
Expected growth '95-'97	8.1%
Market breakdown <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services • Hardware/equipment/other 	47% 53%
Fastest growing segment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobile telephony 	25% growth in 1995 (same rate forecast for 1996)
Internet connections <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Users • New hosts connected • Total users exchanging data 	5.5 million 100,000 per month (last quarter of 1995) 40 million (worldwide)

Source: European Information Technology Observatory, March 1996. Copies available from, among others, EUROBIT, fax: +49 69 66031510.

*Not an EU country

INTRODUCING THE INFORMATION SOCIETY ACTIVITY CENTRE

Mr. J. Wenzel, previous Head of Cabinet for Commissioner Bangemann has been appointed Chief Advisor in Charge of the recently-established Information Society Activity Centre.

The Activity Centre is jointly managed by European Commission Directorate General III and Directorate General XIII. Its overall goal is to improve the coordination of the Commission's activities related to the Information Society.

The Activity Centre also includes ISPO – the Information Society Project Office – and covers international aspects of the Information Society.



CALENDAR

**EUROPEAN INFORMATION
SOCIETY AWARENESS WEEK**

The main objective of the Week, which will be held from 6-10 May 96 in a variety of locations throughout Europe is to promote awareness of the Information Society and its practical implications. 50 events will take place, half of which are sponsored by the European Commission. Many events will place particular emphasis on implications for businesses, notably SMEs, particularly in the area of electronic commerce. Other events focusing on a more general audience will also be included. A key feature of the Week is the video-link with the Business on the Web event to be held in Paris on 9-10 May, whose aim is to enable SMEs to catch up on state-of-the-art Internet technologies which can help them do business better. Details of all events will be published on ISPO's Web server as they are finalised (<http://www.ispo.cec.be>). For further details, contact: Nic Morris, DG XXIII, Fax +32 2 2300520, e-mail: eichdt@belgium.eu.net Jan Hens, ISPO, Fax +32 2 2994170/80, e-mail: jhe@ispo.cec.be

**INFORMATION SOCIETY AND
DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE
SOUTH AFRICA, 13-15 MAY 1996**

The G-7 Ministerial Conference on the Information Society, held in Brussels in February 95 re-emphasised the need for all countries - including developing countries - to be integrated in the Global Information Society. To further this goal, a conference on the Information Society and Development is being held in South Africa on 13-15 May, aiming to demonstrate the potential of information technologies and services for developing countries, to foster their social and economic development, and to find ways to involve them in the IS process through concrete actions. To date, a total of 61 countries and international organisations have been invited. In addition to a ministerial session, parallel workshops and an exhibit are also planned where participants from governments, the private sector, international organisations and NGOs can jointly address the needs and challenges of the developing world.

**INFORMATION SOCIETY RELATED CONFERENCES/WORKSHOPS
IN THE FORTHCOMING MONTHS**

High-Performance Computing and networking - HPCN 96
Brussels (B)
15-19 April 1996
HPCN-Programme secretariat
Fax: +31 30 2321967
e-mail: hpcn96@fwi.uva.nl
<http://www.fwi.uva.nl/HPCN/>

DTI - The UK Government's Information Society initiative
London (UK)
18 April 1996
Global Highways Business Group
Member Services
Fax: +44 1753 604455
e-mail: b.line@slh0630.wins.icl.co.uk

The way forward for all - Examples of applications for the citizens in the Area of City Information Highways
Eindhoven (NL)
22-23 April 1996
EITIRT
V.H.C.M. Evers
Fax: +31 40 2783780
e-mail: a687827@nlevdpsb.snads.philips.nl
ISPO
A. Kaminara
Fax: +32 2 2994170
e-mail: aka@ispo.cec.be

Information Society Awareness Week
Events in different European Cities
6-10 May 1996
Euro Info Centre
Nic Morris
Fax: +32 2 2300520
e-mail: eichdt@belgium.eu.net
ISPO
Jan Hens
Fax: +32 2 2964180
e-mail: jhe@ispo.cec.be

The Global Information Society and Lifelong Learning
Liverpool (UK)
7-10 May 1996
Copson International
Fax: +44 151 7095447
e-mail: copson@mail.cybase.co.uk
<http://www.connect.org.uk/merseyworld/liverlearn/inspiration>

IS Forum - Public Administrations
Rome (I)
7-11 May 1996
Segreteria organizzativa:
Istituto Mides
V. Alberico II, 33, 00193 Roma
Fax: +39 6 68802433

First European Digital Cities Conference: the challenge of the future
Copenhagen
8-9 May 1996
Telecities coordination office
Fax: +32 2 5134322
e-mail: telecities@mcr1.poptel.org.uk
<http://www.poptel.org.uk/telecities/>

5th International World Wide Web Conference - part of which is the Business on the Web event
Paris (F)
6-10 May 1996
INRIA
Domaine De Voluceau
Fax: +33 1 39635330
e-mail: www5-info@inria.fr
<http://www5conf.inria.fr/welcome.html>

Conference on the Information Society and Development
South Africa
13-15 May 1996
ISPO
General conference information
Fax: +32 2 2994180
e-mail: ispo@ispo.cec.be
<http://www.ispo.cec.be>

Telematics for Health and Disabled & Elderly People
Gauteng, South Africa
16-18 May 1996
Club de Bruxelles
Tim D. Robinson
Fax: +32 2 7335050

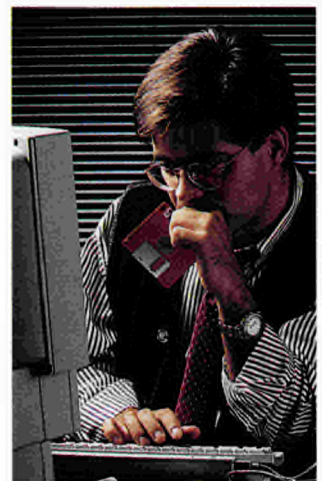
Work in the Information Society
Helsinki (Finland)
20-22 May 1996
Finnish Institute of Occupational Health
Sari Lilja
Fax: +358 0 4747548
e-mail: slil@occuphealth.fi

1st European Conference on Regions and Society of Information
Alicante (E)
30-31 May 1996
European Commission
Mr. Jose Cotta
Fax: +32 2 2969131
e-mail: jcca@dg13.cec.be

Cooperation with Mediterranean countries in the area of Information Society
Rome (I)
30-31 May 1996
European Commission
Mr. Ricci
Fax: +32 2 2968970
e-mail: aricc@dg13.cec.be

Economics of the Information Society - Human Capital in the Information Society
Helsinki (Finland)
6-7 June 1996
ETLA Research Institute of the Finnish Economy
Fax: +358 0 601753

Information technologies in the Human Services: Dreams and Realities
Rovaniemi (Finland)
11-14 June 1996
National R&D Centre for Welfare and Health
Fax: +358 0 3967 2001
e-mail: husita@stakes.fi



SMEs in a Learning Society
London (UK)
20-21 June 1996
University of North London
J. Mitra/M. Lapetra
Fax: +44 171 7537064
e-mail: m.lapetra/j.mitra@unl.ac.uk

IDA '96: Public Administrations and the Information Society
Rome (I)
20-21 June 1996
Finsiel secretariat
Fax: +39 6 22715555
e-mail: ida.conf@finsiel.it
IDA
Fax: +32 2 2990286
e-mail: ida-central@dg3.cec.be

EU/CEEC Information Society Forum
Prague (Czech Rep.)
12-13 September 1996
National Information Center NIS
R. Stefec
Fax: +42 2 24223177
e-mail: stefec@dec.nis.cz

ISPO SECRETARIAT

Free phone service

Austria	0660 5835
Belgium	0800 13891
Denmark	800 1 8888
Finland	0800 113635
France	0591 7227
Germany	0130 821943
Greece	00800 3212635
Ireland	1800 553224
Italy	1678 76790
Luxembourg	0800 2929
Netherlands	060 222086
Portugal	0505 329635
Spain	900 993290
Sweden	020 791635
United Kingdom	0800 962114

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B-1049 Brussels