

EDUC-010

Brussels, 5 March 2003

**OPINION**

of the

Committee of the Regions

of 12 February 2003

on the

**Proposal for a Council Decision adopting a multi-annual programme (2003-2005)**

**for monitoring of eEurope, dissemination of good practices and**

**the improvement of network and information security**

**(MODINIS)**

COM(2002) 425 final – 2002/0187 CNS

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS,

Having regard to the proposal for a Council Decision *adopting a multi-annual programme (2003-2005) for monitoring of eEurope, dissemination of good practices and the improvement of network and information security (MODINIS) COM(2002) 425 final – 2002/0187 (CNS)*,

Having regard to the decision of the European Commission of 26 July 2002 to consult it on this subject, under the first paragraph of Article 265 of the Treaty establishing the European Community,

Having regard to the decision of its Bureau 14 May 2002 to instruct its Commission for Culture and Education to draw up an opinion on this subject,

Having regard to its Opinion on the *Information society and regional development - ERDF interventions 2000/2006: criteria for programme assessment*, rapporteur: **Mr Tögel** (CdR 124/2000 fin)<sup>1</sup>,

Having regard to its Opinion on the Commission Communication - *Network and Information Security: Proposal for a European Policy Approach*, rapporteur: **Mrs Barrero-Florez**

(CdR 257/2001 fin)<sup>2</sup>,

Having regard to its Opinion on the *follow-up to the Action Plan on promoting a safer use of the Internet and the Proposal amending Decision No. 276/1999/EC adopting a multiannual Community action plan on promoting safer use of the Internet by combating illegal and harmful content on global networks*, rapporteur: **Mr Luigi Sergio Ricca** (CdR 140/2002 fin),

Having regard to its draft opinion CdR 252/2002 rev. 2 adopted on 28 November 2002 by its Commission for Culture and Education (rapporteur: **Mr Dieter Schiffmann**, Member of the Rhineland – Palatinate Landtag (D/PES)),

**unanimously adopted the following opinion at its 48<sup>th</sup> plenary session, held on 12-13 February 2003 (meeting of 12 February).**

1. **The Committee of the Regions' views**

**The Committee of the Regions,**

1. **reiterates** its belief in the need to implement the eEurope action plan 2005, and stresses the importance of the priorities assigned to e-government, e-learning, e-health and an e-business environment, as well as the security of the information infrastructure and the development of broadband access, and it particularly advocates a programme to support the implementation of, and to monitor compliance with, the objectives of the action plan;
2. **reiterates** the belief expressed in its Opinion on the information society and regional development (CdR 124/2000) that it is above all local and regional authorities which plan, carry out, guarantee and in particular finance the actual work involved in setting up the information society throughout Europe, e.g. by developing appropriate regional initiatives;
3. **therefore, in view of** the importance of these tasks, calls for the regional and local level to be integrated into the procedures for monitoring and observing eEurope more closely than provided for in the programme;
4. **shares** the view that comparisons must be made of the progress in implementing eEurope, particularly with regard to the promotion of services, applications and content, as well as to the development of broadband infrastructure and the monitoring of safety issues, and that to this end a procedure needs to be developed;
5. **underlines** the need for the establishment of a mechanism for monitoring and exchange of experience which enables the Member States to compare and analyse performances, and calls for this mechanism to have a strong local and regional component, as successful implementation at regional and local level is an important precondition for the success of eEurope;
6. **particularly stresses** the importance of the benchmarking process for keeping track of, and promoting progress in, the implementation and comparison of individual procedures;
7. **considers** that a uniform method of benchmarking should be used for eEurope 2005 in

all Member States, that data should be up-to-date, and that existing sources of data in the Member States should be used, and suggests that, to facilitate evaluation, data from the USA be used for comparative purposes;

8. **considers** that, in addition to national initiatives, those of the regions and local authorities undertaken in the framework of eEurope should also be included in the benchmarking;
9. **stresses** the need to support the Member States' measures aimed at the implementation of the eEurope programme by comparing performance and disseminating good practice, and calls for inclusion of the local and regional level of government in the measures;
10. **considers** the programme important with a view to reducing regional disparities in bringing about the information society, and is convinced that the dissemination of good practice by the regions will in particular benefit disadvantaged regions and regions whose industrial development is lagging behind;
11. **stresses** that the collection and analysis of data should, in view of the need to take account of the regional level, also include regional indicators;
12. **considers** the participation of the Member States in the financing of local projects for the development of local broadband infrastructure to be worthwhile, and calls on the Commission to support the local and regional exchange of experience on the dissemination of good practice;
13. **particularly stresses** its positive assessment of the need for widespread availability of broadband connections, and shares the view that this will have a positive impact on economic activity, and that eEurope should also place particular emphasis on the objective of providing broadband access for public administrations, schools and medical establishments;
14. **stresses** the particular importance of network and information security for economic and social development, and in this connection draws attention to the conclusions of its Opinion on the Communication – Network and Information Security: Proposal for a European Policy Approach<sup>3</sup> and its Opinion on the Communication on the follow-up to the Action Plan on promoting a safer use of the Internet and the Proposal amending Decision No. 276/1999/EC adopting a multiannual Community action plan on promoting safer use of the Internet by combating illegal and harmful content on global networks<sup>4</sup>;
15. **in particular stresses** the need for support for actions in the Member States designed to increase network and information security;
16. **at the same time, however, stresses** the responsibility of the local and regional authorities for the development of political measures in the area of network and information security;
17. **against this background argues** that the objectives of the programme should also include the improvement of regional and local measures to enhance network and information security and step up the development of broadband networks;
18. **stresses** that support should also be given to awareness-raising actions at regional

and local level designed to increase network and information security;

19. **stresses** the need to analyse the economic and social implications of the information, e.g. with a view to regional and local developments;
20. **argues** that the committee which is to support the Commission in implementing the programme and coordinating it with other Community programmes should include local and regional representatives among its members;
21. **considers** it doubtful whether the budgetary resources earmarked for implementation of the programme are sufficient, and feels that this question should be considered in the light of experience, and that the involvement of the applicant countries should also be considered;
22. **advocates** in general terms that the measures be extended to the applicant countries, as the whole area is of high importance with a view to bringing the applicant countries up to the EU level;
23. **calls** for the planned evaluation report on the results of the programme also to be submitted to the Committee of the Regions.

## 2. The Committee of the Regions' recommendations

### Recommendation 1

Recital 8

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
There is a need for the establishment of a mechanism for monitoring and the exchange of experiences which enables Member States to compare and analyse performances and review progress in relation to the eEurope Action plan. Such a mechanism will allow Member States to better exploit the economic and industrial potential of the technological development, in particular in the area of the Information Society.	There is a need for the establishment of a mechanism for monitoring and the exchange of experiences which enables Member States, <u>regions and local authorities</u> to compare and analyse performances and review progress in relation to the eEurope Action plan. Such a mechanism will allow Member States, <u>regions and local authorities</u> to better exploit the economic and industrial potential of the technological development, in particular in the area of the Information Society.

### Reason

A mechanism of this type must also take account of the regional and local dimension. The success of the action plan depends on the effective implementation of the measures at regional and local level.

### Recommendation 2

Recital 9

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
Benchmarking allows Member States to assess whether the national initiatives that they have taken in the framework of the eEurope Action Plan are producing results comparable to those in other Member States and are fully exploiting the potential of the technologies.	Benchmarking allows Member States, <u>regions and local authorities</u> to assess whether the national <u>and regional and local</u> initiatives taken in the framework of the eEurope Action Plan are producing results comparable to those in other Member States and are fully exploiting the potential of the technologies.

### Reason

This takes account of the importance of the regions and local authorities for the implementation of the programme.

### Recommendation 3

Recital 10, first sentence

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
Action by Member States in the framework of the eEurope Action Plan can be further supported by disseminating good practices	Action by Member States <u>and their local and regional levels of government</u> in the framework of the eEurope Action Plan can be further supported by disseminating good practices

### Reason

Regional and local level measures should in particular be supported in this way.

### Recommendation 4

Recital 12, second sentence

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
The complex nature of network and information security implies that, in developing policy measures in this field, local, national and where appropriate European authorities should take into account a range of political, economic, organisational and technical aspects, and be aware of the decentralised and global character of communication networks.	The complex nature of network and information security implies that, in developing policy measures in this field, local, <u>regional</u> , national and where appropriate European authorities should take into account a range of political, economic, organisational and technical aspects, and be aware of the decentralised and global character of communication networks.

### Reason

Appropriate account should be taken of the regional authorities.

### Recommendation 5

Recital 13, second sentence

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
Support should be given to the awareness raising actions of Member States designed to increase network and information security, in particular by organising at European level the data collection, analysis and the dissemination of good practices on forward-looking responses to existing and emerging security threats.	Support should be given to the awareness raising actions of Member States, <u>regional and local authorities</u> designed to increase network and information security, in particular by organising at European level the data collection, analysis and the dissemination of good practices on forward-looking responses to existing and emerging security threats.

### Reason

The necessary support for awareness-raising measures must also include the regional and local level.

### Recommendation 6

Article 1(c)

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
(Article 1(c)) to analyse the economic and societal consequences of the Information Society with the view to appropriate policy responses particularly in terms of industrial competitiveness and cohesion;	(Article 1(c)) to analyse the economic and societal consequences of the Information Society with the view to <u>regional and local developments</u> and appropriate policy responses particularly in terms of industrial competitiveness and cohesion;

### Reason

The effects of the information society are thrown into sharp relief by comparing developments in the regions and local areas.

### Recommendation 7

Article 1(d)

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
(Article 1(d)) to enhance national and European efforts for improving network and information security and to foster the development of broadband rollout.	(Article 1(d)) to enhance national, <u>regional, local</u> and European efforts for improving network and information security and to foster the development of broadband rollout.

**Reason**

Regional and local-level measures are particularly important.

**Recommendation 8**

(Article 1, fourth paragraph)

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
(Article 1(4))The programme should also provide a common framework for complementary interaction at European level of the various national, regional, local levels.	(Article 1, fourth paragraph)The programme should also provide a common framework for complementary interaction at European level of the various national, regional, local levels. <u>The programme should involve the applicant countries.</u>

**Reason**

The information society is highly important for preparations for EU accession and the applicant countries should therefore be involved at an early stage.

**Recommendation 9**

Article 2(a)

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
(Article 2(a)) data collection and analysis on the basis of a new set of benchmarking indicators including regional indicators where appropriate. A special focus should be laid on data related to the key targets of the eEurope 2005 Action plan;	(Article 2(a)) data collection and analysis on the basis of a new set of benchmarking indicators including regional indicators where appropriate. A special focus should be laid on data related to the key targets of the eEurope 2005 Action plan; <u>data collection and analysis should also include the applicant countries;</u>

**Reason**

The importance of the information society for the applicant countries needs to be taken into account at an early stage.

**Recommendation 10**

Article 6(1)

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
(Article 6(1)) The Commission shall be assisted by a Committee composed of representatives of the Member States and chaired by the representative of the	(Article 6(1)) The Commission shall be assisted by a Committee composed of representatives of the Member States, <u>regions and local authorities</u> and chaired by the

Commission.	representative of the Commission.
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### Reason

This takes account of the importance of the local and regional measures for the successful implementation of the programme.

### Recommendation 11

Article 7(4)

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
(Article 7(4)) At the end of the programme, the Commission will submit to the European Parliament, to the Council and to the Economic and Social Committee an evaluation report on the results obtained in implementing the actions referred in the article 2.	(Article 7(4)) At the end of the programme, the Commission will submit to the European Parliament, to the Council, to the <u>Committee of the Regions</u> and to the Economic and Social Committee an evaluation report on the results obtained in implementing the actions referred in the article 2.

### Reason

Given the importance of the regional and local levels for successful implementation, the CoR must be involved.

Brussels, 12 February 2003.

The President

The Secretary-General

of the

of the

Committee of the Regions

Committee of the Regions

**Albert Bore**

**Vincenzo Falcone**

<sup>1</sup> OJ C 22, 24.1.2001, p. 32

<sup>2</sup> OJ C 107, 3.5.2002, p. 89

<sup>3</sup> (CdR 257/2001 fin)

<sup>4</sup> (CdR 140/2002 fin)



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