

Commission sets out its objectives for the United Nations World Summit on Information Society

The European Commission has adopted a Communication on the forthcoming World Summit on Information Society setting out the main objectives for the EU at this Summit. This Summit, the first world-wide event in the field, is under the patronage of the United Nations and will be held in Geneva in December 2003, continuing in Tunis in November 2005.

The Information Society is of particular relevance to the European Union: over the last decade, it has developed a vision of the Information Society and has expressed this through a comprehensive set of policies. At its meeting in Lisbon in 2000, the European Council committed itself to the development of a knowledge based economy, which has guided EU policy ever since.

The Summit will allow many countries to better understand the benefits of the Information Society for their socio-economic development and for a better integration into the world economy. The Political Declaration and the Plan of Action to be adopted by the Summit will influence national policies and help to further develop the global Information Society.

The EU has been playing a very active role in the Summit preparations. The Commission's Communication clarifies the general context, sets out the main objectives of the Summit and identifies the key objectives for the EU in this context. These are notably:

Building the Information Society prerequisites: the Summit should base its outcomes on a core of principles based on fundamental human rights, establish the framework for an enabling environment and capacity building by investing first in people and to pave the way for an Information Society reflecting our values and principles as well as its appropriate governance.

Developing the right tools: the Summit should encourage all interested parties to devise and implement coherent e-strategies, including appropriate regulatory frameworks, and allow broad mobilisation of all stakeholders.

Seizing the benefit of the Information Society for countries and individuals: the Summit should reinforce the right to communicate and to access to information and knowledge, contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals laid down by the United Nations, enable participation in the major flows of economic, scientific and cultural exchange, using Information and Communication Technologies for social development and economic growth.

The Communication intends to pave the way for concrete actions and proposals by the EU to the Plan of Action, based on the Union's longstanding experience in dialogue and co-operation with partner countries, in particular with developing ones. Several countries have expressed interest in the EU's eEurope initiatives in this field, and this will lead to the further development of dialogue and support for the elaboration of e-strategies. In addition, action programmes could be envisaged e.g. in the fields of e-Government, e-Learning (e-Schools), e-Health and an initiative for Education and Research Networks.

The next meeting of the Telecommunications Council in Luxembourg to be held on 5 June will debate the WSIS on the basis of this Communication and adopt conclusions, setting a common EU position for the Summit. This will allow a dynamic and constructive interaction with the Summit preparations and offer an opportunity to exert a significant influence on the outcome of the Summit.

The communication can be found at:

http://europa.eu.int/information_society/topics/telecoms/international/news/index_en.htm