# The information strategy of the European Union

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# Contents

# The concept of information strategy

In this chapter we define the concept of information strategy which is fundamental to the creation of the information society and present the strategic policy initiatives of the European Union.

It is information strategy which assigns the tasks necessary to achieve the objectives and provides the tools indispensable to accomplishing those objectives, thus playing a central role in building the desired information society. In the following discussion we shall explain what we call information strategy; what its basic components are; why it is significant that information strategy has raised the status of some previously neglected areas of information society in political life. We shall also define a 'complete information strategy' and the necessary conditions for completeness. Our analysis is mainly based on the article entitled "Development of information strategies and their characteristics. Hungary's opportunities and possibilities, especially in respect to EU integration" written by László Z. Karvalics, and published in 1998 (Z. Karvalics, 1998).

Z. Karvalics called **"information strategy"** the new quality of political planning at various levels (national, international, regional, federal), which appeared at the beginning of the 1990s and which comprises the handling of the following three areas together:

1. The "information public utility": information infrastructure, which consists of facilities that process public information and provide services, which include computers, databases and communication networks. By utilising these everyone will be able to access their required information anywhere and at any time easily, quickly and cheaply.
2. The informatisation of society means the complete informatisation of the most important institutional structures: politics, law, healthcare, education, etc.
3. The development policies of the information industries: preferential development of some innovation and research sectors to facilitate the informatisation of the whole economy.

Information strategy is also seen as assisting possible changes to the quality of social life: this hope is expressed in the programme of the "**building of information society**". This technique of social planning formulates visions for the future, draws a comprehensive social picture, looks ahead to the long-term, and presumes a consensus regarding this question amongst the responsible political elite. It regulates the managed concentration of resources, and it considers education the sector that will help us to attain competitive advantage; thus education is seen as a priority area to ensure economic prominence.

The design and writing of information strategies maps the network logics of the globalised world, so, in regard to building the information society, we can separate policies on each sub-system level. The European Union follows a supranational policy, while most nations have worked out their own strategies on a national level too, although these are playing an ever smaller role and in some places have ceased completely. Plans are made on a regional level, moreover the projection of "intelligent cities" might also be considered part of the group of information strategies.

A "comprehensive" information strategy can be said to exist if all of the following conditions are fulfilled:

0. (Zero or boundary condition) The decision-making politicians are committed to building an information society.
1. There is a basic, comprehensive planning document which is accepted at the highest level which involves the whole of society.

2. Effective co-ordination of the programme at governmental level.
3. An institution specialising in executing the operative tasks.
4. An organisation that serves as a basis for scientific and methodological planning, that executes and co-ordinates the basic and applied research necessary for the programme.
5. Pilot projects are studied to gain experience before the complete execution of the programme.
6. Making the whole of society familiar with the idea and accepting of the aims and objectives.

If only three or four of these conditions are met, then it can only be claimed that a "partial" strategy has come into being, and if only one or two conditions are realised then this constitutes a complete lack of an information strategy.

A comprehensive information strategy is indispensable for a country that aims to build an information society. An information strategy is much more than the total of the directives comprising single aspects of the transition to the information society: in fact, it is a basic policy document, and a general national development plan. Such a strategy deals not only with the Internet and generally with the social usage of information tools, but with the whole of the information society, focusing on competitiveness and the quality of life because the country's future and welfare depends on its execution.

# The information policy of the European Union

The roots of this information policy can be traced back through the history of the European Economic Community (EEC, in brief: the Single Market). The Council of Ministers of the Single Market accepted the first five year pilot programmes in 1978, which included the subject of the information society and they employed several research groups. The first comprehensive programme of informatics, encompassing the whole of society, started in France at the beginning of the 1980s: this was the Minitel system which connected phone subscribers to a network offering many services through several million free-stationed terminals with screens – significantly preceding the Internet era but achieving the connection of a mass population through telecommunications technology.

After this, information strategy at European level evolved through processes within the committee system of the European Union: the research policy that placed informatics at its centre was integrated to cater for the need for further development of enterprises, and moved in the same direction to follow the interests of the markets. Consequently, information technology (IT) and later, the information and communication technologies (ICT) began to occupy a central role in development programmes in Europe from the 1980s onwards.

## 1. The various levels of European information policy

In the European Union, information policy – just like other policies – is made at various levels. A united Europe has formed a new, previously non-existent organizational form; the network state which tries to meet the challenges of globalisation and localisation creatively. The **network state** (Castells, 1996) is a complex system of institutions, in which the various decision-making levels – local, regional, national and supranational – are integrated. Meetings are held at various places in a given order with a special asymmetry due to the **principle of subsidiarity**, which means the decisions are made as close to the level of implementation where their effect will be felt. The network does not have a real centre, and subordination still prevails. It has connecting points with different certificates, but these depend on each other mutually, there is no part that could neglect the other, because that would jeopardize the operation of the whole system – this is the main difference between a policy network and a centralised political structure.

In the networking mode of operation – as we shall see later – information policy is multilevel. The policy objectives are set at the supranational level, but they are implemented on a lower level in achieving national information strategies, which often deconstruct them into regional and local (regional or district level) development programmes.

The following section will focus primarily on the supranational level and will not present the objectives of specific national or regional information policies in detail.

# 2. The European policy for the creation of information society: from the Bangemann Report to the eEurope programme (1993–1999)

## 1994: The year Europe reached the age of majority in information politics: the Bangemann Report

1994 heralded the "coming of age" for European information policy, when it was stated in official policy terms. The report entitled "Europe and the Global Information Society – Recommendations to the European Council" was prepared under the direction of the previous Vice-President of the European Commission, Martin Bangemann with the assistance of industrial experts and users representing various sectors of society. This document, known as the Bangemann Report was debated and accepted by the European Council at a conference held on Corfu in June 1994.

The report identified measures to improve the international competitiveness of European enterprises saying it was necessary for the European Council to intervene more proactively. On the one hand to accelerate the current market liberalisation process, and also to improve and standardise the present services. In addition to the need for political intervention, the report also pointed out that financing the building and operation of the information infrastructure was primarily the responsibility of the private sector. To reassure private providers, it was necessary to formulate stable legal regulatory frameworks, which should be integrated by harmonisation of the legal processes of the Member States. This was also the most important task of information policy.

The Bangemann Report concluded that the spirit of competitiveness was the most important factor complemented by a firm belief that only free but well-regulated competition based on equal opportunities would encourage the building of the information society in Europe. There was an underlying assumption in the proposals in the report that the information revolution would bring new markets and simultaneously change the logic of the operation of the economy. Although the Bangemann Report called for a "market centred revolution" – more than a decade later when the report does not have a direct effect on the main trend of the information policy of the European Union – it can be seen that we were able to talk about market centred processes in the document but not affect them in reality. The report represented a perspective that presented the information society from a narrow economic aspect. Perhaps this contributed to Bangemann's withdrawal from political life at the end of the 1990s to establish himself in the private sector, where after the creation of an economic base, information policy started to concentrate on the socio-cultural aspects of the information society.

## The Action Plan: "Europe's Way to the Information Society"

After the debate on the Bangemann Report in June, the European strategy-making engine got under way and upon the request of the European Council the European Commission introduced the document "Europe's Way to the Information Society – an Action Plan" as early as July 1994. Originally the Action Plan contained tasks only for the years 1994 and 1995, but it was regularly reconsidered and it assigned tasks for the following years. In 1996 it was revalidated and became a "rolling action plan" and its effect was extended until 1998. It reached the end of its validity only with the appearance of the new *eEurope* Action Plan.

The information policy evolving in the European Union in 1994 defined the tasks relating to the information society primarily as economic, secondarily as legal-regulatory, and thirdly as promotional tasks.

## New official documents and an overview of the 1994 Action Plan (1996–1997)

1996 and 1997 were devoted to quiet examination and hard-work in the area of information policy. The administration concentrated on the execution of the previously accepted Action Plan and after extending its

effect, on the consolidation of the results. In the meantime more and more new areas were thoroughly examined to see what kind of changes the information revolution might bring for them in the shorter and the medium term.

Four main information policy guidelines were defined in the overview, which are weighted equally:

1. *The development of the economic environment*: The liberalisation of telecommunications had to be finished in each part of the European Union at the very latest by 1 January 1998. This also meant that the transparency and consistency of the interconnected national regulations had to be improved in the interests of competition in the internal market. Furthermore, the rapid spread of the information infrastructure had to be assisted, especially amongst small and medium-sized enterprises.
2. *Investing in the future*: The fact that the information society is a knowledge-based society meant that the development of research in the information areas received an enhanced role in the research framework programmes.
3. *People at the centre*: When forming the services and the content, more attention had to be given to the expectations of the population and people. It was very important that the objectives of the structural funds were more closely tied to the objectives of information policy.
4. *Accepting global challenges*: consequent on increasing globalisation, comprehensive regulations are needed to cover the whole world. The information society is also a global society, which requires that in the 21st century we should endeavour to integrate the whole world and turn it into an information society.

In 1997 the European Union concentrated on assisting the convergence and the gradual moulding of the toolkit in telecommunications, the media and the entire information technology sphere with regard to both legal and economic aspects. The main task was to dissolve the barriers to a strong information infrastructure. The market procedures of convergence had already started, so the main question concerned what kind of political steps it was necessary to take. The Green Paper entitled "Convergence of the telecommunications, media and information technology" articulated proposals to exploit the advantages more thoroughly and these have generated widespread debate in society. However, the regulatory steps to form a harmonized environment took a decade of work. In the same year Padraig Flynn, the Commissioner for Employment and Social Affairs introduced the report by an expert group on the state of the information society (*Building a European Information Society for us all – Final Report of the High Level Group of Experts on the Information Society 1997).*

This document, which encapsulates in its title the principle of "information society for all" laid down in the 1999 *eEurope* programme, considered the building the information society was acceptable only if it was supported by strong measures promoting social cohesion. That was why the document tried to define the necessary measures to help realize this intention. The document contained more than 30 recommendations; it covered topics ranging from economic questions (e.g. employment, regional integration) to the social (e.g. quality of life, health) and political areas (development of democracy). This document can be considered as the forerunner of the 1999 *eEurope* programme, because it defined the wide information spectrum of the plan and its aims far surpassed the purely economic objectives of the Bangemann Report.

## 3. III. The information policy of Europe: eEurope (1999-2005)

Jumping from the era of expert reports and conferences held with the participation of politicians from 1993 to 1997, European information policy started to emphasize the interests of the wider public by the end of 1998. Beyond the catchwords, people started to get involved in the building of the information society, e.g. on the user level of information equipment. Politicians started to take the principle of "information society

for all" seriously. The social implications of information policy had to be declared, which happened with the acceptance of the *eEurope* programme. The change in the approach did not take place instantly, but happened gradually and was completed with the elaboration of the *eEurope* programme.

The *eEurope* programme is an organic continuation of the development of the European information technologies of the 90's, yet it can be seen as indicative of the new era after the economy-centred period from 1993 to 1999 characterised by Bangemann. While the measures taken until 1999 in information policy had economic objectives and social objectives appeared only at a rhetorical level instead of concrete proposals, the situation from 1999 changed. Social sensitivity, which existed previously mainly on paper, began to be translated into in specific action. In order to execute action at a high level, it was necessary to have a new strategy and a new action plan.

## "Socialisation" of the building of the information society – new guidelines of the e*Europe* programme (1999)

The renewed information policy of 1999 can be connected mainly to new people, who became the leaders of the political processes at that time. The strong German influence, which was felt when the aims of information politics were determined, waned. The European Parliament entrusted Mr. Romano Prodi with the presidential tasks of the European Commission in September 1999; Mr. Jose Manual Barroso replaced him in this post at the end of 2004. Changes occurred at the Directorate responsible for the information society. Erkii Liikanen, from Finland, the "laboratory" of the EU in respect to information society social development became an influential politician and took a responsible management role. The initiative "eEurope: An Information Society for All", which was launched by the European Commission in December 1999, was practically the programme of modernisation of the newly elected president of the European Commission. Its aim was to accelerate the European processes of transition to the information society and to make the results more accessible to every citizen of the European Union. *eEurope* preserved the main economic objectives of the previous era (1993-1999), while elevating assisting social development to the same level. In order to achieve these objectives, the following specific tasks were assigned:

1. Every EU citizen, every home, school, shop and office must be involved with the digital era and connected to networks.
2. A digitally educated Europe must be formed, based on an entrepreneur culture, which is able to finance and execute the new conceptions.
3. The processes must be socially open; they should strengthen consumers' trust and social cohesion. (*eEurope* Action Plan, 2000: 1).

At the turn of the 20th century to the 21st., Europe had a comparative advantage in several areas, in particular digital television and mobile telecommunications, compared to the rest of the world, but suffered a considerable lag in other areas; for example, in Internet usage. However as integration of media, telecommunications and the Internet proceeds continuously Europe has had to implement urgent plans to try to take the lead in the global competition. Europe has experienced a rapid spread of mobile telecommunications which could lead to a competitive advantage in wireless Internet. Clearly, this area of progress should be supported. Technological advantage in this area is not new.

The European Union has largely liberalised its telecommunications moving provision from public agencies to competitive private companies within a framework of legal regulation. Three industries – the supply of content (e.g. information and sporting results), research and the promotion of telecommunications development – are all supported by the European Union. Steps have been taken to bolster consumer trust, improve tax arrangements and enforce intellectual property rights.

The poorer performance of the EU in other areas of information society development might be improved by specifically targeted programmes. To achieve this we must strengthen Internet usage, support electronic technology commercially and promote the rise of information literacy and the network culture. The public sector must lead through investment in programmes and promotion of the sector. This concentration on an Internet based task system can be defended because it agrees with the European Union's wish to focus strongly on the Internet to eliminate Europe's serious lag in this technology.

There were two further areas in which an important change of priorities can be seen. These are cultural policy, which was not a problem that could be resolved by investment, and the digital environment, which did need investment since the EU lagged behinds its competitors. Although the Bangemann Report had said that the leading role in financing development here was the responsibility of the private sector, *eEurope* laid out explicit political tasks, both in the area of publicity, and in public investment. For obvious reasons, such investments could be realised quicker if they were public rather than private. These projects are mainly large-volume infrastructure developments which cannot be provided by or could with difficulty be supported by the private sphere but are nevertheless indispensable for the more effective operation of the economy. An information infrastructure that is truly available to all can be built only with the active participation and financial support of the public sector. A decision on this has already been made at the supranational level.

## The *eEurope* Action Plan (2000)

The *eEurope* Action Plan was elaborated by the European Commission, then it was submitted for debate at the European Council's meeting in June 2000 and was finally accepted by the Council. From the acceptance of the *eEurope* programme in December 1999 until submitting the proposal, there was a wide public debate about the objectives and the different schedule of implementation. There was an unofficial Ministerial conference in April 2000 in Lisbon on the information society and knowledge-based society, in which the members of the European Parliament and heads of states expressed their views on the *eEurope* programme. Expert opinion was available throughout the preparation of the Action Plan. Finally those writers who prepared the Action Plan restructured the main activity lines to clarify them and make them more publicly accessible. They assembled the modified activity lines into three main clusters. The new information policy was guided by the following three objectives:

1. Building of the infrastructural support that ensures access to the Internet everywhere cheap, quickly and safe Internet-usage.
2. Coaching people to prepare them for the challenges of the information society.
3. Development of the Internet-usage areas.

2002 was the final deadline for achieving the Action Plan and for all of the targets to have been achieved. In 2000 it seemed that if Europe could not fall into line then achieving the ambitious targets set in Lisbon for Europe to become the world's leading information and knowledge- society, would remain a far off goal. It is important to remember that this Action Plan was prepared before the so-called 'dotcom' crisis occurred and the American economy subsequently started to slow down. Since then the balance has changed and European development has not had to continue at such a high pace, because its main competitor's economic growth slowed down. However, the Action Plan only spelled out responsibilities and the Union did not give any financial support to the Member States for their implementation, so achievement mainly depended on national policy. "The *eEurope* targets can only be achieved if Member States, the European Parliament and the European Commission are ready to commit themselves to this Action Plan and to the reassessment of priorities which it will imply. No party can afford to relax; no matter how advanced they may be relative to others. Each Member State must be ready to set new priorities, to provide adequate funding and to remove obstacles

to achieve targets." (eEurope Action Plan, 2000: 5). Therefore the success of the *eEurope* Plan depended on the Member States and the cooperation between them, as well as on the institutions of the European Union.

## *eEurope+ 2003*: extending the targets of eEurope to the Accession Countries (2001)

The *eEurope* programme also sought to draw the new Accession States into the execution of the targets for developing the information society. In order to do this, the information strategy of the European Union called *eEurope+ (eEurope+ 2003: A co-operative effort to implement the Information Society in Europe – Action Plan*) was rewritten at the end of June 2001, using the *eEurope* programme as a model, which set the main development tasks for the Accession Countries.

To facilitate rapid development and so that the technology could make people's lives more efficient it was necessary to have a comprehensive policy. This was the objective of those who worked out the *eEurope*+ programme. This document, which was ready by the end of June 2001, contains only 32 pages but it is a very thorough and concise action plan. The Eastern and Central European countries indicated their intention to join the *eEurope* programme as early as the conference held in Warsaw in May 2000, in such a that they would construct an action plan similar to the *eEurope* programme for their area with the help of all the Accession Countries.

In addition to the candidate countries, Cyprus, Malta and Turkey supported the work on the preparation of the programme in February 2001; thus three extra countries were involved besides Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia and Romania. The 13 countries that joined the *eEurope*+ programme were then comparable to the EU15 in regard to their aggregated areas and numbers of inhabitants, that is, the size of the potential market they represented. It seemed a realistic assumption that if all the 28 countries implemented the targets of *eEurope* or the *eEurope*+ programmes, then Europe would become the most developed knowledge economy and a full knowledge society.

Within these developments one main task was to construct the framework for a unified regulatory structure to assist the transition to the new economy. By the time the details of the *eEurope*+ programme were settled, most of the Accession Countries already had their own national information strategies. The only exceptions were Albania, Macedonia, Hungary and Slovenia, but these countries started to plan their own national programmes too. *eEurope*+ made it possible to harmonize these existing national strategies with the official information programme of the EU and the *eEurope*, thus the *eEurope*+ programme was prepared, as a common, hybrid programme. The drafters of the Action Plan thought that the problems of harmonisation could be solved if they included all of the targets of the EU programme, but for their execution they would set their own internal deadlines and monitoring methods. The information programmes of the 13 Accession Countries considered the following targets as priority areas (with some amendments).

0. Creating the basis for the information society:
    a. Affordable telecommunication services for all.
    b. Adopting sections of *Acquis*, the common European regulation relating to the information society.
1. Cheap, quick and safe Internet.
2. People and skills must be the subject of investment.
3. Encouraging the use of Internet and the protection of the *online* environment.

The above general targets – except for point zero and the environmental objective – were the same as those of the *eEurope* programme. Each country had to launch clearly specified actions with exact timing in order to

achieve these objectives. The execution of tasks had to be timed for 2002 and 2003, after the first results of the *eEurope* programme had been achieved. The main target of the programme was to minimise the digital gap within the European Union. However, the Union could not guarantee their intended development by adopting their limited programme to achieve the information society: it would have been necessary to modernise the whole economy, reform the market processes, make the operation of government more transparent and change the public system of communications. Building the information society was conceivable only as part of a thorough programme of modernisation.

## *eEurope2005* – The programme of broadband Internet

For Europe in 2002, it was obvious that the future information society had to be a socially unified society. In the Action Plan of the *eEurope*2005 programme, which covered the period after the *eEurope* and the *eEurope*+ programmes were closed, the aim of "information society for all" did not refer to the building of the infrastructure and the networks, but more to the content accessible on the Internet and to the new services. Thus quality became more important than quantity. The decision-makers of Europe expected to make changes in the main trends of their information policies and European institutions, because of this change in their approach. The message of the new Action Plan was the following: the Member States had to support broadband Internet services and also had to encourage secure broadband Internet access for everyone.

The European Commission submitted the new programme to the European Council at its meeting in June 2002. According to the programme, Europe pledged to do its utmost to realise the objectives of the programmes on e-government, electronic education and healthcare services, dynamic e-commerce environment and online public services. The Action Plan set the deadlines for completing the tasks in 2005. All of the *eEurope* programmes were part of the Lisbon strategy, the objective of which was to enhance competitiveness, to form the basis of a knowledge-based society, and to raise social cohesion and employment by 2010 as its final deadline.

The effects of the Action Plan are to be seen in the following four areas:

1. As a policy task any national and European regulations should be reviewed if they hinder the execution of the targets of the Action Plan.
2. The *eEurope* programmes started a process which facilitated the exchange of experience and called attention to the correction of mistakes.
3. *Benchmarking* helps to supervise processes so that the set objectives will be executed. Gathering data `ensures continuation of effective execution and is required to facilitate a general evaluation by the European Council due each spring. Benchmarking set objectives for gathering and servicing time-based, comparable and reliable data.
4. In order to achieve the targets set in the Action Plan, it was essential to co-ordinate the information policies of the Member States.

The European Commission asked for the co-operation of the private sector and of the Member States in the following main target areas to facilitate the implementation of the Action Plan:

- modern online public services (e-government),
- e-education,
- online healthcare services,
- dynamic e-commerce environment,
- secure information systems.

# 4. The i2010 Initiative: The European Information Society for Growth and Employment

In reviews for the implementation of the supranational Action Plans, the state of development of information services in the various nations of Europe in 2005 showed very uneven progress – despite the success of the *eEurope*2005 programme. The state of development of European information society did not indicate that we would become the world leader. The "eurocrats" of the Union realised that the resources allocated for implementation of new tasks were exhausted and that the Union's ability to regenerate itself had severely decreased. Due to a decreasing rate of economic growth, the implementation of targets for social cohesion and full employment had failed. New challenges appeared brought on by the shrinkage of the IT industry in Europe, the accession of the new Member States, the appearance of new technological opportunities and the strength of new competitors. The Commission changed in 2004, and this coincided with the final year of the *eEurope* era. The Union had to face the reality of a "multi-speed" Europe" which had not changed in spite of all their efforts and they still lacked any central organisation which could enforce Union decisions at national level.

In November 2004 under the presidency of José Manuel Barroso, the European Commission chose to introduce a policy of renewal. Nothing proves this better than the choice of the Commissioner, Ms. Viviane Reding, made responsible for the building of the information society, who came from the media world and announced the building of a "mediatised information society" in the new policy document "i2010: European Information Society for Growth and Employment" which was published in June 2005. The new programme – as its title suggests – is not part of the *eEurope* programme family any more, yet it preserved some elements from the targets of the *eEurope*2005, for example, the promotion of broadband Internet usage while ensuring the quality of content for the users.

The Wim Kok Reports form the basis of the new trends (Kok, 2003a, 2003b, 2004), which sharply criticize the Lisbon targets of 2000. The report of 2003 criticised Lisbon by analysing the accession process: "The EU has to re-invent itself again […] the Lisbon targets […] are grand words which were not followed by structural reforms". The report started with a labour policy orientation, which was accepted in March 2004, which still assumed the Lisbon targets to be attainable. However, the revision at the beginning of November had accommodated this view and further proposed a new orientation strengthening the following five areas:

- Strengthening and mobilising the European research community as part of the knowledge society, making research and development the highest area of priority and promoting innovation.
- Strengthening the internal market of the Union.
- Improving conditions for entrepreneurship.
- A more adaptable and inclusive labour market especially in regard to those who can be reintegrated through lifelong learning including the elderly.
- A sustainable future in respect to the environment.

Although reaching the Lisbon targets by 2010 seemed to be unrealistic, or even impossible for the new political elite, the new tasks are proposed with the intention of establishing the world's most competitive knowledge-based society and economy. A more thorough analysis suggests that giving up the grand targets openly, would mean the tearing apart of the framework on European thinking and would smash to atoms the message to countries and other power centres: the European Union wants the power to decide the processes and to lead them, and their existence still has to be reckoned with. Thus the Barroso headed European Commission decided to restart the Lisbon strategy, naming economic growth and the creation of workplaces as main priorities. Pursuant to this, at its spring session in 2005 the European Council defined its position saying that sustainable growth depended on knowledge and innovation and for this the application of information and

communication technologies was indispensable in public services, and in small- and medium-sized enterprises as well as in households, thus an "inclusive" information society had to be built.

The European Commission defined three priorities in order to achieve these objectives:

1. *Building a single European information space.*

This priority was to be achieved through technological development, the mass application of ICT and digital convergence. In order to form a single European information space, the following challenges had to be overcome:

- Speed: ensuring broadband Internet services and promoting them.
- Rich content: guaranteeing security: setting up the necessary legal background in order to formulate contents of a higher standard.
- Interoperability: ensuring interconnection between the various systems, platforms and devices.
- Security: the battle against illegal contents, prevention of fraud, increasing users' trust.

Objective I. can be developed through the building of a single European information space, which is affordable, secure and has broadband communication. This will offer a rich and colourful content, and digital services.

After deciding on what comprehensive targets to aim for, the Commission drafted the individual tasks in relation to the schedule:

- Further measures were needed to review the directive on television without frontiers up to 2005.
- General regulation of electronic communication, putting forward the question of radio frequencies and by 2006, the development of an effective strategy on frequency management.
- The development of the interoperable system of digital rights.
- Articulation of strategy for a secure information society up to 2006.
- Finally, reviewing the Community law relating to information society and media services up to 2007.

2. *Investment in research on information and communication technologies and to encourage innovation.*

The European Union owns one third of the world's ICT industrial output, but the rate of increase is lagging far behind the rate of growth in India and China. The selling of products in the Union is increasing by only five percent annually. Europe preserved its first place in the world in electronic communication (in the areas of nanotechnology, micro-systems and in the so-called embedded systems), but the expenditure on ICT research continuously falls behind our competitors. So objective II could be paraphrased in the following way: invest in high standard research and innovation in the area of ICT, and catch up with Europe's competitors.

3. *Establishing an "inclusive" European information society.*

More than half of the population of the Union is integrated in the information society to only a minor degree. Social, economic and territorial cohesion is indispensable for the proper operation of the Union. In order to establish this cohesion, we have to build the information society. The ageing population of the Union will present it with severe demographic problems. In resolving these problems – by introducing part-time employment for the elderly or by helping people to spend their free time usefully – information and communication technologies may be especially useful.

Summarising: objective III. aims to establish an "inclusive" information society that offers high standards of public services and improves the quality of life.

In order to achieve these objectives, the Commission provides a guide to access to electronic services and the broadband Internet-services (1); the Commission had an e-government Action Plan developed by 2006 for ICT-based public services (2); it named the ICT initiatives that should function as "flagships" up to 2007, emphasizing the following issues; the needs of an ageing population, safe and clean transport and of cultural diversity (3); it articulates a proposal from now to 2008 on social inclusion (eInclusion), focusing especially on problems arising from differences in knowledge and diversity because of disadvantageous geographical locations (4).

The European Commission makes proposals to achieve the targets discussed above, allocates Community resources to finance strategic research, supports the launching of services for all the citizens of the Union, while the Member States develop the legal system within their own authority, finance research projects relevant for them, appear in the ICT-market as investors, undertake the development of new public services and elaborate long-term strategies. The so-called "**open method of coordination**" connects the governmental and non-governmental players, it gives them common objectives and the means to exchange their experience and cooperate in installing the necessary measures and solutions. The Commission executes a rolling plan and tries to adapt to the new needs identified in its development policy.

# Summary

In this chapter we showed how the strategy for building the information society was first defined (briefly - information strategy). The reader was made familiar with the new quality of policy planning in this area that appeared at the beginning of the 1990s, raising IT from its previous subordinate position and bringing in the development of information oriented public utilities and the informatisation of key sub-systems of society (e.g. education, healthcare) and proposing development strategies for the information industries, to take sector management to a higher level. The strategy of building the information society can be complete or partial, according to the number of conditions it fulfils out of seven (only a partial strategy can be claimed if a mere three or four requirements are fulfilled).

Then, the circumstances leading to the publication of the Bangemann Report were examined to show why it might be claimed that 1994 was the year when the Union came of age. Next, the main stages of the changes in policy between 1994-1999 were outlined which led to the coining of the slogan "information society for all", while social aspects and related tasks received increasing attention alongside objectives previously centred only on the economic aspects of development.

Between 1999 and 2005 successive *eEurope* programmes directed the main lines of development of information society in Europe. Strategy concentrated on the Internet, which materialized in a series of programmes in sequence and a related series of Action Plans at three year intervals. Conditions for the broadband infrastructure were established by Romano Prodi when he was President of the Commission before he was replaced by Jose Manuel Barroso in that position. With Barroso, the strategy of the European Union for building the information society changed again. These changes and the main directions of the new strategy in connection with the programme of the *i2010* initiative were outlined.

The programme indicated something of a return to the grassroots, because it placed at its centre the building of a single information space, research and development, the building of an inclusive information society. In order to accomplish these new tasks in accordance with the terms of the Lisbon targets were assigned which sought to make Europe the most developed knowledge-based economy in the world.

The Union probably will not change its policy and practice organised to achieve the information society, setting the objectives and creating the programmes will take place centrally on a supranational level connecting national action plans to those programmes. However, in consequence a "multi-speed" Europe will continue: the various Member States will have variable degrees of success in implementing common programmes and will only achieve the intended transformation in diversity, not together.

# Revision questions

1. What is information strategy and how can we discriminate a limited from a complete strategy?
2. What is the main focus of the Bangemann Report?
3. What are the key documents of the *eEurope* programmes and how do they differ from each other?
4. What policy and programme is laid down by the i2010 information strategy?

# Key terms

**Information strategy:** A new stage of high level political planning that emerged in the early 1990s, uniting areas such as the development of information infrastructure, the informatisation of the key subsystems of society and the development policy for the information industries. Functioning as a framework for social planning that determines the programme of building the information society, it includes visions about the future, outlines a comprehensive view of society, has long-term aspirations, and presupposes a consensus between the players of the political elite regarding the future attainment of a desired social quality. It prescribes the controlled concentration of resources. It regards education as the main sector where competitive advantage can be achieved and therefore considers it as a priority of national prosperity.

**Network state:** A complex institutional system in which different local, regional, national and supranational decision-making levels are combined.

**Open Method of Coordination (OMC):** Links governmental and non-governmental players, providing them with joint objectives and a means to encourage them to share their experience and to cooperate in working out solutions and necessary measures.

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