

Commission launches Public Consultation on Open Platforms in Digital TV and 3G

The European Commission has launched a public consultation on a report on remaining barriers to the achievement of widespread access to new services and applications of the Information Society through open platforms in digital television and 3G mobile communications, which was requested by the Barcelona Summit and the Seville Council. The consultation will run until 15 February 2003. A public hearing is currently scheduled for 4 February 2003.

The "Information Society for All" vision is to make electronic services an every-day reality for all citizens, and to bring everyone (administrations, businesses, citizens, homes and schools) into the digital age. Erkki Liikanen, European Commissioner responsible for Enterprise and the Information Society said: "In the future, all digital communications platforms will be able to deliver electronic and Information Society services. But the precise capabilities of each delivery platform will differ. Therefore open platforms for digital television and 3G mobile will contribute to user choice and interoperability."

The approach used to provide services over interconnected networks can require the use of proprietary technology at the interfaces between services and applications, which can have repercussions on the interoperability of services, platforms and applications and therefore on consumer choice. The preliminary report identifies the voluntary moves on the part of industry to achieve interoperability. The report notes that this is an area that is evolving rapidly and that the Commission services will follow developments closely.

The report also identifies that creation of openness and interoperability in different delivery platforms such as 3G and digital TV cannot alone ensure widespread access over these two platforms. Other factors, related to consumer trust and confidence, the availability of desirable services and content, and a clear regulatory environment in which companies operate, must also be present in order for an Information Society for all to happen.

The report finds that effective application of existing policies related to electronic communications and the eEurope 2005 Action Plan will be critical to the successful achievement of an Information Society for all, and suggests actions for Member States and for the Commission. The final report is intended to be adopted as a formal communication addressed to the European Parliament, the Council, the Committee of the Regions and Economic and Social Committee once the public consultation is concluded.

Website:

http://europa.eu.int/information_society/topics/telecoms/regulatory/publicconsult/index_en.htm