



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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Main Results of the Council

The Council adopted:

*conclusions on the **internal energy market**;*

*conclusions on the Commission's **Biomass action plan**;*

*conclusions on **eGovernment** for all Europeans.*

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OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

none

¹

- Where declarations, conclusions or resolutions have been formally adopted by the Council, this is indicated in the heading for the item concerned and the text is placed between quotation marks.
- The documents whose references are given in the text are available on the Council's Internet site <http://www.consilium.europa.eu>.
- Acts adopted with statements for the Council minutes which may be released to the public are indicated by an asterisk; these statements are available on the abovementioned Council Internet site or may be obtained from the Press Office.

PARTICIPANTS

The Governments of the Member States and the European Commission were represented as follows:

Belgium:

Mr Marc VERWILGHEN

Minister for Economic Affairs, Energy, Foreign Trade and Scientific Policy

Czech Republic:

Mr Jiří BIS

Deputy Minister, Ministry of Industry and Trade

Denmark:

Mr Flemming HANSEN

Minister for Transport and Energy

Germany:

Mr Georg-Wilhelm ADAMOWITSCH

State Secretary, Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Labour

Mr Bernd PFAFFENBACH

State Secretary, Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Technology

Estonia:

Mr Tiit NABER

Permanent Representative

Greece:

Mr Dimitrios SIOUFAS

Mr Mihail-Georgios LIAPIS

Minister for Development

Minister for Transport and Communications

Spain:

Mr José MONTILLA AGUILERA

Minister for Industry, Tourism and Trade

France:

Mr François LOOS

Minister with responsibility for Industry

Ireland:

Mr John BROWNE

Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture and Food (with special responsibility for Forestry^o)

Italy:

Mr Pierluigi BERSANI

Mr Paolo GENTILONI

Minister for Economical Development

Minister for Communications

Cyprus:

Mr Haris THRASSOU

Minister for Communications and Works

Latvia:

Mr Aigars ŠTOKENBERGS

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Minister with special responsibility for e-Administration

Lithuania:

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Deputy Minister for the Economy

State Secretary at the Ministry of Transport and Communications

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Minister for Economic Affairs and Foreign Trade,
Minister for Sport

Hungary:

Mr György HATVANI

Deputy State Secretary, Ministry of Economy and Transport

Malta:

Mr Ninu ZAMMIT

Mr Censu GALEA

Minister for Resources and Infrastructure

Minister for Competitiveness and Communications

Netherlands:

Mr Laurens Jan BRINKHORST

Minister for Economic Affairs

Austria:

Mr Martin BARTENSTEIN
Mr Hubert GORBACH

Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Labour
Vice Chancellor and Federal Minister for Transport,
Innovation and Technology

Poland:

Mr Piotr NAIMSKI

Mr Boguslaw KOWALSKI

Deputy Minister for Economic Affairs, State Secretary,
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State Secretary, Ministry of Transport

Portugal:

Mr Mário LINO

Mr António CASTRO GUERRA

Minister for Public Works, Transport and
Communications
State Secretary for Industry and Innovation, attached to
the Minister for Economic Affairs and Innovation

Slovenia:

Ms Mary TOVŠAK PLETERSKI

Deputy Permanent Representative

Slovakia:

Ms Eva ŠIMKOVÁ

State Secretary at the Ministry of the Economy

Finland:

Mr Mauri PEKKARINEN

Ms Susanna HUOVINEN

Minister for Trade and Industry
Minister for Transport and Communications

Sweden:

Ms Mona SAHLIN

Ms Ulrica MESSING

Minister for Community Development
Minister for Communications and Regional Policy

United Kingdom:

Ms Margaret HODGE

Minister of State for Industry and the Regions

.....

Commission:

Ms Viviane REDING

Mr Andris PIEBALGS

Member

Member

.....

The Governments of the Acceding States were represented as follows:

Bulgaria:

Mr Rumen OVCHAROV

Minister for the Economy and Energy

Romania:

Mr Zsolt BOGOS

Mr Zsolt NAGY

State Secretary, Ministry of Economy and Commerce
Minister for Communications and Information
Technology

ITEMS DEBATED

ENERGY

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The Council took note of the information provided by the Presidency and Commissioner, Andris Piebalgs, on current developments concerning different topics of external relations in the field of energy.

Commissioner, Andris Piebalgs, introduced this section by outlining the joint Commission /High Representative paper "An external policy to serve Europe's energy interests" (9971/06) that has been prepared for the June European Council.

The Council was also informed by Commissioner on the state of the ratification of the contracting parties and on the likely entry into force on 1st July of the Energy Community Treaty¹. He also gave information on issues which were going to be discussed at a Ministerial Council of the Athens process (predecessor to the Energy Community Treaty) that would take place in the afternoon of 8 June.

The Council took note of the information provided by the Presidency and Commissioner, Andris Piebalgs, on the third² EU-OPEC ministerial meeting held in Brussels on 7 June. (See press release at http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/misc/89925.pdf)

Regarding the EU Russia relations, the Council heard the information of the Presidency on G8 Energy ministerial meeting (16 March 2006) and on key messages for the G8 Summit (St. Petersburg, 15-17 July 2006).

The Council was briefed by the Commission on the state of play regarding the EU-Russia dialogue, in particular, on the progress with the four thematic groups (infrastructure, investment, energy efficiency and trade) and on current negotiations with the Russian Federation on the Transit Protocol in the context of the Energy Charter Treaty.

1 The Treaty is based on the Athens process and the 2002 and 2003 Athens Memoranda of Understanding and its objective is to create integrated market in natural gas and electricity in South East Europe between the European Community and the Republic of Albania, the Republic of Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Republic of Montenegro, Romania, the Republic of Serbia and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (pursuant to United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244).

2 The first ministerial meeting EU-OPEC took place on 9 June 2005 in Brussels. The second one was held in Vienna on 2 December 2005.

INTERNAL ENERGY MARKET - Council conclusions

On the basis of a questionnaire prepared by the Presidency, the Council held a policy debate on the internal energy market and adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council,

Bearing in mind the conclusions of the 2006 Spring European Council, in particular paragraph 46 (b) and paragraphs 12 to 18 of Annex III,

In the light of the Commission report on progress in creating an internal gas and electricity market (14800/05),

Noting the Commission preliminary report on the energy sector inquiry highlights areas where more needs to be done before we have a fully functioning internal energy market,

Addressing the issues relating to the internal energy market that are raised in the Commission Green Paper on a European Strategy for Sustainable, Competitive and Secure Energy,

STRESSES that

1. Secure supplies of electricity and gas at competitive prices, delivered on open, transparent and competitive interconnected markets, with adequate protection of final consumers, are crucial to Europe's competitiveness, and progress has to be made with the second electricity and gas directives leading to full market opening in July 2007, while accepting the special circumstances of some small and isolated Member States.
2. The right balance should be found among the three objectives of competitive markets, security of supply and sustainability, taking national circumstances into account. An effective and well functioning internal market plays a key role in this respect.
3. Full, effective and transparent implementation and consistent application of existing legislation not just according to its letter, but equally its spirit, has to be ensured. This implementation should be beneficial to both household consumers and businesses and be in line with public service obligations, including any on affordable access to energy for those Member States who choose to implement specific provisions in this respect.

4. A coherent and integrated approach towards a competitive energy policy and competitive energy markets, ensuring the availability of reasonably priced energy, should be created by the regulatory framework as well as oversight by regulatory authorities and competition authorities. In this respect, the exchange of best practice between all market actors, including networks operators, and regulators, should be promoted. The Commission should monitor developments and report on progress made, using its enforcement powers where necessary.
5. Enhanced cooperation and coordination, in particular between regulators, system operators, energy exchanges and governments, have to be ensured; for instance, more use could be made of non-legislative action such as the exchange of best practice. To that effect valuable existing fora such as Madrid and Florence, the Council of European Energy Regulators (CEER), the European Energy Regulators' Group for Gas and Electricity (ERGEG) and the European Transmission System Operators (ETSO, GTE) should continue playing an active role. In this respect, initiatives such as the Electricity Regional Initiative recently launched by the European Energy Regulators' Group for Gas and Electricity should be supported.
6. The national regulatory authorities, relevant state administration bodies and competition authorities have to play an increasingly important role in delivering liberalised energy markets across the EU. In the light of concentration indicators for many gas and electricity markets, a thorough application of competition rules, including merger control, is necessary, at both EU and national level. The relevant authorities should be able to carry out their tasks effectively and in a clearly defined manner, and cooperate and coordinate with each other, particularly on issues such as the regulation and monitoring of cross-border network access and trading in order to achieve adequate regulatory consistency across Member States and to avoid double regulation and the imposition of additional unnecessary costs.
7. Fair and non-discriminatory access to the network for all system users is essential if competition is to develop. This requires effective unbundling of network businesses.
8. Transparency on the energy markets, for both operators and final consumers, has to be ensured. Market players must have equal access to accurate, timely and comprehensive information, especially on price formation and available network capacity, including capacity on cross-border infrastructure. More information could be released to the market under the existing legislation, under the effective monitoring and supervision of regulatory authorities which should consider whether any obstacles to the provision of sufficient information remain.

9. Cross-border exchange of energy should be improved and the coordinated development of regional energy cooperation should be accelerated while facilitating the integration of regional energy markets into, and the further development of, the EU internal market notably through adequate and coherent interconnection and access to interconnection capacity, paying particular attention to countries and regions with energy networks that are largely isolated from the EU energy network. To that effect the Commission is invited to submit by the end of 2006 a Priority Interconnection Plan identifying measures to be taken at Member State level as well as Community level.
10. Regular meetings at regional level, such as in the Nordic and North West European markets, could make a useful contribution by focusing on practical obstacles to cross-border trade and fostering co-operation.
11. Cross border exchanges with third countries should be enhanced, and approaches similar to that of the internal energy market should be promoted to neighbouring countries whenever possible. At the same time, due account should be taken of the risk of abuse of market position resulting from dependency on a single supplier and of the importance of reciprocity to ensure a level playing field in terms of access to markets and infrastructure, and in terms of environmental standards and safety. In this context, a clear framework of trade rules has to be established, and the prompt implementation of the Energy Community Treaty and the EU-Russia energy dialogue have a useful role to play, also with a view to ratification of the Energy Charter Treaty by the Russian Federation.
12. Obstacles to investment in cross-border infrastructure, storage capacity and LNG terminals have to be addressed and steps should be taken to increase the liquidity of wholesale markets (electricity exchanges and gas hubs).
13. Investment should be encouraged within the Community by regulatory frameworks which are stable and transparent and provide clear investment incentives. In the same vein, administrative authorisation procedures should be speeded up substantially while maintaining environmental and health standards, *inter alia* by considering time-limits for the procedures if appropriate.
14. Medium- to long-term investment planning procedures and investment coordination should be improved, including with the private sector and European financial institutions, especially as regards cross-border interconnection, gas infrastructure including underground storage and LNG facilities as well as generation capacities. A business climate more conducive to long-term investment should be ensured through increased transparency and exchange of information based *inter alia* on Member States' own monitoring.

15. A balanced mechanism in regard of long term contracts needs to be provided that will strengthen competition on the internal market, address transparency issues and at the same time safeguard investment incentives and security of supply.
16. TSOs should cooperate with each other to define complete and consistent technical rules required for the facilitation of cross-border trade in energy, especially how congestion is managed on the electricity market, with a view to making networks operate like a single grid from the end-user's point of view. Those rules are essential and must be agreed at an early date. In order to increase the safety of the grid and to optimise cross-border exchanges, TSOs should cooperate and coordinate at regional level and exchange information on a regular basis.
17. In order to help the gas market catch up more rapidly and achieve smooth functioning, a number of specific issues have to be resolved at the technical and regulatory level - having regard to national circumstances - such as interoperability issues relating to gas quality and access to conversion facilities; the functioning of gas market flexibility instruments has to be improved, including access to storage capacities and networks, and competition between external suppliers should be aimed for.
18. Prior to considering further legislation, the impact of existing legislation should be assessed while certain factors may require more investigation such as the role of long term gas contracts and external suppliers, the impact of the Emissions Trading Scheme and primary energy prices - especially for energy-intensive industries - the specific needs of energy-intensive industries, dependence on external suppliers, how to assess market concentration and the need to secure adequate capacity margins and non-discriminatory access to the market. Moreover, the further development of the internal markets in electricity and gas should be discussed again involving all stakeholders.
19. Security of electricity and gas supply has to be enhanced. To that end, diversification of sources and routes for primary energy sources has an essential role to play, and adequate monitoring of the supply and demand adequacy should be put forward at European level. Furthermore, the contribution of renewable energies to diversification of supply should be taken into account.

LOOKS FORWARD to the 2006 Commission report called for by Directives 2003/54 and 2003/55 and the outcome of its investigation of the above factors, as well as to the Commission's final report on the energy sector inquiry."

SUSTAINABILITY OF ENERGY PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION

– ***Biomass Action Plan - Council conclusions***

Following a brief presentation of Commissioner, Andris Piebalgs, the Council adopted the following conclusions on the Commission's Biomass Action Plan:

"The Council,

RESPONDING to the call of the European Council regarding the implementation of the Biomass Action Plan and the development of a long-term strategy for bioenergy beyond 2010,

WELCOMING the Commission Communication on a Biomass Action Plan (15741/05) and the Commission Communication on an EU Strategy for Biofuels (6153/06),

UNDERLINING that the use of biomass as an energy source should be increased,

CONVINCED that an increased use of biomass can contribute to the three main objectives of energy policy by:

- Enhancing security of supply through the diversification of energy supply sources and the reduction of dependence on external energy sources;
- Enhancing competitiveness through the development of new and efficient technologies and providing economic development and employment opportunities in rural areas;
- Promoting environmental sustainability through inter alia the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and an increase of the share of renewable energy sources, while respecting other environmental policy objectives;

RECALLING:

- The Council conclusions on renewable energy of November 2004, in particular the chapter on a biomass energy action plan (14314/04),

- The importance of the following Directives for the use of biomass as an energy source: Directive 2003/30/EC on the promotion of the use of biofuels or other renewable fuels for transport,
 - Directive 2001/77/EC on the promotion of electricity produced from renewable energy sources in the internal electricity market,
 - Directive 2004/8/EC on the promotion of cogeneration based on a useful heat demand in the internal energy market,
 - Directive 2002/91/EC on the energy performance of buildings,
 - Directive 2003/87/EC on a scheme for greenhouse gas emission allowance trading within the Community;

UNDERLINES the following general principles with respect to the definition of a biomass policy:

1. An integrated approach should be followed which takes account of sustainability, the impact on growth and jobs as well as environmental issues including biodiversity conservation and life cycle analysis as far as possible, in close cooperation with all relevant sectors including agriculture, forestry and waste management and addressing socio-economic, fiscal, trade and industrial policy questions.
2. The principle of subsidiarity should be respected, giving flexibility to Member States to:
 - develop their own specific policy approach and determine individual goals,
 - choose the type(s) of biomass and energy crops and the sectors in which biomass is used,
 - decide on the instruments for the promotion of bioenergy and on the instruments to achieve cost-effectiveness,
 - choose the tools for achieving the objectives of the Directive on electricity from renewable energy sources.
3. Cost-efficiency should be an important guiding principle, at national and at EU level, for an ecologically rational promotion of bioenergy, built upon an economically sustainable, long-term financial basis while maximising environmental benefits.

4. A balance should be sought between energy uses of biomass, non-energy uses of biomass and nature conservation, taking also national economic circumstances into account.
5. A balanced approach regarding domestic production and imports of biomass should be found, taking account of aspects such as competitiveness, security of supply and rural development;
6. The impact of relevant existing legislation in the energy sector should be assessed before revising such legislation; this requirement should not be seen as an obstacle to new legislative proposals.

IS OF THE VIEW THAT THE FOLLOWING ISSUES HAVE TO BE ADDRESSED AS PRIORITY:

7. Research, development and demonstration on biomass, regarding new and efficient technologies for generation and use of renewable fuels, including raw materials. This concerns in particular second-generation biofuels, bio-refineries, efficient boiler technologies, the impact of biomass fuel emissions on air pollution and market introduction aspects;
8. Promoting the creation of well functioning, transparent and open markets for biomass at regional, EU- and global level as appropriate, taking into account environmental sustainability;
9. The removal of technical and non-technical (including administrative) barriers at EU and at national level,
10. Information campaigns targeted at farmers, forest owners, local authorities, the energy sector and consumers,
11. Increasing the use of biomass including waste for heating and cooling purposes, in particular for cogeneration and district heating,
12. Adoption of technical standards for biofuels, as well as a revision of the fuel quality Directive to allow higher blends of biofuels in petrol and diesel.

EMPHASISES:

13. The importance of promoting the cost-efficient and sustainable use of biomass in the three areas of heating and cooling, electricity production and transport and of taking action in this respect,
14. The role that public procurement can play for the promotion of biomass and its increased use, inter alia through the promotion of clean and energy-efficient vehicles and renewable energy generation in buildings,
15. The role of voluntary agreements which are a valuable alternative for the promotion of biomass use,
16. The importance of woody biomass in terms of size of the market and that it would therefore be useful to explore the development of European markets for inter alia pellets and chips, including spot markets, bearing in mind that from a national point of view regarding energy sources diversification the availability of biomass for internal use may be important,
17. In line with commitments made at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the benefits that sustainable production and use of biomass can have for developing countries, and the importance of transferring energy technologies compatible with sustainable development to these countries.

WELCOMES THE COMMISSION'S INTENTION TO:

18. Bring forward a Forestry Action Plan,
19. Assess the Energy Crops Scheme and the possibility of extending it to those new Member States that are not currently eligible,
20. Examine how the total life cycle of biofuel use can count towards the CO₂ emission reduction targets under a global perspective,
21. Further encourage the development of an industry-led biofuel technology platform,
22. Review the existing standard EN 14214, inter alia with a view to including other forms of biomass, taking the relevance of climate conditions into due account, and to allowing ethanol to replace methanol,

23. Encourage the development of technical standards for solid, liquid and gaseous biofuels and for related equipment.

URGES MEMBER STATES TO:

24. Link support to the achievement of high energy efficiency levels and tangible, cost-effective benefits for the environment and security of supply,
25. Achieve the already established indicative national targets for biofuels,
26. Create a favourable regulatory environment for investments in biomass production and the appropriate equipment and provide medium- to long-term stability and transparency for investors, also with regard to appropriate support schemes if a Member State chooses to have such a scheme.

INVITES THE COMMISSION TO:

27. Take account of the abovementioned priorities,
28. Initiate shortly a discussion about the sustainability of biomass - including by comparing different types of biomass - and to provide information about the compatibility of minimum sustainability standards for bioenergy with the Community acquis in relevant policy areas,
29. Provide information about all costs and benefits of the promotion of biomass production within the EU,
30. Bring forward proposals to encourage the cost-efficient and sustainable use of biomass for heating and cooling,
31. Establish efficiency and emission criteria for biomass installations, using inter alia the Eco-Design Directive, in particular for household biomass boilers,
32. In its ongoing review of the waste framework legislation, facilitate and further encourage the use of biomass and clean waste as fuel; review the animal by-products legislation with a view to encouraging the use of farming and food processing by-products as a renewable energy source. Such encouragement should however take into account other worthwhile uses of waste and animal by-products, including traditional uses,

33. Revise the vehicle emission testing procedure in order to take into account the use of biofuels as reference fuels for testing biofuel-powered vehicles,
34. Simplify administrative procedures for the production and use of bio-energies in the context of the CAP and assess the extension of the application of the Energy Crops Scheme to all Member States,
35. Explore the issue of simple and cost-effective measures to guarantee that biofuels are produced in a sustainable way, inter alia certification, in respect of environmental, social and technical standards, and applying to internal production as well as imported biofuels; in doing so, no technical trade barriers should be created,

INVITES

36. Member States to develop or update National Biomass Action Plans in response to the present conclusions,
37. The Commission to carry out an assessment of the implementation of relevant Community legislation in the Member States and of the actions undertaken as follow-up to these conclusions and in particular points 27 to 35, including in the light of their contribution to the achievement of the three main objectives of European energy policy, and report to the Council by the end of 2008."

– ***Energy Efficiency***

The Council took note of the information provided by Commissioner, Andris Piebalgs, on the two following issues:

- outcome of the consultation launched last year concerning the Commission's Green Paper on Energy Efficiency¹, and
- on the completion of the negotiations between the United States and the European Community on the coordination of energy-efficient labelling programmes for office equipment (Energy Star II). Corresponding legal instruments for the formal conclusions of the Energy Star agreement first, and then for its implementation in the EU will be submitted by the Commission in the coming months.

¹ Commission Staff working document "Report on the analysis of the debate of the Green Paper on energy efficiency" (doc. 10368/05 ADD 1)

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

– ***eGovernment for all Europeans - Council conclusions***

The Council heard a presentation of the Commission's communication "*i2010 eGovernment Action Plan: Accelerating eGovernment in Europe for the Benefit of All* " and held a brief public debate.

The communication (8688/06), adopted on 25 April, contains an eGovernment Action Plan as integral part of the Commission "i2010 initiative for jobs and growth in the information society", aimed at contributing to the Lisbon agenda for jobs and growth and other Community policies. The action plan draws, in particular, on the Ministerial Declaration approved at the 3rd ministerial eGovernment conference, which took place in Manchester (United Kingdom) in November 2005. The Action Plan maps out the way ahead for eGovernment in Europe by focusing on five major objectives for 2010 and by setting roadmaps for specific actions in the priority areas.

The Council took note of information from the Portuguese delegation on its intention to organise during its Presidency in the second semester 2007 the fourth eGovernment Ministerial Conference, which is expected to review the implementation status of the i2010 eGovernment Action Plan.

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

1. WELCOMES

- the Communication from the Commission on "*i2010 eGovernment Action Plan : Accelerating eGovernment in Europe for the Benefit of All*"¹
- the Communication from the Commission on "*Interoperability for Pan-European eGovernment Services*"².

2. RECALLS

- the Conclusions of the European Council in March 2005 relaunching the Lisbon strategy;

¹ COM(2006) 173 final.

² COM(2006) 45 final.

- the Conclusions of the European Council in March 2006 calling on the Commission and the Member States to implement the new i2010 Strategy vigorously;
- the general objectives of the i2010 strategy as endorsed in the Council Conclusions of December 2005;
- the Council Conclusions on eGovernment of November 2003;
- the objectives of the Ministerial Declaration of the European eGovernment Conference of Manchester in November 2005;
- the outcome of the High Level Seminar in Vienna in February 2006 on "eGovernment for all Europeans".

3. RECOGNISES

- the need to join common efforts, in order to achieve wider impact and promote take-up around the policy priorities and the objectives, as set out in the Ministerial Declaration of Manchester and the i2010 eGovernment Action Plan in the areas of:
 - a. Inclusive eGovernment;
 - b. Efficient and effective eGovernment;
 - c. High impact services;
 - d. Key enablers, including management of electronic identifications;
- the growing interest in eParticipation and the impact of ICT on activities in the political sphere and welcomes its inclusion in the i2010 eGovernment Action Plan;
- the importance of innovation as an essential part of eGovernment and the significant contribution of the public sector in achieving the overall Lisbon goals;
- the important role efficient and seamless eGovernment services play in improving the competitiveness of European economies;
- the need to formulate requirements and identify opportunities to stimulate innovation and lead markets through eGovernment solutions;

- the necessity to continuously improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public administrations by promoting innovative services and processes aiming at reducing administrative burden on citizens and businesses;
- that high-impact eGovernment services have the potential to facilitate the exercise of the four internal market freedoms, to ensure better quality of life and inclusion and to enable greater participation of European citizens in the decision-making process at European, national, regional and local levels;
- the need to safeguard through the promotion of open standards, open specifications, open interfaces and interoperable solutions that eGovernment solutions at the national level do not lead to new barriers in the internal market.

4. UNDERLINES

- that the implementation of the i2010 eGovernment Action Plan should be guided by key principles, such as sustainability, interoperability, inclusiveness, transparency, mutual recognition of key enablers, data protection, security based on privacy enhancing technologies and policies and multi-platform service provision;
- the need to establish a culture of active cooperation and coordination between all stakeholders in designing and delivering eGovernment and coherent policy approaches;
- the importance and the potential of “pilot” regional co-operation models in identifying eGovernment solutions, that could be further promoted at European Union level;
- that policy measures should pay attention to the regional and local dimensions in delivering electronic services as well as to national administrative systems and legal cultures;
- the need to make better use of existing eGovernment resources, as currently developed and managed by Member States and the Commission.

5. INVITES THE COMMISSION AND THE MEMBER STATES TO

- undertake all necessary efforts to implement the specific objectives, actions and roadmaps as outlined in the Action Plan, in particular to :
- intensify the collaboration between public administrations at all levels across Member States, in order to ensure the creation, development and implementation of user-centered and inclusive services, in particular cross-border services or common access to appropriate national services for all EU citizens, whilst taking into account the principle of subsidiarity;
- develop and agree an effective and proportionate measurement framework for e-Government services, including reduction on burden on businesses, citizens and public administration and evaluating satisfaction with public services, in order to track progress and provide a basis for an assessment against the Action Plan;
- further support a structured and regular dialogue with all stakeholders contributing in particular to the interchange of eGovernment solutions;
- share eGovernment resources in all relevant projects from 2006 on and explore mechanisms to ensure the long-term financial and operational sustainability, in order to optimize the existing information and best practice exchange mechanisms, including building blocks and technical solutions aiming at interoperability between national information systems and improving administrative cooperation;
- promote the implementation of high-impact eGovernment services for citizens and businesses across the EU, including eProcurement and other services with a direct impact on the internal market through appropriate demand stimulation policies and initiatives;
- put in place, on the basis of existing services and work going on at national and European level, key enablers such as interoperable electronic identification for the secure access to electronic public services based, where appropriate, on recognised international standards, common strategies, guidelines, terminology, and consistent architectures, while fully respecting data protection legislation;

- create appropriate conditions by agreeing during 2006 on a roadmap for the recognition of authenticated electronic documents and strengthening efforts in developing a long-term archiving model within the European Union;
- experiment with innovative eParticipation schemes aiming at increasing participation in democratic processes focusing on tools and addressing citizens' demands.

6. INVITES THE MEMBER STATES TO

- undertake all necessary efforts to promote the policy priorities and the achievement of the objectives related to i2010 eGovernment Action Plan when designing their National Reform Programmes (NRPs);
- ensure an appropriate legal and organisational environment which stimulates the creation of accessible, inclusive, user-centered and seamless electronic services of public administrations across the European Union and wider ICT take-up in the public and private sectors;
- focus on a sustainable approach providing public servants with the necessary skills and competencies to manage change and provide citizens, businesses and administrations with user-centric services leading to tangible benefits and improving quality of life;
- make available secure means of electronic identification, in order to access electronic services, taking into account user convenience and the principle of mutual recognition within the EU;
- encourage the use of commonly developed key enablers within public administrations at all levels, thus promoting interoperability, the use of open standards and interactive and integrated electronic public services;
- further enhance the role of public-private partnerships in promoting the development of eGovernment solutions, thus contributing to the implementation of the eGovernment policy agenda.

7. INVITES THE COMMISSION TO

- monitor the implementation of the objectives of i2010 eGovernment Action Plan in close cooperation with the Member States and strengthen coordination processes;
- accelerate and support the implementation of those objectives, in particular by :
 - promoting interoperability and open standards by ensuring that European standardisation policy addresses, where necessary, the particular needs for effective eGovernment;
 - ensuring coherent and efficient use of the eGovernment-related EU programs, in order to create greater synergies;
 - encouraging investment in ICT Research and Development, supporting, as far as appropriate, the development of synergies between national and Community research and innovation efforts in eGovernment by using existing instruments for Research and Technological Development;
 - encouraging the dissemination of learning and good practice through the i2010 High Level Group, biennial Ministerial conferences and good practice awards;
 - continuing the assessment of economic and social impact of cross-border eGovernment services;
- put in place the necessary mechanisms to stimulate pilot projects and other necessary support activities in line with existing and future Community programmes;
- report annually to the European Parliament and the Council, in the framework of the Annual Report on the European Information Society, on relevant progress in achieving the i2010 policy priorities and to recommend, where appropriate, policy adjustments.

8. INVITES STAKEHOLDERS TO

- participate actively in the process of the implementation of the eGovernment policy agenda by considering public-private partnerships in promoting the development of eGovernment solutions, so that eGovernment solutions should not necessarily be limited to public sector bodies;

- actively contribute to the development of shared roadmaps and put building blocks in place;
- support the delivery of more inclusive services through innovative policy design and more effective delivery across all sectors;
- structure the involvement of SMEs, which are essential partners in the deployment at the local level, and of civil society, particularly concerning eParticipation;
- report on the significant progress made by industry in the realisation of the objectives of the eGovernment i2010 Action Plan."

– ***Future challenges for the electronic communications regulatory framework***

The Council held a policy debate, on the basis of a questionnaire¹ prepared by the Presidency, on future challenges for the electronic communications regulatory framework.

The i2010 initiative underlines the key role of information and communication technologies in achieving the growth and jobs objectives of the Lisbon strategy. These objectives are emphasized by the European electronic communications regulatory framework aimed at ensuring competition on the market, creating a favourable environment for investment and innovation and, through these, bringing choice, quality and lower prices to the consumer.

Since the adoption of the regulatory framework, the Member States have been making the required changes to national legislation and practices, and most of the necessary adjustments have been made. The Commission's 11th implementation report (6700/06) shows that some shortcomings in implementation remain.

The framework is now up for a review and a Commission proposal is expected to be presented at the end of this year.

The Council highlighted a number of issues that need to be considered as part of the review process:

- the guiding principles of the 2002 regulatory framework for electronic communications should be maintained;

¹ 7828/06

- new revised rules should focus on specific areas that need improvement, be future-safe and aim at enhancing competition, fostering new investments and innovation, whilst strengthening consumers' interests;
- flexibility of spectrum allocation and the efficient use of spectrum should be further improved, thus ensuring optimum use between competing needs; spectrum regulation should take account of national/local characteristics and facilitate the take-up of innovative and demand-driven services; harmonisation on EU and international level has to be further discussed;
- notification and dispute-solving procedures could be simplified, making them more efficient, more streamlined and less resource-intensive;
- swift implementation of the regulatory framework is of paramount importance for its effectiveness.

– ***Network and information security***

The Council held an exchange of views, on the basis of a questionnaire¹ prepared by the Presidency, on the main network and information security policy priorities to contribute to the ongoing European Union debate.

The Commission presented its future plans regarding this theme in its communication "*A strategy for a secure information society*" (10248/06 + ADD1), adopted on 31 May, that identifies security challenges in relation to information systems and networks in the EU and outlines a comprehensive and dynamic policy framework founded on a holistic and multi-stakeholder approach based on dialogue, partnership and empowerment.

The Ministers identified the following main policy priorities for network and information security in the years to come:

- trust through increased awareness among businesses and consumers;
- identification;

¹ 9713/06

- data security and data protection;
- enhance cooperation, in particular as regards common security standards.

The Ministers acknowledged the important role of the European Network and Information Agency (ENISA) in contributing to a culture of network and information security in the EU.

The Council welcomed the intention of the incoming Finnish Presidency to organise in September 2006 the annual European Information Society Conference, which will address trust and security in the fast-changing technical environment.

A Council Resolution on network and information security is to be adopted in December 2006 and to endorse the future policy orientations, priorities and tools in tackling security challenges for the information society.

OTHER BUSINESS

– ***First annual report on European Information Society***

The Commission presented to the Council a communication "i2010- first annual report on European Information Society" (9707/06), which updates the actions under information society and media policies for the period 2006-2007. The communication calls for "policy convergence" in the information and communication technologies sector to combine regulatory instruments and the promotion of EU-wide research in the interests of growth and jobs in Europe.

– ***World Summit on the Information Society***

The Commission presented to the Council its communication on the Follow-up of the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), which took place in Tunis on 16-18 November 2005 (8841/06). The communication contains an assessment of the principal summit results, indicates the EU priorities and makes proposals as to how the EU can help follow-up the WSIS process.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED
