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**Strengthening the European
Information Society: From Talk to
Action**

*Check Against Delivery
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort*

I2010 Conference "Towards a ubiquitous European Information Society

Helsinki, 28 September 2006

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I am here today. The i2010 annual events are always the occasion to discuss the "hot topics" of the European information society and media. The Finnish Presidency of course is continuing this "tradition".

I could start by pointing out the importance of Information and communication technologies for growth, productivity and employment, citing figures to support this analysis and appeal to the audience to tackle ICT issues more actively.

But I do not need to do this today – I hope. This audience already knows these facts. Our job is to undertake the practical work of making the European Information Society "ubiquitous". Ubiquitous means technologies and networks that are seamlessly embedded in everyday life delivering services when, where and how we want them. But ubiquity also means more need for security, protection of our identity and privacy; and it demands that we show how ICT can make life better for Europeans: bringing citizens and consumers on board is essential.

Let us take first security. It is high on the Finnish Presidency's agenda. And they are right. Attacks on information systems are increasingly economically motivated. The Internet has become a strong arm of organised crime and international terrorism. Spam, for example, is increasingly becoming a vehicle for viruses and fraudulent and criminal activities, such as spyware, and phishing. We see servers and PCs being taken over and used as relays for illicit and criminal activities - without the knowledge of their owners.

As our policies to establish a ubiquitous online society pay off, with wide take-up of "always-on" broadband connections, the growth of wireless broadband and business on-line, we are increasing vulnerable to these attacks.

RFID

Moreover, experts say that the Ubiquitous Information Society is a movement towards the "Internet of Things". In the future many objects will be smart tagged with Radio Frequency Identification Devices (RFID). RFID offers an opportunity to create new services and to have a massive jump in productivity – especially in inventory management and logistics. RFID applications are at take off point: forecasts say that the RFID market may grow tenfold by 2016. But, this greater information also raises our vulnerability, especially if we put together tagging of objects with the personal data of users.

If we do not think carefully and prepare well, RFID might be rejected by public opinion, just as many people reject GMOs. If we wait until there is a problem before taking steps on security, RFID risks being seen not in terms of better services, social benefits or job and wealth creation, but simply as the spy chip.

This is an area in which we policy makers have to set the ground rules so that citizens are sure that their interests are protected and that they get a fair share of the benefits that RFID can bring. Policy in this area needs to be proactive.

That is why I launched a consultation process at CEBIT in March last year: to listen to the interests and concerns of all stakeholders and to prepare appropriate steps. The open consultation phase will end on the 30th September: we have received 2000 replies: a record for such consultations. I will present the first results on the 16th October in Brussels and come forward at the year end with proposals on next steps.

Security

We have been promoting the information society and we begin to see the fruits of success. But now begins the serious business starts of making sure that the standards of the Information Society are right. Ubiquity means that we are no longer talking about a frontier for technologists or a playground for geeks, but technologies that are at the heart of society.

That is why on security, in particular, we need to move from talk to action. I have already started: in May I launched a new security strategy. I will soon formally update our approach to spam, spyware and malware and cyber-crime, where we may need to envisage further measures, in particular as regards enforcement and international cooperation.

So you see, the Commission is not asleep on the job, but we cannot win the war alone. We need a culture of security in which everybody plays their part. That means national governments have not only to identify but also to implement best practice in policymaking. For example, informing users of the risks and raising awareness is crucial, so I applaud Member States that have established e-security web portals identifying threats, risks and alerts and documenting best practices.

But, security threats are inherently cross-border. The international coordination of risk monitoring and reaction is a major role of ENISA (European and Network Information and Security Agency). That is why in our Security Strategy Communication the Commission called upon ENISA to look into the feasibility of creating a European multilingual information sharing and alert system to build upon and link national public and private initiatives. I today call again on ENISA to deliver soon on this to ensure that we are well prepared, at a continental scale, for any potential virus attacks on Europe's IT networks

A second area of need is for authoritative and independent information on security incidents and consumer confidence. That is why we have also asked ENISA to move ahead urgently on developing with Member States and stakeholders a data collection framework to collect and analyse EU-wide data.

I really hope that ENISA will pick up these challenges: we need to give the Agency a more proactive position. I therefore also call upon Member States to get alongside ENISA on these important responsibilities.

Industry also has a role to play: software producers and Internet service providers must provide adequate and auditable levels of security. I believe I see some signs of movement in the software sector, in this respect. I am watching with interest.

As you know, however, when I see the need I am not afraid to regulate, especially where it might create momentum for action, and help make the most of our internal market. That is why in the consultation paper on the revision of e-Communications framework, which I published in June, I have indicated my intention to regulate for better network integrity, most notably to impose requirements on providers of electronic communications to notify breaches of security and to keep users informed. I am also considering powers for competent national authorities to require specific security measures.

The consultation is open until the 27th October – you still all have time to read it and make your input on security as well as a number of other “important topics”!

Users on-board

My vision of the ubiquitous information society is one in which ICTs become seen as making things better. Let me give you an example: Most of us took a plane to come to Helsinki and in an age of increased security alerts, flying is no longer a pleasure.

You all know the scenario. You are on the plane, seatbelt buckled, and you hear the pilot say: "Sorry ladies and gentleman, a passenger has not shown up and there will be a delay whilst we find his baggage to take it off the plane". That's it! The flight is going to be delayed and maybe you will miss your connection. This is not hypothetical, five per cent of airline departure delays are due to people who check in their baggage but do not actually get on the plane

But now there is a solution. A European-funded project called OpTag is combining RFID and panoramic cameras to track passenger movements. The airline can immediately locate the passenger carrying a RFID boarding pass and failing that they can spot his (or her) baggage in the hold and unload it quickly. You see the argument: RFID an economic gain, but also, a gain for the flying public. This is the win-win we should be seeking.

Making gains for Europe and making gains for the public is also central to another topic of this conference the "Intelligent Car Initiative: safer, smarter and cleaner". I give you some examples. Seat belt reminders, those bells that ring in your car when you have not buckled up, really work: annoying but effective! There is evidence that if they were installed in all cars they could reduce road deaths by 7000 each year and 380,000 injuries – think of the reduced burden on health care costs! Collision avoidance systems could eliminate 4 000 accidents per year across the EU if just 3 % of cars had them fitted.

eCall – the automatic emergency call system – could reduce response time to the accident by 50% in rural areas and up to 40% in urban areas. Up to 2.500 lives could be saved per year and costs of accidents could be reduced by 26bn€. The technology is there. Industry is ready to move; some car makers are already installing eCall. But politics is slow, so far we are still waiting for 18 Member States to sign the Memorandum of Understanding of which 6 Member States are unable to report any progress at all. And only a couple of Member States have launched test beds. It's time to move from words to action.

Our European Information Society has to have more in it for the citizen "How to keep the user on board", a theme under discussion today is a rising concern in EU policies. As President Barroso has put it, the Single Market is first and foremost for consumers. With the Commission proposal on international roaming charges, I think we have taken a first important step in this direction. The roaming proposal is a practical application of the Commission's "Europe of results".

So that is our challenge. To strengthen the European Information Society, we have to get people on board by showing practical benefits for citizens of the Single Information Space. It is our collective responsibility of policy makers, industry and all other stakeholders.

It's time to move from talk to action.