

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA
STANDING COMMITTEE
OF THE EFTA STATES

4/TD/W/003
15 January 1997
Brussels

WORKING GROUP ON EDUCATION, TRAINING AND YOUTH

Comments by the EFTA Working Group¹ on the Action plan for a European Education Initiative: Learning in the Information Society (1996 - 1998)

1. The communication from the Commission on "Learning in the Information Society - Action plan for a European education initiative (1996 - 1998)², deals with the important issue of how to disseminate and use new technology in education and training. The emergence of the information society, with the use of new media for information exchange, like Internet, is a challenge to the education society.
2. The EFTA Working Group on Education, Training and Youth welcomes the initiative from the Commission and agrees that there is a need for planned action on a European level in order to make better use of new technology in education and training. Co-ordination and a planned approach encompassing all EEA countries will quite likely turn out to be of benefit for all parts. In this context, we would especially like to mention the joint call for proposals in the area of Multimedia educational software. It is essential that the EFTA EEA countries are recognized as fully eligible partners for all projects under the joint call for proposals. Equal participation for the EFTA EEA States in the procedures for selection of projects must also be safeguarded.
3. As for the four courses of action proposed in the communication, the EFTA Working Group find them to be of high relevance. We would especially like to point to the importance of stimulating the development and dissemination of content. As any tool for information, the new technologies may also be used for spreading harmful and illegal content, like pornography, racist propaganda etc. The production and dissemination of high-quality pedagogical material that is interesting to young people, is one way of combating these tendencies.

¹ Comprising the Delegations of the three EFTA EEA States Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

² COM(96) 471 final of 2 October 1996

(continued)

4. In this context, we would like to stress the role of the education system in making young people conscious about the social and societal impact of new technologies. Not only is it important that young people learn how to use the new media, it is also essential that they are aware of the implications this might have on themselves and the society. This is an aspect we think worthy of consideration in the follow-up to the action plan.

5. The EFTA EEA countries have come quite far in introducing new technologies in the education field. For instance, the number of schools and other educational institutions linked to Internet is relatively high. The experience from the EFTA EEA countries might be a valuable input in the discussion at a European level.

6. Given the full participation of the EFTA EEA States in the Community's education programmes and initiatives, we look forward to participating with great interest in the activities that will follow from the Commission's communication.

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