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(Information)

COUNCIL

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS

of 24 September 1998

concerning the European Audiovisual Conference: 'Challenges and opportunities of the digital age'

(98/C 306/01)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

1) Welcomes the Presidency, Commission and British Screen Advisory Council (BSAC) joint initiative in holding in Birmingham on 6 to 8 April 1998 the European Audiovisual Conference entitled 'Challenges and opportunities of the digital age' (the 'Birmingham Conference');

2) Recognises that issues covered by the four Working Groups at the Birmingham Conference are key audiovisual policy priorities;

3) Welcomes constructive and innovative ideas for future orientations from the reports of the said four Working Groups;

4) Accepts the need for further work by Member States, the Commission and the Council, within their respective responsibilities, to evaluate those ideas, prioritise them and decide on the need for further action;

5) Urges the Commission and the Austrian Presidency to take forward the follow-up from the Birmingham Conference in that context;

6) Notes in particular the opportunity presented by:

— the planned half-term review of MEDIA II, which should explore ways of encouraging a strong and competitive programme industry, taking account of the European cultural diversity and the particular conditions in small language areas. The professionals expressed interest in the creation of financial tools for attracting private capital and in the promotion of European audiovisual productions on external markets,

— the consultation on the Commission's Green Paper on convergence which will enable the Commission to formulate the announced action plan at the end of 1998, taking into account the existing regulatory framework, and the possible needs of developing digital services as they emerge.