

In order to support this activity and as a preparation for the fifth framework programme several activities are taking place in the transition period. Firstly, a call for tenders for study on 'Assessing the design for all approach for the integration of disabled and older persons in the information society' has been launched. Furthermore, many research projects and studies have been carried under the Tide, Telematics and COST programmes, disseminating the results and creating awareness.

The Commission has proposed the inclusion of design for all in the draft standardisation mandate addressed to the standardisation organisations, in the field of information and telecommunication technologies dealing with consumer requirements in the information society. Applications and services for the international standard (IS) must therefore be designed for all and offer equal access to all consumers with or without special needs.

⁽¹⁾ COM(93) 433 final.

⁽²⁾ COM(91) 539 final.

⁽³⁾ OJ C 17, 20.1.1998.

⁽⁴⁾ COM(97) 257 final.

(98/C 196/86)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-4026/97

by Mair Morgan (PSE) to the Commission

(14 January 1998)

Subject: Agenda 2000

The Commission proposes three new Community Initiatives in Agenda 2000. Will these three initiatives be referred to in the framework regulation? Furthermore, while the Commission has referred to mainstreaming the experiences of the Community Initiatives into the regional Objectives there are clearly inconsistencies in the Commission's approach. Whilst rural areas will benefit from Objective 2 and Leader, there are no grass roots Community initiatives to complement the other strands of Objective 2. Will the Commission give further consideration to extending the best practice of Leader into a fourth Initiative for urban and industrial areas?

Answer given by Mrs Wulf-Mathies on behalf of the Commission

(4 March 1998)

With a view to strengthening the effectiveness, public profile and innovative character of the future Community Initiatives, the Commission has indeed stated in Agenda 2000 ⁽¹⁾ that they will concentrate on three topics only: cross-border, trans-national and inter-regional cooperation; rural development; and human resources in the context of equal opportunities. The Commission is also looking at the advisability of explicitly including these Initiatives in the new Regulations on the Structural Funds that are currently in preparation.

The concentration on a few topics should make it possible to reflect more closely the Community interest in cooperation and innovation to promote the harmonious development of the Community territory, to encourage new approaches within rural society in order to meet the proposed profound reform of the common agricultural policy, and to better mobilise human resources, the latter aim in the context of employment in the Community and access to the labour market.

The fact that the Commission is not proposing an initiative specifically for the areas affected by the decline of industry does not mean that such areas have less priority. Both Objective 1 (regions lagging behind in their development which are also affected by difficulties in the production system and in employment) and Objective 2 (economic and social conversion of areas undergoing economic transformation, including industry and services and depressed rural and urban areas) as well as Objective 3 (development of human resources in other areas) and the new Community Initiatives as proposed will be instruments for implementing projects in industrial and urban areas.

⁽¹⁾ COM(97) 2000 final.