COUNCIL RESOLUTION

of 18 November 1991

concerning electronics, information and communication technologies

(91/C 325/02)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community,

Having regard to the communication from the Commission concerning industrial policy in an open and competitive environment: guidelines for a Community approach,

Having regard to the communication from the Commission concerning the European electronics and information technology industry; state of play, issues at stake and proposals for action,

Whereas the Community's approach to industrial policy centres on the completion of the single market and the application of the competition rules at international level to ensure, on the basis of a balance of rights and obligations, that competitors' markets are as open as the Community market;

Whereas the Community's electronics, information and communication technologies are of paramount importance for the competitiveness of the Community's economy;

Whereas equal access to markets and fair competition on a global scale are, as a matter of urgency, priorities in the areas of electronics, information technology and telecommunications; whereas the Community aims at the positive and timely conclusion of the current GATT negotiations;

Whereas the main responsibility for improving industrial competitiveness lies with the economic actors themselves, with public authorities having, nevertheless, to provide them with a clear and predictable framework for their activities;

Whereas trans-European networks and computerized telecommunications links between administrations and services of general interest should respond to user needs;

Whereas the Community's support for research and development, in particular on areas which are vital for the development of technology and its application by users, is a significant contribution to the future competitive position of this industry; whereas industrial cooperation is to be encouraged, in order to develop, in Europe, key technologies which are internationally competitive, in particular in a long-term perspective;

Whereas small and medium-sized enterprises are important as innovators and disseminators of such technologies; whereas aspects of economic and social cohesion and regional development have to be taken into account;

Whereas the use of electronics, information and communication technologies within the European economy depends crucially on the availability of people with the relevant skills,

HEREBY ADOPTS THIS RESOLUTION:

I

THE COUNCIL:

1. emphasizes that, in order to support the Community's pledge to free and fair international trade and competition:

   — the Community must be in a position to ensure rapid and effective action against unfair competition and practices,

   — the efficiency of the Community's trade policy instruments, such as anti-dumping, should be enhanced in order to promote free and fair trade,

   — the Community should continue to support the establishment of more effective multilateral rules on non-discriminatory market access for users and suppliers, including compliance measures,

   — the Community should maintain its efforts to support the establishment of competition rules, with a view to achieving the elimination of practices restraining competition and the effective application of such rules in each of the Community's main trading partners,

— the GATT rules should be further developed and improved with regard to their effectiveness;

2. takes the view that in the light of the results of the Uruguay Round negotiations additional bilateral initiatives of the Community, without prejudice to existing GATT obligations, may be necessary to create effective market access with equal opportunities;

3. understands the need for a more systematic gathering of information on marketing, market access and distribution practices throughout the main industrial areas in the world;

4. underlines the importance of a favourable business environment for improving the competitiveness of electronics, information and communication technology industries, specifically taking into account the role and interests of users and giving special consideration to small and medium-sized enterprises as well as to regional development.

Means for improving the business environment include:

— full and effective implementation of all the relevant measures, in particular those concerning public procurement, aimed at creating the unified market in the Community, including the application of a system of effective competition,

— speeding up the process of European standardization and certification to meet the requirements arising from the creation of the internal market,

— reviewing present-day financing systems in the Community, for example with regard to the provision of risk capital,

— the infrastructure for cooperation between enterprises of all sizes,

— facilitating cooperation, without distortion of competition in the internal market, between individual enterprises, such as microelectronics, in order to be able to compete on world markets,

— strengthening the competitive position of subcontractors so as to permit them to meet the exacting and developing needs of contractors,

— promoting rules and mechanisms comparable to those in the internal market with a view to creating a level playing field for European industry in world markets, in particular in the areas of public procurement, standardization and certification, distribution, competition policy, strategic alliances and foreign investments;

5. stresses the need for trans-European networks and computerized telecommunication links between administrations and services of general interest, taking account, in so far as action by the Community is concerned, of decisions to be taken in the appropriate Community fora;

6. is convinced of the necessity for industry in the Community to be competitive at a world level, particularly when assessing strategic alliances and capital intensive investment in the framework of the rules of competition;

7. is also convinced that steps should be taken to strengthen the efforts of the Community's R & D activity, taking into account *inter alia* the interest of small and medium-sized enterprizes:

— by focusing, in the relevant programmes, on areas which are vital for the development of technology and its application by users,

— by establishing priorities and allocating accordingly the financial means provided by the Community budget in so far as possible,

— by promoting a better synergy between R & D carried out in the Community programmes and Eureka, while maintaining Eureka's present flexible structure,

— by taking measures for the dissemination and exploitation of R & D results to users across the Community;

8. emphasizes the need to enhance efforts relating to the provision of training at all levels in electronics, information and communication technologies above and beyond the current efforts being made by Member States and at Community level.

II

THE COUNCIL INVITES THE COMMISSION:

1. to report on:

— relevant studies undertaken by the Community and its Member States,

— the most recent agreement between the United States and Japan concerning semiconductors, as well as its consequences for European producers and users,

— the present-day situation of market access in third countries,

— government practices in the field of electronics, information and telecommunication technologies in the Community and its major trading partners;

2. to establish a centralized point of information, possibly within the Commission services, charged with monitoring marketing, market access and distribution practices throughout the main industrial areas in the world;

3. to monitor, in consultation with the high-level group composed of representatives of Member States and, with respect to trade-related matters, with the committee referred to in Article 113 of the EEC Treaty, the progress in achieving the goals set out in this resolution, and to report, at regular intervals and at least once a year, on the progress achieved.

III

THE COUNCIL INVITES THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION:

to take and, where required, propose the measures necessary for reinforcing the abovementioned basic principles and for pursuing the achievement of the goals set out in this resolution. These measures should be initiated concurrently as a matter of urgency.