H. **The role of new technologies**

The availability of new technologies has increased the options available to those delivering and undertaking education and training programmes; as a result, new technologies are now an important part of such programmes. The harnessing of the potential of new technologies in order to support, assist and stimulate the lifelong learning process presents a direct challenge to educational planners and practitioners. Part of this challenge is to ensure that new technologies do not give rise to further inequalities as between individuals or regions leading to a greater sense of exclusion.

A number of key areas for development may include the following:

— equipping education and training institutions with the range of new technologies, as resources permit, which can provide new and effective options for teaching and learning and developing the necessary methodologies for their pedagogical application,

— developing better initial and in-service teacher training in the use and application of multi-media tools,

— exploring how distance education can be best utilized and promoting its development, and

— disseminating data and exchanging experience on best practice in the use of educational technology.

DECLARATION OF THE COUNCIL AND OF THE MINISTERS FOR EDUCATION MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL

of 20 December 1996

on protection of children and countering paedophilia

(97/C 7/03)

All children have the right to a secure and caring childhood which facilitates the nurturing of their full potential. However, recent tragic events involving the physical, emotional and sexual abuse of children are in sharp contrast with this right.

The Council and the Ministers for Education affirm that education systems should continue to endeavour at all times to provide a safe and caring environment, in which young people are protected and can grow into well-balanced individuals who can play an active part in the development of society.

The Council and the Ministers for Education are aware that no society escapes the evil of paedophilia and the effects it leaves on victims, their families and the societies in which they live. At this time, the Ministers for Education extend their deepest sympathies to all who have suffered, both physically and emotionally, as a result of these crimes.

To protect children effectively and counter paedophilia, the Council and the Ministers for Education consider that measures must be taken in a range of areas, at national, European and international level. For this reason, the Council and the Ministers for Education welcome the action already taken by Justice and Home Affairs Ministers, and Telecommunications Ministers.

Education systems, particularly teachers and schools, have an important role to play in protecting children generally and in helping to counter paedophilia. Exchanges of information on the practices and approaches in the Member States, facilitated by a Commission survey, will be beneficial in assisting the relevant authorities in keeping under review the responses which education systems make in order to protect children and to prevent their physical, emotional and sexual abuse.
