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Committee on Industry, Research and Energy

2008/2204(INI)

5.12.2008

OPINION

of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy

for the Committee on International Trade

on International Trade and the Internet
(2008/2204(INI))

Rapporteur: Silvia-Adriana Țicău

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Industry, Research and Energy calls on the Committee on International Trade, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Welcomes the progress already achieved in the framework of GATS, WIPO Internet Treaties, UNCITRAL model law, the extensive work by the OECD, and the extensive policy framework adopted at the recent OECD Ministerial Meeting in Seoul in 2008, and the World Summit on the Information Society;
2. Recalls the possibilities offered by information and communication technologies (ICTs) to facilitate the trading of goods and services, and to contribute to the development of new e-services;
3. Recalls that the Internet has created tremendous new opportunities for both consumers (in the form of increased choice and lower prices) and businesses (in the form of new channels to enter the global market);
4. Points to the fact that the Internet presents exciting opportunities for companies, both small and large, and urban and rural, to sell products online; also points out that existing services can increasingly be provided online; and that thanks in particular to the advent of affordable, high quality voice and video communications, people can communicate easily wherever they are in the world, including the potential to receive payment for services provided on an entirely 'remote' basis;
5. Points to the fact that the internet makes it possible to distribute immaterial goods in an innovative way;
6. Reiterates that ICTs are now ubiquitous in the economy; and new platforms and networks are being developed and rolled out; recognises the need for open standards and their importance for innovation, competition and effective consumer choice;
7. Recalls that the tremendous 'success story' of the Internet is based on the concept of a "free" net in which protection of privacy and free flow of information are key elements; the Internet should be kept as a creative space allowing new business models to flourish;
8. Underlines that preserving the openness and neutrality of the Internet in Europe and beyond is a pre-condition for its continuous growth, as well as that of the wider economy and global trade which increasingly 'run' on Internet technologies;
9. Emphasises that confident consumers and business partners are the key to the further development of e-commerce; and that the security of networks, combating fraud and the protection of privacy, personal data and intellectual property rights are essential in creating trust;
10. Notes with concern that often consumers and vendors using ICT are subject to discriminatory treatment in comparison to consumers and vendors acting in offline

markets;

11. Takes the view that the full potential of e-commerce for SMEs is not yet fully exploited and that there is still much to be done to achieve a Single European Electronic Market for products and services where SMEs could play a leading role for the further integration of the European markets; underlines that the full potential of e-commerce, e-communications and the Information Society as such has not yet been fully exploited, in particular by SMEs, and that these developments present huge opportunities for disadvantaged communities, bypassing traditional boundaries and distances;
12. Takes the view that in the context of international public procurement, where new technologies allow for cross-border e-commerce, new forms of, for example, combinatorial auctions for SME-consortia and online publication and advertising tenders allow for significant increases of procurement trade not only within the European Union but globally thus encouraging cross-border e-commerce;
13. Takes the view that much of the future of trade and future export markets for the European Union lie in welfare services such as certain health care services and education which can increasingly be offered over the Internet, and which depend on consistent, clear international trade frameworks and agreements;
14. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to continue to work for a coordinated policy approach as well as a legal framework at international level which tackles outdated regulatory barriers that prevent the Internet from realising its full potential, supports digital transactions, and which is governed by consistent principles across international borders, giving special attention to a legal framework for e-payment and e-commerce;
15. Calls on content providing companies to exploit fully the possibilities offered by the internet and to engage where possible in innovative business models;
16. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that new digital trade barriers (physical infrastructure, human and legal capacity, non-tariff barriers, **such as censorship and restrictions on freedom of information**) are anticipated and countered in existing and new commitments; interoperability, interconnectivity and issues related to internet governance should also be addressed in this context; furthermore, calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that efforts to reduce hidden trade barriers begin as soon as possible by completing the single market for e-communications and digital content and by reinforcing e-commerce in audiovisual services, in the interest of consumers and the competitiveness of European industry;
17. Recommends that security needs are balanced with respect for fundamental freedoms and the encouragement of creativity and dissemination of knowledge;
18. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to encourage SMEs to 'go online' and to organise platforms for sharing information and exchanging best practices and recommends that the Commission and the Member States promote public procurement through electronic use, taking great care to ensure e-Accessibility;
19. Calls on the Commission to review and examine existing multilateral and bilateral trade

agreements, that are under preparation, in place and in the process of being negotiated, in order to establish a clear set of priorities on what to encourage and what to avoid in future trade agreement negotiations and developments. This process should be transparent and open, and ensure maximum multi-stakeholder engagement.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	2.12.2008
Result of final vote	+: 38 -: 0 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	Šarūnas Birutis, Jan Březina, Jerzy Buzek, Jorgo Chatzimarkakis, Giles Chichester, Dragoș Florin David, Den Dover, Nicole Fontaine, Adam Gierek, Norbert Glante, David Hammerstein, Erna Hennicot-Schoepges, Mary Honeyball, Ján Hudacký, Werner Langen, Anne Laperrouze, Pia Elda Locatelli, Eluned Morgan, Antonio Mussa, Angelika Niebler, Reino Paasilinna, Aldo Patriciello, Miloslav Ransdorf, Vladimír Remek, Teresa Riera Madurell, Mechtild Rothe, Paul Rübig, Britta Thomsen, Patrizia Toia, Claude Turmes, Nikolaos Vakalis, Adina-Ioana Vălean
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Gabriele Albertini, Alexander Alvaro, Pierre Pribetich, John Purvis, Silvia-Adriana Țicău, Vladimir Urutchev