

***SECOND PRESENTATION AT THE GENDER & TECHNOLOGY WORKSHOP,
BRUSSELS, 28 JUNE 2004***

II. TECHNOETHICS - "TECHNOETHOS"

Patsantaras, Nikolaos, Kamberidou, Irene

Today we are going through a disempowerment in the social-institutional mechanisms of control, an accelerated process, based essentially on the technological revolution. Despite its bottom-up (egalitarian) development, the Information Society seems to run the risk of bringing forth a new elite. Within this emerging information world order, globalization is being established in the virtual domain as well. The information elite whose key objectives are to gain control over technological research, design, development and its applications seems to be characterized by a lack of support for human values that are increasingly being sacrificed to technological progress and priority given to information. The new class of information technologists, this 'invisible elite' that possesses the means and the know-how to promote the new technological society while bypassing and ignoring basic human values, disregards social solidarity, gender equity, equal opportunities, democratic dialogue, economic justice and aesthetical creativity. As a result, new questions and issues have arisen, such as: (1) Are we witnessing the emergence of new underprivileged social groups or non-mainstream groups? (2) Is this a prediction or foresight into future exclusions, and primarily the massive under-representation or exclusion of women? (3) Are we witnessing the emergence of a new form of modern 'slavery', virtual servitude and alienation, notably the emergence of new vulnerable social groups destined to become the servants of the new information elite, since they will not be able to participate in the socio-production processes, thereby developing, not only technophobia or digital illiteracy, but an imaginary or metaphysical relationship with technology rather than a productive one? (4) Is this elite's key objective to gain control over technological research, design, development and its applications. There is a real threat that 'digital despotism' may in the end succeed in drawing the boundaries of exclusion for many social groups and women in particular, according to results from international and intercultural gender research. Among the plethora of new questions and issues that have emerged, are the effects of technological developments on our natural environment (Gibbs et al., 2003). In order to preserve life and an environmental balance on our planet, we must look for solutions, not in the traditional economic profit rationale, but in the framework of a socio-economic, life-centric rationale and in the formulation of a technological code of ethics. Environmental policies and directives must be firmly and strictly implemented and self-restriction, self-restraint and self-control exercised as far as consumption and production are concerned- avoiding or limiting the unnecessary, needless and extravagant squandering of resources.

The explosive developments of technology create a deficiency, an absence in social ethics, in the social ethos, in human values. Justice, as a regulatory mechanism within the EU appears to be a very slow process, a slow agent, namely in keeping up with accelerated technological developments. The technological elite or social groups with the know-how formulate development speeds that other social groups will have to follow and those who cannot will suffer exclusion, and "servitude" under this new elite. This is a democratic deficiency that not only produces social inequalities but also establishes a faceless, invisible and bodiless domination- a virtual sovereignty. Today's elite is an invisible virtual elite of power and control. What then could be an adequate regulatory mechanism? The formulation and promotion of a Technoethics Technoethics (or technoethos), a teleological foundation. In using a teleological foundation, any actions in the framework of Information Society can be ethically and morally judged and socially evaluated. On the other hand, ethical issues, the ethos of a social action can be identified in the framework of sociological methodology or specific system theory methods, to stabilize the viability of the technognostic system based on ethos, including the prospects of transformation and change. One could argue that this is a contradiction. However, a correlation or an association of the two phenomenologically opposite positions in today's complex realities and developments can create the preconditions for a practical compromise. A compromise that will lean towards the realization of an ethical perspective for the benefit of the entire society. Naturally this cannot be achieved if social exclusions from production and social processes continues to exist.

If the technological system does not want to collapse, what is required is a new technoethics or virtual ethical code. A virtual code of ethics that will not be considered an operation/service/function of the technological system whose purpose will be the viability and development of its system-- but, instead, a virtual code of ethics that will take into account the consequences of any technological development, progress, or evolutionary procedure (a teleological approach to ethical questions, such as practices that will not augment or reproduce social exclusions.) In other words, a balance or an equilibrium in the technological system and its development and viability orientations, are dependent on the consequences that they will have on the social body (In this process, the mission of the political system is of a catalytic character). Thus, without exclusions, with social cooperation and collaborations, a practical compromise could be achieved, a compromise that will lean more towards ethically correct results or consequences for all social groups.

[continue with POWER POINT presentation]

The formulation of a socio-tehnoethics code for the Information Society (or the virtual environment) is absolutely necessary. For the realization of the technological system's essential operation or function, which is identified with the reflection of the technological system (socio-methodological formulation of ethos) we must seriously consider the consequences, the results (in other words, social exclusions) created by its development tendencies and patterns, as have been confirmed in basic academic/scientific research (teleological foundation of ethos). The socio-technoethics or technoethos which we propose, can be

founded only in this framework, and will close the gaps which are created from the incapacities of the political system and the justice system in the framework of Information Society. The proposed 'socio-technoethics' or technoethos could serve as a tool for eliminating a further propagation of technophobia. It should be focused at influencing mainstream IST development and formulation from a gender perspective as well as support technological education and adequate training measures, targeting both genders of all socioeconomic groups.

PROPOSALS:

In order to counterbalance trends that less privileged social groups, such as women, the following may be required:

1. The formulation of an 'ethical code' or 'technoethos' for the Information Society (or the virtual environment) is absolutely necessary in order to diminish and eventually eliminate the development of the 'Virtual Harem'.
2. The institutionalization of mandatory technological training/education in the public school system's curriculum, beginning in kindergarten and elementary school. Only in this way can the process of exclusion be eradicated and, in the long run, inclusion into Information Society achieved.
3. Education and technological training of specific social groups or non-mainstream groups, and primarily women of the lower socio-economic classes, must be a major priority (along with the participation of the technology industry that produces technology). In a democratic society exclusion can be abolished only through educational legislation and policies. Through such policies—in the medium and long term—social stereotypes of demarcation and dichotomy, reproduced primarily in direct relation to socio-economic levels or class, will eventually be wiped out.
4. More inclusive access to technological know-how and to the processes of technological design and composition.
5. Addressing different people's needs, diverse needs, and diverse users.
6. It is absolutely necessary to get more women—who are active agents within this field—involved in these processes. In taking into account results from international and intercultural gender research a more diverse approach to technological development could be achieved. A narrow view on technological culture not only excludes the perspectives of women, but also those of other non-mainstream groups. The perspectives of women and on women may lead to an opening up of technological culture, a broadening of perspectives, and may eventually result in a broader band of technological composition, and the creation of a female culture on the Internet to empower female users to take a more active role: women's networks, fora, sharing of information, platforms, platforms for media and content.
7. Using the internet as a tool is a gender-neutral, however access and willingness to use these is gender constrained, consequently,

4. we must identify how both genders respond differently to technology and then provided gendered solutions.
5. examine the redistribution of duties-obligations, etc.
8. The establishment of an international, intercultural network of experts from various fields of gender research, the social sciences, women's studies and technological research and development, in order to influence mainstream IST development and formulation from a gender perspective, broaden and enhance diversity and perspectives, technological support and education/training designed for both genders, and building and strengthening relevant networks.

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Information Society

Consultation Workshop on Gender and Technology

Brussels, 28 June 2004

Draft Report

1. RATIONALE AND SCOPE

The workshop aimed to discuss topics and strategies and to propose ideas that would help promote women's participation in the Information Society in a more coherent and sustainable way.

Another purpose of this workshop was to assure input for a session on gender at the IST2004 Conference in The Hague in November 2004. This session was proposed to run tentatively under the catchy title "Virtual Harem".

The agenda brought together a variety of views and suggestions. The first presentation aimed at drawing a historically accurate picture of the "harem" as one form of institutionalized social exclusion in Ottoman society, and at investigating whether the Information Society was in danger of facilitating new or similar forms of exclusion, i.e. "virtual harems". The second presentation examined the degenderisation of Information Society. Another presentation described the possibilities of mentoring as a tool to promote female role models in business and research. The final presentation aimed at offering practical suggestions as to how to raise awareness and promote a more balanced gender distribution in Information Society.

** The agenda brought together a variety of views and suggestions.

2. SUMMARIES OF PRESENTATIONS

2.1. Harems

The first presentation examined the organisational structure, the female network of power and the pyramidal hierarchy of the 18th and 19th century harems in Ottoman society. **Dr Kamberidou** presented the intricate organisation and the multiethnic composition of the Imperial Harem—an institution of women's slavery—and the survival strategies and strategies of self-empowerment of the harem inmates. This example, the 'harem', was used to draw a parallel between the servitude to the privileged elite that also can be seen to exist when excluded or marginalized groups in today's society are powerless to take part in the rapidly expanding technological society. ✓

2.2. The Virtual Harem: Technophobia or exclusion? An educational perspective. ✓

The explosion of the rapidly advancing technological globalisation can be seen to have marginalized certain citizen groups and even whole countries outside the technological mainstream, which are not catered for in terms of possibilities to interact, influence and contribute to development and change. This in turn leads to an imbalance between the development of Information Society technologies and democratic achievement of the citizens

of Europe. By ensuring that all social groups of European Society are included in the promotion, conception and development in the Information Society, a strengthened Europe will emerge. Technological advance may create further exclusion in the EU and may lead to a globalisation of new “virtual elites”.

The problems associated with virtual exclusion include: Discrimination, electronic conspiracy networks; electronic terrorism; violation of the electronic personality; domination of the imaginary; explosion of pornography; slave trafficking of women and children; castrated human subjects etc. To prevent “digital despotism” (i.e. the exclusion of certain groups due to their inability to follow the pace of technological developments set by the elite) and the further development of a “technological elite”, it is necessary to assure the educational prerequisites for equal opportunities. This would include not only the necessary infrastructure but also a non-discriminatory and equitable policy of distribution. A neglect of these preconditions could lead to the creation of a “Virtual Harem”, excluding large parts of the population, i.e. at lower hierarchy levels with no influence on the operational procedures.

The exclusion of groups of people from the Information Society is not only a gender issue but should be dealt with as social discrimination. Some measures to be taken in order to reverse these inequalities are as follows:

- (1) Raise level of techno-competence through education by reforming technological education programmes and providing know how to as large as possible societal groups and ensuring a long term democratic operation of the educational system. The institutionalisation of mandatory technological education in the public school curriculum, beginning in kindergarten and elementary school. Only in this way can exclusion be eradicated.*
- (2) The provision of a more equitable and non-discriminatory distribution of a technological infrastructure (as following from pilot study results in Greece).*
- (3) Technological education or training of specific social or non-mainstream groups, primarily women of the lower socioeconomic classes, with active involvement by industry, must be a major priority. If technology does not adopt inclusion, it will ultimately endanger its own viability.*
- (4) It is absolutely necessary to get more women who are working in this field and who are still underrepresented within this field involved—as active agents—in the processes of technological design and development. They need to be empowered so they can penetrate the higher ranks of decision-making positions.*
- (5) There should be a continuous dialogue to consolidate diverse needs for diverse users involving actively citizens, experts and marginalized groups.*
- (6) Need for more and better interdisciplinary research – Social sciences/ technological and gender research.*
- (7) Develop a “socio-technoethics” (i.e. an ‘ethical code’ for the Information Society) to act as a driver of future developments towards inclusion and better participation.*

A natural reaction to exclusion from the social production process that is increasingly taking place within the context of the Information Society is technology aversion or “technophobia”. It results from a failure of integration, and is a serious social problem, and if not fully taken into account, could eventually lead to the decomposition of Information Society.

The proposed “technoethics” could serve as a regulatory framework for eliminating a further propagation of this aversion or technophobia. It should drive mainstream IST development towards more equality. ^c

2.3. Mentoring Programme

The mentoring program at the Stockholm School of Economics aims to radically change the gender structure of the Swedish business community by promoting the female role and position. The methods implemented are: Visualisation of female role models; increased knowledge of gender and organisation; It also challenges the traditional role of male leadership that still prevails. This mentoring programme concentrates solely on female students currently enrolled at the Stockholm School of Economics (mentored) and powerful famous female executives at a high level acting as role models (mentors). Although the number of women at top management level has increased by 10% in the past nine years, it is far from the desired level of female leadership. The mentoring programme has chosen to work only with women as it is thought that this will be the most effective way of building the self image and influence of the women who are thought to become the “leaders of the future”.

The programme is based on three building blocks. It links on the one hand one-on-one mentoring sessions of students and female executives, with student group meetings and on the other with traditional lectures. This mentoring programme has been extended by offering the students themselves the possibility of acting themselves as mentors to high school students from an ethnically diverse suburb of Stockholm. This shows how this type of programme can be extended to include several generations for women.

The Feminist Organisation Studies (FOSFOR) combines teaching on Organisation and Gender, Change and Resistance to Change, Women and Leadership, and Gender-Power perspective.

A number of positive results have been reported by the students taking part in the mentor programme. It is considered to prepare young women better for working life and gender-based obstacles. It also provides them with continuous support through the established network. As such it increases women’s self confidence and provides increased gender awareness.

The mentors benefit from the programme through interaction with “tomorrow’s leaders” and their challenge of the mentors’ apprehension, and through close stimulating contact with the research community.

The prospective impact the mentorship programme is expected to have (or is having) on the business community, includes: Increased gender awareness, closer bond with education and research, ultimately thought to inspire and encourage more female leaders.

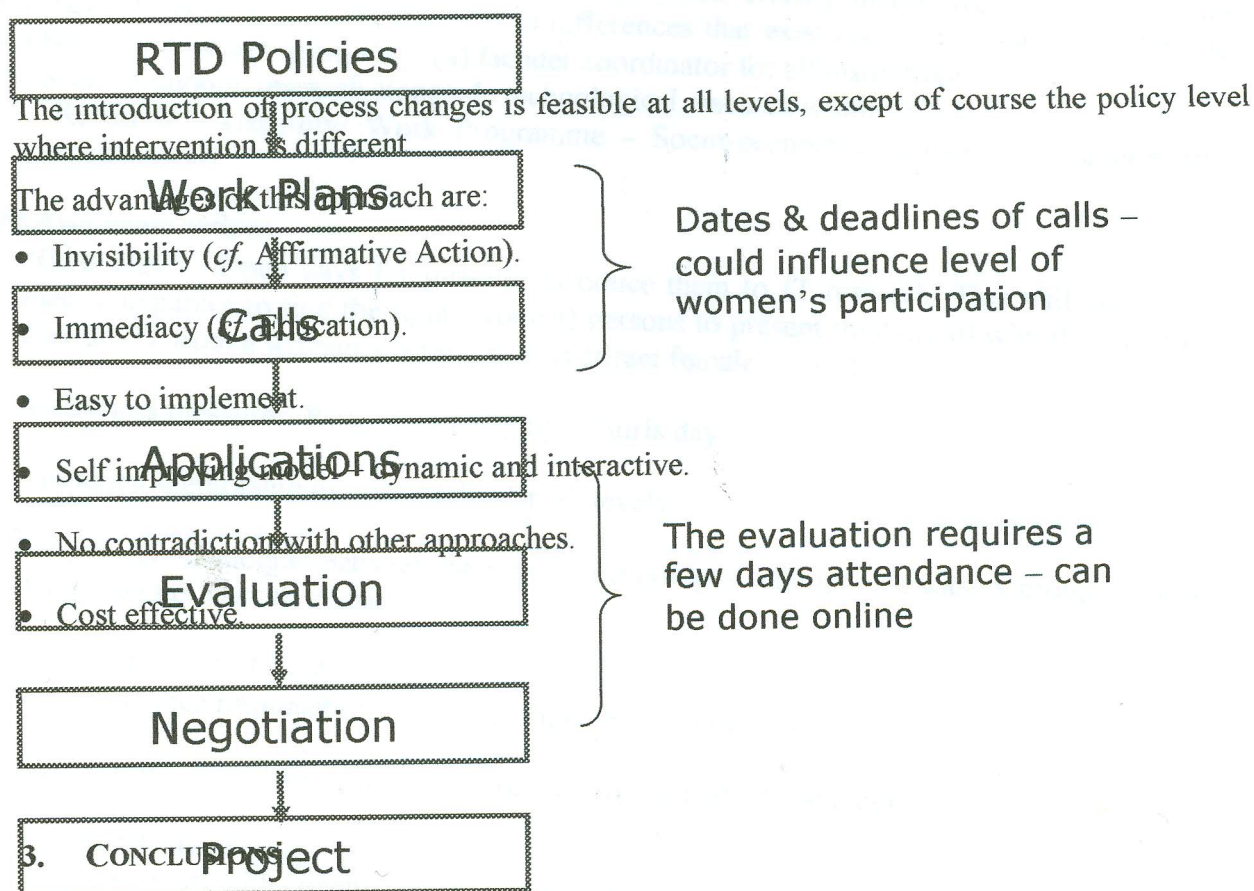
2.4. Towards a Pro-Active Integrated Approach to Gender Awareness and Evenly-Spread Distribution in Scientific & Technological Endeavours

Existing approaches have inherent problems that should be addressed. Despite the fact that *education* may be an effective tool, it takes very long time to show any results and have inherent problems. On the other hand affirmative actions are often coercive or create polemics and they also run the risk of having a negative impact. It is important to have a common ground with a gender-specific orientation instead of an overall social remedy. Proposed solutions could be:

- Identification of specific processes (e.g. FP6 R&D, Industrial R&D, academic basic research etc.) where intervention is possible;
- Decomposition of processes into components;
- Analysing each component to determine its influence (if any) on the final (desired) result. Intervention – based on the analysis, changing the identified influencing components;
- Perennial improvement – on-going monitoring / intervention that actually produce desired changes;
- Intervention – based on the analysis, changing the identified influencing components;

Continuous improvement based on the feedback from the -intervention monitoring and redesigning of action.

An Example – FP6



The second part of the workshop was dedicated to brainstorming and debate on a future policy for gender integration in the Information Society. An extensive discussion took place on the name and structure of the gender related session on the IST event in The Hague. The title “Virtual Harem”, initially proposed, was considered to be too ambiguous to be used. It implied different meanings for different cultures and negative connotations. The participants agreed that it was unsuitable. A number of different titles were proposed such as:

- A Degendered Information Society

- Degendering the Information Society
- Is Technology Gender Neutral?
- Gender the gist of Information Society
- Gender e-Quality

After examination and in order to respect the deadlines, it was decided to use the title “e-Quality” for the workshop.

The discussions can be summarised as follows:

(1) The mentoring scheme established at the Stockholm School of Economics for female entrepreneurs to act as role models for young women could be used on a broader European scale, and in all Member States. This could possibly be done by initially encouraging European MEPs to act as mentors.

(2) Investigate FP6 processes and counter balance measures.

- Career development assurances despite enforced breaks
- Increase female evaluators: How? Child minding facilities, remote evaluation (reduce evening work)

(3) Generation of non-institutional (virtual) networks. Evenly distributed participation and synergy effects need to draw attention to differences that exist and to make sure that they do not become obstacles to equality. (4) Gender coordinator for all institutions.

(5) Socio-economic research alongside technological research within IST.

Research – Usability/ Work Programme – Socio-economic courses of imbalance and exclusion

(6) Awareness actions:

- “Girls Day” - Open days for girls to introduce them to IT research. This will also allow these companies to find the right (women) persons to present thinking of why they do what they do. IT from a woman’s perspective to attract female interest.
- Awareness measures: Roadshow/campaign/ “girls day”
- Cascading mentorship by role models on all levels.
- Constructive Dialogue: between the sexes, Technology-technophobic society groups, radical change versus smooth transition.

(7) Best practices exchange

- Gender balance responsibility versus companies’ experiences
- Work towards establishing a ‘code of (good) conduct’ (technoethics)

(8) Assess IST procedures

Prepare report with conclusions/suggestions for change.

(9) Set up Working Group to prepare IST2004 session “e-quality” in The Hague.

Draft Policy Proposal on Gender and the Information Society

July 2004

1. Objectives

- To facilitate access and equal participation of women in the Information Society and a balanced representation in all related scientific and technological domains.
- To support effectively relevant Commission policies, e.g. gender mainstreaming and “Women and Science”, within the context of the Information Society and the IST Priority of the Framework Programme.

2. The Information Society – an opportunity to achieve gender balance in Europe by 2010

The Information Society offers a unique opportunity to address and help to correct gender imbalances in society, and to raise the level of women’s participation in domains hitherto dominated by men.

For example, ICTs offer invaluable opportunities to overcome geographical distance, to decouple work/education/training and absence from home, to engage in instant, media-rich communication, to enable online participation in interest groups, political fora and thus to facilitate an articulation of one’s opinion, to access services – all without compromising parental duties.

However, to realise these opportunities, one must first address the real gender gap in the use of ICTs which is still prevalent in European society. The range of possible exclusion factors is already well known – lack of role models for young women; gender not taken account of in the design of ICTs; technophobia; lack of technical education/training, to name a few.

As it is not impossible to overcome these in the next five years, there is scope for action if it is taken now.

By making gender balance part of its policy, DG Information Society could achieve an important policy goal, and could also demonstrate that Information Society technologies can act as a catalyst for a more cohesive and inclusive society.

3. Scope for action

The following actions should be pursued as a matter of priority:

(1) Define policy goal: “Inclusive IS by 2010”

- As an integral part of next “eEurope” framework!
- Develop Action Plan (including promotional activities with DG EAC, proposals for gender-balanced school curricula, information networks and “massive” campaigns – endorsed by High-Level Group)
- Set up benchmarking indicators to measure progress.

- Consider setting up a “Code of Good Conduct” (technoethics) to act as a self-regulatory measure to achieve gender balance (to be endorsed by the Advisory Group);
- The aim would be to raise participation figures in a sustainable way that this goal can be considered as achieved by 2010 – e.g. if a yearly 10 % increase of female IT students can be achieved.

(2) Understand and fight IS-related technophobia:

- Encourage socio-economic research in IS-related technophobia and gender-related exclusion.
- Include “gender equality” as criterion when doing IS policy impact assessment.
- Put “inclusion” and “simplicity of use” as visible overarching goals of R&D activities supported by DG INFSO – Possible wording (e.g. in the Work Programme) could be: “To develop next generation of IS technologies with respect to XYZ usability guidelines” (to be endorsed by the Advisory Group).
- Invite schools to exhibitions of IST events and develop several other fora to enable IST projects to get in contact with potential future engineers/researchers (e.g. Conference/Workshop sessions specifically targeting young people).
- Involve more actively teachers as multipliers (alongside journalists) in INFSO events: Explain IS policy targets (e.g. eEurope) and IST project results (brochures, press releases, multi-media presentations, etc).

(3) Facilitate learning:

- Set up a Europe-wide mentoring and dissemination plan that encourages and promotes female role models (as advisors/mentors to younger people on issues such as ICT, management, entrepreneurship, ...)
- Encourage IST project participants to disseminate their results and inform about their research work in local schools; encourage institutions (labs, universities, companies) involved in IST projects to organise open-door events for young people – costs to be claimed as dissemination costs

(4) Activities to encourage gender balance in IST:

- Develop guidelines & related metrics to encourage women researcher participation in IST projects (to be promoted by and their implementation followed up by IST Project Officers).
- Develop and implement strategies to encourage a higher proportion of women as evaluators and project reviewers – Ben-Asher’s proposal to assess processes is useful here
- “Name & shame” –Reward staff who succeed at raising levels in their domain significantly

4. Institutional means

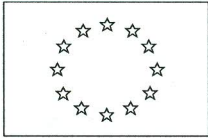
- **Establish a High-Level Group** of respected personalities (with equal participation of men and women) – from politics, research, business to act as “Advisory Group on Gender and the Information Society”, to convene on an annual basis, to officially

endorse the Action Plan and to supervise its implementation -- **Nov. 2004 – announcement at IST2004 event.**

- Set up an **Action Group**, supported by a secretariat, to co-ordinate the activities of the Action Plan (with virtual and face-to-face meetings) to elaborate an **Action Plan 2010** and a roadmap for its implementation in collaboration with the Action Group (targets & objectives, activities, time plan) to be included in the next eEurope Action Plan -- **October 2004 Workshop.**
- Establish a **cross- INFSO team of correspondents** (co-ordinated by Directorate C) who would support the INFSO-internal activities – **September 2004**

5. Resources

- The study launched in Dir C (reference?) would prove a useful tool to set up a statistics baseline on the basis of IST projects and to define tentatively a list of possible benchmarking indicators
- It would be useful to complement this activity by some socio-economic study on the reasons for IS gender imbalance
- A European mentoring network could be set up as a result of a specific call for tenders – technical annex to be endorsed by the High-Level Group
- Dir C needs to allocate a full person-year in resources, supported by a group of correspondents from each Directorate. This team could be assisted by a stagiaire/END for a duration of 3-5 years (successively appointed by interested Member States). All Directorates should envisage allocating some person-months of resources to follow up and report on the activities under 3 (4) above.
- Financial resources for Action Group activities (mainly travel money) should come from DG INFSO administrative budget.
- Financial resources for the campaign could come from Member States institutions – similar to how it was done under eEurope GoDigital and by industrial sponsors at Member State level. A published table of Member States' financial involvement could act as a competitive mechanism for leveraging necessary funds for the campaign.



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Directorate-General Information Society
Miniaturisation, Embedded Systems and Societal Applications

June, 2004

Brussels, 24 JUIN 2004
INFSO-13C D/525313

Subject: Consutation Workshop on Gender and Technology

Dear Dr Irene KAMBERIDOU,

I would like to invite you to a meeting which will take place in Brussels (av Beaulieu 31 6/30) on the 28-Jun-2004.

Travelling expenses and subsistence will be reimbursed as indicated (*).

Yours sincerely,

Rosalie Zobel

Rosalie ZOBEL
Authorised Representative of
Fabio Colasanti

(*) Scale for reimbursement of travel and subsistence

* The expert shall be entitled to the reimbursement of travel expenses between this place of residence and the place where the meeting is held on submission of supporting documents, where such reimbursement does not exceed the price of a return first-class rail ticket (including compulsory travel supplements). If the distance by rail is greater than 400 km or the journey includes a sea crossing, the economy class air fare shall be reimbursable on submission of the ticket.

A subsistence allowance of 149,63 euro shall be paid for each day spent at the meeting.

Dr Irene KAMBERIDOU
ETHN. ANTISTASSEOS STREET
GR - 17237 DAFNE

June 2004



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Information Society and Media Directorate-General

Components and Systems
The Director

26 MARS 2007

Brussels,
INFSO-G6/ANP/cd D(2007) 811234

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

**Subject: Contribution of Dr Kamberidou to the Gender Expert Action Group
of Directorate-General Information Society and Media**

* I herewith confirm that Dr Irene Kamberidou, Lecturer at the Sociology Department of Athens University, Greece, has contributed to three workshops involving European experts that were organised by my Directorate. These seminars on "Gender and Technology" were held in Brussels in June 2004, October 2005 and April 2006 respectively and aimed at preparing a session on Gender and ICT at the IST Conference in The Hague, in November 2004 and at contributing to ideas for an Action Plan "Women and Information and Communication Technologies".

Her paper contributions have been of high relevance and value to the discussions and are available on the Commission's Cordis website.

I wish Ms Kamberidou much success in her further academic career.

Rosalie Zobel

Rosalie Zobel