

eRegion Central Europe: Exploiting Opportunities of a Cross-border eMergence
Matjaž Janša, Director General
Directorate for Electronic Communications, Ministry of Economy, Republic of
Slovenia

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Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

Please allow me to extend a warm welcome to Bled, along with the wish that the 20th Bled conference should represent a step forward to our common future, a part of which will be the emerging e-region.

The development of an e-region is undoubtedly of value and strategically important for Slovenia as the level of telecommunication technologies and e-solutions introduced here offers an opportunity for accelerated development in the country and improved links with our neighbours.

The creation of new content, services and business models leads to growth and employment. We are living in an era of “e-business solutions” that are based on integrated ICT solutions, secure Internet services and “cooperative tools” that increase productivity.

Allow me to mention here that the European Commission at the end of March 2007 published an annual report on the implementation of the EU information society strategy, in which positive trends can be observed in the development of the information society in the EU, where ICT remains the main factor for the acceleration of growth and innovation. The scepticism still noticeable a few years ago is gone, investment in the ICT sector is increasing, and the use of ICT applications supporting economic and social development is growing.

In 2006, greater emphases could be found in the EU 27 National Reform Programmes on ICT's role in the achievement of the Lisbon goals. ICT was recognised as the driving force behind innovation and a tool for the transformation of administrative and business models, as well as an important instrument for an increase in the quality of life and work.

It is noticeable that companies are searching for innovative products to assist their development. They are prepared to invest a great deal into new business models, i.e. e-business. Users quickly accept new services, whilst the development of broadband promotes the development of new services.

The public sector is not lagging behind. Public services available on the Internet are maturing and providing a visible improvement in efficiency; more services are conducted online, the available services have been enhanced and an increasing number of Europeans are interacting with the public sector via the Internet. It is the public administration, i.e. e-government, that leads in this, while e-health and e-learning are not far behind.

The outcome of discussions and reports will be an inspiration for the spring session of the European Council in 2008, that is during Slovenian presidency, where the issues relating to the Next Generation Network and the Internet will be discussed. An interim overview of the reference framework of the European policies regarding the information society and media

policy will enable Europe to benefit from the development in the implementation of the Lisbon Agenda for growth and new jobs.

I hope that the 20th Bled conference signifies a step forward to our common future, including the emergence of an e-region, which is why the cooperation among research units, laboratories, organisers, companies and government organisations is so important.

Thank you.