

## **Inaugural Meeting of the private sector ICT Forum for Southeast Europe, 26/09/2006 Budva, Montenegro - Public and Private sector partnership is key for the development of Information Society in SE Europe**

The inaugural meeting of the private sector ICT Forum for South-eastern Europe was successfully organized on 26 September 2006 in Budva, Montenegro and attracted representatives from the business sector of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). The establishment of a private sector ICT Forum in SE Europe is one more initiative by INA that has made various efforts in order to mobilize public and private capital for the development of Broadband, especially in isolated and rural regions of South-eastern Europe.

The establishment of a private sector ICT Forum for Southeastern Europe with the support of the Stability Pact was approved by the Business Advisory Council for Southeastern Europe (BAC SE Europe) after a proposal of INA President Mr. Vassili N. Takas and Mr. Goran Radman, Chairman of Microsoft Southeast Europe at the Tirana BAC meeting last June. The private sector forum will act as a catalyst for the promotion of Public Private Partnerships for broadband infrastructure and services. The conclusions of the inaugural meeting of the private sector ICT Forum were presented at the joint meeting of the Working Group of eSEEurope and the bSEE Task Force the next day and were received with positive comments by the representatives of the Western Balkan countries.

The BAC led ICT Forum for SE Europe will provide a permanent consultation platform for the business community and the governments of the region aiming to the elaboration of policy proposals that will enable a more favorable environment for ICT entrepreneurship in the region and contribute to the removal of all obstacles for investment in ICT. In the BAC led ICT Forum for SE Europe participate executives from local and international ICT companies active in the region. INA President Mr. Vassili N. Takas and Mr. Goran Radman, President of Microsoft Southeastern Europe are the coordinators while the initiative is under the auspices of the Business Advisory Council for Southeast Europe.

The establishment of such a forum is in accordance with the directions of the Lisbon strategy and will facilitate the convergence of the national policies for the promotion of innovation and competitiveness. In addition it aspires to promote a stable and effective collaboration of Public and Private Sectors and support the emergence of an entrepreneurial culture that is necessary for the effective use of ICT as one of the most critical aspects for the convergence of Southeastern Europe with the European Union norms and standards.

The BAC led ICT Forum for SE Europe will implement actions and activities that will act complimentary to the effort of the countries of the SE Europe region to participate in equal terms in the digital age. The following actions were set as immediate priorities:

- The promotion of Public-Private sector dialogue in all the countries of the region and the elaboration of a common position with the main private sector concerns and priorities for ICT development in the SEE region and its presentation in international fora
- The identification of best practices for ICT development from the SE Europe region and their promotion as point of reference
- The presentation of the Private sector views and suggestions on Public Private Partnerships models for ICT and their presentation at the next ministerial conference scheduled to take place in Bosnia
- The establishment of an eGovernment Centre for SE Europe based to the model of the eGovernment Academy in Estonia with the support of INA, Microsoft, SRC and other stakeholders
- The periodical publication of ICT progress reports per country

The next meeting of ICT Forum is scheduled for April 2007 in Belgrade, Serbia.