



Brussels, 3 August 2006

ICT companies active in South East Europe

Subject: Invitation to the 1st Private Sector ICT Forum under the Business Advisory Council for South Eastern Europe (BAC for SEE)

Dear Sir/Madam,

With the ICT sector in South East Europe becoming increasingly dynamic, the Business Advisory Council for South Eastern Europe (BAC for SEE) decided during its June 15 meeting in Tirana to establish a BAC-led ICT Forum of the Private Sector for Southeastern Europe in order to create an active link between the Private Sector (multinational and local ICT companies and associations) and the Public Sector (the governments of the region participating in the Stability Pact's electronic South East Europe - eSEE and broadband South East Europe - bSEE initiatives). This ICT Forum will be co-chaired by BAC members Dr. Vassili N. Takas, President of the Southeastern Europe Telecommunications & Informatics Research Institute (INA) and Mr. Goran Radman, Chairman of Microsoft South-East Europe, in collaboration with Stability Pact Deputy Special Co-ordinator, Mr. Michael Mozur.

The aim of the ICT Forum is to establish a permanent dialogue between the broader private sector ICT community and the Stability Pact's regional initiatives. Focusing on the enabling and regulatory environment and seeking to promote eGovernment programs, the eSEE initiative (see www.stabilitypact.org/e-see/default.asp and attachments) has been working since 2000 and has effectively energized regional co-operation on the ICT agenda. Created in July 2005 by the region's Ministers of Communications, the bSEE task force is currently developing an action plan to promote the development of a regional broadband market. Both initiatives strive to ensure that development of regional telecommunications and eGovernment and eBusiness activities enhance the region's overall infrastructure and attractiveness for investment, both domestic and international.

The BAC-led ICT Forum will be launched at an inaugural meeting scheduled for 1400-1700 on Tuesday, September 26 in Budva, Montenegro during Montenegro's annual "InfoFest" ICT trade fair and in connection with the quarterly meeting of the eSEE Working Group and the bSEE Task Force.. The ICT Forum, once constituted, will provide input to the agenda of the eSEE and bSEE working groups and will report to the BAC, through its two co-chairs, on its activities for the development of the ICT Sector in the region.

SPECIAL CO-ORDINATOR
OF THE STABILITY PACT
FOR SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE

Rue Wiertz 50
B-1050 Brussels (Belgium)

Tel.: +32 (2) 401 87 03
Fax: +32 (2) 401 87 12

Website: www.stabilitypact.org
E-mail: scsp@stabilitypact.org



Therefore, we would like to invite your organization to participate in this new initiative and enrich the ICT Forum with your valuable experience and views.

The topics of the meeting will include the following:

- Ø Private sector concerns and priorities for ICT development in the SEE region;
- Ø Establishment of a high level component to the dialogue for the development of the Information society in SEE by including a private sector element in the eSEE/bSEE Ministerial meeting, to be held later in the fall in Bosnia-Herzegovina on the basis of a unified presentation by BAC-led ICT Forum representatives, including the BAC co-chairs, and complemented by representatives of regional ICT business associations and organizations of the telecom sector;
- Ø The possible creation of country specific dialogues on Information Society (IS) and ICT issues, whereby the eSEE and bSEE working groups will co-ordinate periodic meetings under the Stability Pact umbrella, bringing together all governmental agencies working on IS issues (i.e. Transport and Communications, Economy, Finance, Interior, Justice and Prime Ministerial offices) with local private sector participants in the BAC-led ICT Forum and donor government representatives, in order to co-ordinate actions and programs in individual countries;
- Ø The elaboration of specific Public Private Partnership models proposed by the BAC-led ICT Forum for successful project implementation to be used by eSEE Working Group and bSEE Task Force representatives on a regional or national level.

I am confident that together we will be able to exploit this unique opportunity to voice the considerations and insights of the private sector on the development of Information Society in Southeastern Europe.

Please provide notice about your willingness to participate in the ICT Forum to Dragan Stojovic of the Stability Pact's Working Table II (dragan.stojovic@stabilitypact.org) and Ioannis Konstas of the INA Academy (academy@inatelecom.org).

We look forward to your participation in this important and exciting undertaking.

Yours Sincerely,



Erhard Busek

Attachments: eSEE and bSEE info notes



eSEE (electronic South East Europe) initiative

The eSEE (electronic South East Europe – www.stabilitypact.org/e-see/default.asp) Working Group, established in 2000 under Working Table II of the Stability Pact for SEE, is an effort by the countries of the region to promote Information Society. The 'eSEE Agenda for the Development of Information Society' was adopted by the regional Governments (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and FR Yugoslavia), in Belgrade during October 2002. The corresponding action plan aims at facilitating ICT development in the signatory countries. A large number of parties have acted as advisors/facilitators in the different stages of eSEE implementation, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank Group, the South East European Research Telecommunications and Informatics Institute (INA), countries like Hungary, Slovenia, Sweden, UK, and US, as well as the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).

Progress has already been reported, but it is a common conclusion that more decisive steps have to be taken by the regional authorities and the international community, for SEE countries to avoid falling so far behind, that the process becomes irreversible. Currently an updated eSEE Agenda+ is under preparation to follow the completion of the original eSEE Agenda and will be presented to the next regional Ministerial Conference in late October – early November of 2006.



'bSEE' (broadband South Eastern Europe) initiative

The Initiative for 'bSEE' (broadband South Eastern Europe) development was conceived by INA and its initial conceptual description, which takes into account the guidelines of the European Union and the Stability Pact, was included in the main conclusions of the Workshop on Telecommunications at the 10th Thessaloniki Forum, 24-25 May 2004. A corresponding Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the targeted SEE Governments (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Greece, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Romania and UNMIK) was signed at the Regional Ministerial Meeting on 1 July 2005, in Thessaloniki.

The 'bSEE' initiative is motivated by the consideration that all countries of South East Europe, would benefit in various ways from building up partnerships in the electronic communications sector. All involved parties recognize the potential for extensive trade between the countries of the region enabled by electronic communications and need to tap the capabilities and opportunities in a more focused and comprehensive manner. They also acknowledge the need to promote integral links between the SEE countries with a view to leverage capabilities and opportunities in the Electronic Communications sector. The countries of South East Europe have a common interest in advancing the growth of investments, in forming joint ventures and initiatives, in nurturing technology development and Telecom market evolution. Therefore, they intend to take decisive action at a governmental level, which will facilitate the development of a unified broadband market, fully interfaced with the European and Global networks that will support the implementation of a technology and industry co-operation programme aimed at fostering business partnerships between countries of South East Europe. A bSEE Task Force was set up in March 2006 and the Terms of Reference (ToR) were approved by the country representatives. UNDP Bosnia acts as the bSEE Initiative secretariat and INA Academy was appointed as the only non-governmental member of the Task Force and as an advisor to the Co-ordinator of the Task Force. During the meeting in May 2006, Croatia was unanimously selected as the first co-ordinating country of the bSEE Task Force. A draft bSEE Action Plan has been prepared and its final version is expected to be approved in the next bSEE meeting scheduled for September in Montenegro.