

Conclusions of the 2nd Private Sector SEE ICT Forum

Interesting conclusions for the development of Information Society in the SE Europe region were drawn at the 2nd Private Sector ICT Forum, that took place on Wednesday 18 April, Belgrade, Serbia, were The 2nd Private Forum in Belgrade was organised in conjunction with the 2nd Southeastern Europe Broadband conference that took place in Belgrade from 16 until 18 April and was attended by representatives of the Information and Communications Technologies sector (ICT).

Special Coordinator of the Stability Pact, Dr. Erhard Busek, during his welcome speech, stressed the importance of the development of the ICT sector for regional growth and the significant role of the relative initiatives of the Stability Pact, electronic South East Europe (eSEE) and broadband South East Europe (bSEE). Dr Busek confirmed his support in the need of active attendance of the private sector in the region, while he expressed his satisfaction for the creation of the Private Sector ICT Forum which is going to become the contact point between the private sector and the governments on ICT issues playing an important role in the promotion of essential reforms.

Mr. Vasili N. Takas, INA President, and Mr. Goran Radman, Chairman of Microsoft SE Europe, informed the attendants about the aims of the Forum and gave the participants the opportunity to engage into a very interesting dialogue. The output of the discussion sums up to the following proposals – messages towards the governments of the region and will constitute the private sector component in the Ministerial Conference scheduled for 21-22 June 2007 in Bosnia.

- Establishment of relevant Ministries with extended responsibilities in the coordination of ICT policies and in the implementation of ICT projects
- Adoption and effective implementation Telecom Law in accordance with the EU Electronic Communications framework as a tool for stimulating Private Sector investment. The liberalization of the ICT market will also require better and more effective regulation especially in relation to Broadband infrastructure that is a driver of ICT development.
- Improved dissemination of best practices and promotion of initiatives on Regional ICT Development in order to reach a larger amount of people and organizations within each country and in neighboring states
- Promotion of public awareness for the benefits of ICT's and initiation of support policies for the use of ICT tools by the private sector in the region especially for SME's into their business environment to enhance productivity, efficiency and quality
- Immediate adoption of a suitable legal framework for Public Private Partnerships (PPP), which is absent in most SEE countries, to provide a clear legal basis on PPP project implementation, transparency of procedures and project organization
- Establishment of a Competence Center for PPP in each SEE country that will provide to the the public sector training and consulting on management and implementation of PPP projects
- Training of civil servants on eGovernance based on the international experience and adoption of national eGovernance Strategies for the effective and immediate introduction of government
- Support the development of the local ICT industry in order to stop brain drain, support local talent, attract investment (attract research institutes). Active involvement of local companies in public ICT projects that currently is limited will facilitate their development and contribute to the decrease of brain drain and the creation of ICT capacity.

- Substantial increase of public investments in ICTs. Currently ICT public investment is not preferred by the governments that tend to favor traditional investments that lack the strategic nature and urgency of ICTs
- Contribution of the private sector in ICT projects in order to provide their know-how in organization and implementation of ICT projects to increase the efficiency and the rate of completion
- Raise civil society awareness on the benefits of ICT for the improvement of living conditions
- Provide access to public data to the private sector that are developing ICT content and services (e.g roads, maps, directions, weather info for applications used when crossing borders).

The creation of the ICT Private Forum for SEEurope, supported by the Stability Pact, was decided in June 2006 after the proposal of INA's President Mr Vasilis N. Takas and Mr Goran Radman, Chairman of Microsoft of SE Europe in the Business Advisory Council for Southeast Europe meeting in Tirana. The ICT Forum of SE Europe will constitute a permanent mechanism of consultation between the governments and the business community aiming at the elaboration of proposals which promote ICT business development in the region and contribute to the attraction investments in the ICT sector. In the ICT Forum for SEEurope participants come from various business sectors of ICT both from regional and international ICT companies. The role of the co-ordination of the forum has been appointed to INA President Mr. Vassili N. Taka's and Mr. Goran Radman, Chairman of Microsoft of SEEurope, while the forum takes place under the auspices of the Stability Pact and the Business Advisory Council for Southeast Europe.