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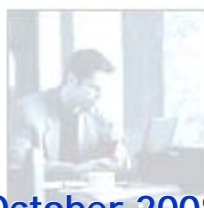
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Note from the Editor

We are pleased to bring you the fourteenth issue of the Electronic South Eastern Initiative Newsletter. We welcome comments, inputs, ideas for articles and general feedback. Please contact Nera Nazečić, Head of Regional eSEE Initiative Secretariat/ Programme Manager of the eLeadership Programme for the Western Balkans, *and the editor of this Newsletter, by e-mail: nnazecic@undp.ba or phone: +387 33 563 836. We are inviting you to visit the official eSEE Initiative web site: http://www.eseeinitiative.org/.*

CROATIA

The Croatian Cultural Heritage project accomplished—The "Croatian Cultural Heritage" project (www.kultura.hr) is a national project for the digitization of archival, library and museum material. It is intended to encourage the creation of new digital contents, improve its accessibility and visibility, and promote a systematic and even approach to the digitization of holdings in cultural institutions. The portal was presented to the public by the Croatian Minister of Culture, H.E. Mr. Božo Biškupić in the summer of 2008.

In the inauguration ceremony, Minister Biškupić described the portal as "a unique ID of Croatian national and cultural identity in the global environment". This important project represents a synergy of history and the future, and allows the preservation of Croatian historical and cultural treasures for new generations.

The portal already contains all the digitalized material from the Croatian National and University Library which has more than 110 thousand pages and more than 150 thousand files along with material from the Croatian State Archives. The portal also has access to the valuable collection of 114 Croatian museums, or 960 thousand digital museum objects, more than five hours emissions from the production of Croatian Radio Television, and a wide range of items.

As the central state administrative body responsible for promoting the information society, the Central Office for e-Croatia recognizes this project as another, extremely valuable stone in the mosaic of the Croatian information society and expresses full support to the Ministry of Culture on its future enrichment. This initiative will be supplemented by additional activities in the field of e-Culture, thanks to which citizens will be offered a range of new services, by the end 2008. (Source: http://e-hrvatska.hr)

The Government of the Republic of Croatia implementing Action Plan for e-Government for 2008— The Implementation Plan for the Program e-Croatia for the year 2008 represents one of the implementing documents of the government program, which leans on the previous work on the computerization of the Republic of Croatia. Based on this year's Plan, the government will take a series of steps and measures targeted at raising the level of computerizing the public administration. Just as in the past four years, their activities will be coordinated and followed up by the Central Office for e-Croatia which will inform the government of the achieved results.

Key terms of this year's program are related to the achievement of three objectives, the first being the continuation of building and strengthening the existing information-communications infrastructure. The second priority is the continuation of efforts in the transformation of public administration to the service of citizens, while the third focuses on the continuation of building the information society to reduce the digital gap.

The most significant measure of this year's Program e-Croatia is the creation of the Strategy Development of e-Management with the aim of creating conditions for building a united computerized space of public administration, whose framework is the information-communications platform for the exchange of data of all bodies of public administration, along with the central authorization and authenticating service based on the electronic identity of citizens.

The plan includes measures that relate to the continuance of the started computerization of the bodies of the state administration, to continue the implementation of projects such as e-Justice, e-Health and the further development and improvement of conditions for e-Business and e-Public Procurement.

By the end of the year, the public administration plans to provide a total of 110 electronic services, of which 71 for the citizens, 13 for entrepreneurs and 26 of special interest to the Government. This year we record the biggest step in the planned level of computerization. Of the total number of services for 59 of them (53%), the planned computerization level is 3 and 4, which is twice as much when compared to last year.

The first ICT Sector Database will be implemented in Croatia— A new cooperation was recently initiated between the Croatian Chamber of Economy and the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing. This cooperation represents the first step in a process that will bring the Croatian scientific and the economic sectors closer, and will also lead to the creation of the first Croatian ICT sector database. The database shall allow both foreign, local enterprises and investors to easily search possible Croatian partners in the ICT sector.

Currently there are 1.600 ICT companies and organisations active in the Croatia. Thanks to the support provided by the Ministry of Science and Education and from the Central State Administrative Office for e-Croatia, all the existing competences of such ICT organisations will be first monitored and then categorized in the database. According to the vice-president of the Economy and European affairs at the Chamber of Economy, Ms. Vesna Trnokop-Tanta, the final goal is to make all the ICT capacities available on-line and to promote the potential of the Croatian ICT sector in an efficient way both to domestic and international markets.

IDC CEMA published the Croatia Vertical Markets 2008-2012 Forecast, September 2008— This IDC study provides a detailed overview of IT spending trends and forecasts for 17 vertical markets and 10 product categories, including hardware, packaged software, and services in Croatia. The study features overviews of key industry developments, industry challenges, and vertical-specific IT drivers and trends and includes tables detailing IT spending by vertical market for each product for the 2008–2012 period.

Analysis is based on continuous research, the monitoring of users' IT spending and emerging purchasing patterns, and supply- and demand-side research. "Vendors have an opportunity to capitalize on growing potential in the SMB segment by educating potential clients of the value proposition IT offers, rather than simply waiting for businesses to draw such a conclusion. Vendors should bear in mind the sectors in which SMBs are most common in Croatia, namely retail, hospitality, construction, and business services, when tailoring their offerings." Source: <http://www.idccroatia.hr>

Serbia

RS Domain for Serbia, 9 October, 2008 — Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted the Conclusion on accepting the Information on transition from .sr.gov.yu to .gov.rs Internet domain name. The Government has obliged all public authorities to provide all necessary technical and other preconditions in order for .gov.rs domain names to become functional latest until October 31st, 2008. Following nternet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers decision, the new top level domain assigned for the Republic of Serbia is .rs, and the management of the Registry is entrusted to the Serbian National Register of Internet Domain Names (RNIDS).   Source:<http://www.arii.sr.gov.yu/?lang=en>

Workshops on how to create an accessible website— Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and National Information Technology and Internet Agency (NITIA), have organized two one-day workshops entitled "How to create an accessible website". The workshops took place on 30 September and 1 October 2008 in in Belgrade.The workshop was inaugurated by Mr. Slobodan Vuckovic, the director of NITIA and Mr. Boris Barjaktarevic, the State Secretary of the Ministry for Telecommunications and IS.

The goal of the workshop was to raise the level of knowledge and information on key aspects of accessibility – both physical, and accessibility of technologies. The participants could learn more on the topic of application of the UN Convention, standards of physical accessibility and accessibility of Internet. Also, "Guidelines for making the public authority web sites accessible", created by NITIA, and an example of an accessible website created according to the Guidelines, were presented.

H.E. Ms. Jasna Matic - Serbian Minister for Telecommunications and Information Society

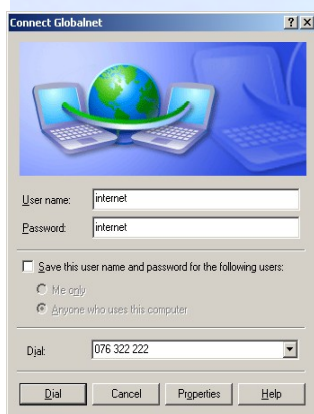**Ministry for Telecommunications and Information Society sets up new agenda—** The Minister for Telecommunications and Information Society in the Government of the Republic of Serbia, H.E. Ms. Jasna Matic stated that the priorities in the work of the Ministry will be popularization, development and expanding ICT use in Serbia and eGovernment development on various levels of the state administration. Minister Matic announced that the postal company "PTT Srbija" will begin using electronic signature this fall, expressing expectation that at the beginning of 2009, e- services of the Government will be available to the public. She also pointed out that wireless broadband WiMAX licences will soon be approved for the licence-holders that are already present in country and region. This technology will increase the broadband Internet availability for citizens and businesses. The Minister underlined that it is necessary to work on raising the awareness of the public on importance of ICT use in today's modern economy, since the significance of this sector has not been recognized in Serbia still.

Minister Matic also announced the realization of the project "e-Government." The plan of Ministry for Telecommunications and Information Society is to make possible for the citizens of Serbia the access to the integral, unique administration counter, in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government.

According to Minister Matic, the alternated regulation for stimulating investment, adopted by the Government is of great importance for domestic ICT development. Three main strategic interests in this sense in Serbia are the automobile-industry, ICT and electronic industry. The investors that invest more than 200 million euro and provide employment to more than 1.000 people will be refunded up to 25% of invested financial resources, from the budget of the Republic of Serbia, said Minister Matic, adding that the new regulation treats foreign and domestic investors equally. When it comes to "Telekom Srbija", which has lost its monopoly status in fixed telephony in the year 2006, Minister pointed out that "Stopping the monopoly is also our obligation both to the EU and the World Trade Organization. It goes without saying that it is not our intention to jeopardize "Telekom", since stopping the monopoly is the process that will strengthen this company as it will many others, which has been already seen at the example of mobile telephony", Minister concluded. Source: <http://www.rzii.sr.gov.yu/?news_20080728>

10 October, 2008 — The Serbian Minister of Telecommunications and Information Society, H.E. Ms. Jasna Matic, announced that internet usage should become cheaper in Serbia starting next year. The ministry had harmonized three sets of regulations that would lead to the liberalization of the internet market in Serbia. The three sets will be published next week and will lead to more competition in wholesale Internet access, announced the Minister and reminded that competition already existed in retail. Source:<http://www.inatelecom.org/

Serbian ICT companies supported by SIEPA, USAID — In cooperation with SIEPA, the USAID Competitiveness Project is supporting Serbian ICT companies to participate in the third biggest ICT fair in the world, GITEX 2008, which will be held in Dubai, UAE, from 19-23 October 2008. SIEPA has reserved 108 square meters of booth space in the Business Solutions hall for the Serbian national stand. In the context of preparations for the participation of the Serbian companies in Dubai, SIEPA and USAID organized presentations and lectures on the ICT market in the Near East, general trade fair participation, and communication with potential partners and clients. The participants from Serbia are Belit, Benet Kernel, Prozone, BioIRC, Europoint, Logo and Serbian Software Cluster. Source: EMportal

Serbia 3rd Conference on Internet business and corporate presence on the Internet "Biz Buzz 2008," 29-31 October, Niska Banja— The conference will take place under the patronage of the National Information Technology and Internet Agency. This year, the theme will be the importance and management of web content. Therefore, the best models and strategies for presenting companies on the web will be presented, as well as most efficient strategies for addressing the potential clients. The target audience are small and medium enterprises. The experts from the field of Internet commerce and marketing, managers of numerous public and private companies, as well as the media will take part in the conference. Source: <http://www.rzii.sr.gov.yu/?akt_20090901>

Last eSEE WG and bSEE TF meetings held in Cavtat on 24 June 2008

The last meeting of the eSEE Working Group and bSEE Taskforce was held on 24 June, in Cavtat, Croatia. The meeting was hosted by the Central State Administrative Office for eCroatia, in the context of 30th International Conference on Information Technology Interfaces ITI 2008 http://iti.srce.hr/. The eSEE-bSEE meeting was inaugurated by Dr. Diana Šimić, eSEE Chairperson, and attended by the eSEE Initiative member Government representatives from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, UNMIK-Kosovo, eSEE Secretariat; representatives of Regional Cooperation Council RCC, Slovene Government, Centre for eGovernance Development and INA-SETA. The meeting of Programme Advisory Committee of the Center for eGovernance Development was held as back to back to eSEE/bSEE meeting.

The Government Officials presented the progress in their respective countries/areas on the status of implementation of eSEE Agenda Plus as the new regional action plan for Information Society development as well as other expert and technical issues pertaining to the wider context of Information Society development. This progress is recorded in the matrices that serve as the internal benchmarking tool of the eSEE Initiative, and are prepared and presented at the meeting by Ms. Nera Nazečić, Head of UNDP funded eSEE Secretariat. She also presented to the group the new eSEE matrices which were designed for monitoring the implementation of eSEE Agenda Plus, stressing that the long version of the matrix was designed to measure both qualitative and quantitative status of implementation level of eSEE Agenda Plus across the region. Moreover, a supplementary matrix was prepared for monitoring the implementation of the basic eGovernment services, and it is supplemented by indicators on the level of interactivity, in accordance with the EUROSTAT Methodology.

An overall perception is that the eSEE workin group is making steady progress in the implementation of eSEE Agenda Plus, bSEE Action Plan and the remaining eSEE Agenda items. Among the highlights of the progress in all Information Society aspects in the region, Bosnia and Herzegovina stressed the leap in the area of eGovernance in light of the implementation of the eGovernnace Programme, implemented by UNDP and co-funded through a cost-sharing agreement of EC and UNDP. The first phase of this project was successfully realized and the second project phase, which will ensure integrated document management system, introduction of support to Government e-sessions, video-conferencing system etc. is on the way. BiH also reported on substantial increase in Broadband and Internet penetration in BiH, stressing how in 2007 BiH experienced the 100% increase of broadband users and that it is anticipated that this progress will be topped by additional up to 400% increase in 2008. Croatia reported on the successful implementation of eCroatia 2007 Programme, and the process of preparation of the strategic framework

for 2008. The Act on Electronic Communications has passed the public discussion phase and the adoption by the Government, and it is in the parliament procedure. In 2008, strategic measures covering the timeframe 2007– 2015, will be taken to contribute to equalization of possibilities for persons with disabilities. The Broadband Action Plan for 2008 was adopted and measures will be taken for further increasing the number of users of broadband in Croatia. Among these measures is the continuation of allocation of the incentive funds for the development of broadband infrastructure in areas with insufficient interest for investment in broadband infrastructure. In Montenegro, the project of central registry of population is in its peak phase, the project on personal data protection is in the final phase of implementation, while the new version of the Law on Electronic Communications was adopted by the Government. In Serbia, the law on eSignature is starting implementation, and in this context, the Serbian Ministry of Telecommunications and Information took the role of central Certification Authority. According to the research conducted by Internet World Stats News, Internet penetration rate in Serbia in December 2007 was at 13.8%, while according to the research conducted by Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia for the year 2007, 7.3% of Serbian households have broadband Internet connection. In UNMIK / Kosovo, as part of the UNDP ICT4D global programme, UNDP in Kosovo is now supporting the development of the eGovernment Strategy, the process which started in June and will have a six months life span to incorporate all types of services including G2G G2C and G2G. Telecommunication Sector Policy Document was adopted in June 2007, while the BWA strategy in 3.4-3.6 GHz, is in the last stages of preparation and will be adopted by Telecommunications Regulatory Agency Board. It is anticipated that by end 2008, 4 operators will be licensed. Estimated number of Internet users in Kosovo is amounting to 400.000, the 67.500 of which are broadband Internet subscribers.

Government officials took note of their obligation to keep all relevant ministries informed and involved in specific obligations and commitments emanating from the eSEE Agenda Plus. In particular, Dr. Šimić highlighted twelve objectives of eSEE Agenda Plus that have deadline either in 2007 or in the near future, and as such require an immediate attention. The group took note of these activities and agreed to the proposal of the Chair to start thinking in line of reporting on these actions for the next meeting. The group agreed to look into the eSEE Agenda Plus deadlines and to devise the strategy for revising them accordingly, should it be necessary.

Mr. Nand Shani, expert at the Economic and Social Development Unit of the Sarajevo based Regional Cooperation Council informed the group that the Regional Cooperation Council was officially launched in February 2008, as the successor of the Stability Pact for SEE. The work of the RCC focuses on six priority areas: economic and social development, energy and infrastructure, justice and home affairs, security cooperation, building human capital, and parliamentary cooperation as an overarching theme. The organization maintains close working relations with all actors of relevance in these areas, such as governments, international organizations, international financial institutions, regional organizations, civil society and the private sector. The RCC functions as a focal point for regional cooperation in South Eastern Europe. Supported by the Secretary General, its Secretariat based in Sarajevo and its Liaison Office in Brussels, the RCC provides the SEECP with operational capacities and acts as a forum for the continued involvement of those members of the international donor community engaged in the region. Mr. Shani reiterated that the RCC Secretary General, Mr. Hido Biščević, has Information Society development high on his priority agenda and stressed how eSEE Initiative can highly benefit from proximity of eSEE Secretariat and RCC, both of which are now based in Sarajevo.

CeGD Programme Advisory Committee meets back to back to eSEE

Centre for eGovernance Development

Programme Advisory Committee of the Centre for eGovernance Development CeGD held its meeting back to eSEE Initiative meetings in Cavtat, 24 June. The Programme Advisory Committee is a body composed of Government Representatives of the eSEE Initiative member states, and it is tasked with providing the input to the Draft Programme of the Center for eGovernment Development (CeGD).

The Centre for eGovernance Development is Ljubljana based public private partnership, created in early 2008 in view of promoting the eGovernance programs within South East Europe. The stakeholders of the CeGD are Stability Pact for SEE succeeded by Regional Cooperation Council, Government of Slovenia, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), European Foundation for Information Society and e-Government (Spain), INA Academy of Thessaloniki (Greece), as well as Microsoft, the SRC.SI (Slovenia). The primary objective of the Centre for e-Governance Development is to support the eGovernance programs of the participants in the eSEE initiative and bSEE taskforce with transfer of knowledge concerning e-governance, e-commerce and development of modern public administration and democracy in the region. The main activity of the Centre is the dissemination of information and best practices by facilitating training to the regional governments in the use of information and communication technologies to increase efficiency and transparency in public administration. It also include activities on specific eGovernance solutions of interest to SEE governments, including eGovernment, eDemocracy, eProcurement, eCustoms, eCommerce, eEducation, eHealth, eJustice, and eInclusion, and assist ICT users (governments, citizens, business community and academia) through a range of supporting activities, including workshops, project preparations, web portals. The Centre will have a multi-tiered structure, and rely on a decentralized network of institutions and experts, public and private and is served by an administrative focal point to ensure effective coordination and implementation of eGovernance programs and policies throughout the region. The CeGD works closely with the eSEE Initiative and the UNDP funded eSEE Secretariat office in Sarajevo to meet the eGovernance needs of the eSEE Initiative parties.

Among the conclusions of the meeting of the Programme Advisory Committee of the Centre for eGovernance Development is to use locally generated know- how, as well as good practices and experts available in the SEE region. The PAC members agreed to be the generating force for articulating the priorities for the region for the CeGD, and to provide the CeGD with the priorities and demands of the SEE region. The Programme Advisory Committee also acknowledged that provisions in CeGD Programme should be taken to address the Municipality level, and to invite Mayors of cities-towns to ICT conferences and include them in work.

Romanian National Unique Center for Electronic Passports Personalization

16 October, 2008 — Romanian Government has decided on the supplementation of number of posts at the General Passport Directorate by 114 in order to set up and operate a National Centre for Electronic Passport Personalization. The staff increase decision was taken to create the adequate conditions for the conduct of the centre's activities, given the number of documents to be personalized. The decision sets the organization and operation of the National Centre for Electronic Passport Personalisation so that the requirements for the release of the electronic passports by December 31, 2008 may be met. Under the new legislative act, the National Centre for Passport Personalization will have the main duties to personalize electronic passports of all kinds as well as other similar documents; manage the databases comprising personal data requested for the personalization of electronic passports in accordance with the legal provisions in force in the area of personal data protection and the free circulation of such data. The Centre for Passport Personalization will also check compliance with the national and international standards and specifications for travel documents, and participate in international commissions concerned with the drawing up of standards and specifications of travel documents and make sure that Romanian electronic passports are readable according to the international standards for travel documents. Source: Government of Romania – Press office

FYROM Deputy Minister Ms. Sekulovska visiting primary & high schools

On 13th October 2008 — Deputy Minister of Information Society, Ms. Mirjana Sekulovska, PhD, visited municipality Resen to meet with the directors and the staff of the primary schools to discuss implementation of the project "Computer for every child". During the visit in Resen's schools a number of questions related to the computer equipment and its maintenance, computer desks, education of the teachers etc. were initiated The directors and the teacher's staff were informed that the equipment and teacher's computer training will soon be provided, while the Ministry of information society as well as the Government of Republic Macedonia will find appropriate solution for ensuring security and maintenance of the equipment. Deputy Minister, Ms. Sekulovska, also visited the free- of- charge internet club in Resen that is managed flawlessly. Source:<www.mio.gov.mk>

Moldova hosts ICT session at 11th CEI Summit Economic Forum

9th October 2008 — For the past ten years the strategic goal of the EU and its Member States has been to transform their Public Administrations to become more efficient and centred on the delivery of ICT-enabled services to citizens and businesses. This ability to offer public services online - 'eGovernment' is considered as a priority in order to reduce public expenses, provide better services and widen the knowledge-based European society.

However, as European integration is progressing, national eGovernment solutions are no longer sufficient and cross-border data exchange requires the integration of different national concepts and models. Therefore the cornerstone of this strategy is to help develop the framework, tools and environment for interoperability between existing systems and applications, to foster the development of public services that would be cross-organisational, cross-level, cross-border, transparent, integrated, secure, decentralised and available anywhere at anytime. The aim of this panel was to create a forum for discussion on interoperability of eGovernment services in the CEI region. The speakers presented their vision and experience of developing interoperable e-government solutions and discussed the progress of the various initiatives and projects both on national and cross-border level in the CEI region. Source: <http://international.asm.md/noutati-2008/ict-session-at-cei-sef.html>

Information Society News from the SEE Region, Regional Cooperation

INFOFEST 2008, Montenegro

INFOFEST 2008, Budva Montenegro— 15th Festival of Information Technology Achievements, INFOFEST 2008, was held from 28th September – 04th October, in Budva, Montenegro. Pexim, as a member of ASSECO SEE group, provided the presentation: "ASEE – Leading Alliance". CardInfo Montenegro company and Logos company from Croatia, also members of ASSECO SEE group, participated in the programme. On 30th September, Pexim and EMC-Documentum organized workshop and cocktail for representatives of large business systems and government. Member companies of the ComTrade Group: Spinnaker New Technologies, HERMES SoftLab and TradeCom participated in the sponsoring of the IT flagship event. As every year, the festival offered participants an excellent opportunity to acquire new expertise, business contacts, exchange good practices and set the scene for a great social event.

Information Society News from the SEE Region, Regional Cooperation

FYROM, Ohrid 6th SEEITA & 5th MASIT Open Days Conference

21-23 September 2008, Ohrid, FYROM — the technology and business leaders from the SEE Region came together in Ohrid to exchange policies and ideas on technology in order to impact the ICT development in the SEE Region. The objective of both SEEITA and MASIT Open Days is to foster regional cooperation and competitiveness in ICT, and to act as a platform for professionals, buyers and providers to meet and discuss challenges relevant to the industry, and build linkages.

On 22 September, the Deputy Minister of Information Society, Ms. Mirjana Sekulovska, PhD, opened the Conference of the SEE IT Associations and Businesses to an audience of over 200 experts from 13 countries: "This conference is a great opportunity for dialogue among the ICT business and associations, for topics that are of mutual interest, having on mind the priorities of the ICT industry in this region, exchange of best practices and making forecast and tracing of the future events, joint cooperation on ICT projects." Deputy Minister, Sekulovska, also presented the project "Computer for every child" and underlined that the educational basis is one of the most important challenge in building a high-quality e-society. Source:

Romania reorganises regulator

22 September 2008— The Romanian Government has dissolved the country's national telecoms regulator, the ANRCTI, and set up in its place the National Authority for Communications (ANC). The ANC will also take on the operations of the country's Institute for Research and Development for Information Technology (ICI)." The new institution shall take over the budget, patrimony, number of positions and personnel of the former [ANRCTI], as well as the ICI's specialised personnel." The ANC also confirmed that the recently-appointed ANRCTI president Dorin-Liviu Nistoran will head the new institution, which will oversee electronic communications, postal services and information technology.

Romania provides IT equipment to secondary schools

On 18 September, 2008 — JSC Sitronics announced that Intracom Telecom a part of Sitronics Telecommunication Solutions business division, has signed a EUR 122.5 million contract with the Romanian Ministry of Education, Research and Youth to deliver equipment for IT laboratories in over 8,000 secondary education schools in Romania. Within the framework of the project, Intracom Telecom will supply infrastructure: workstations and servers connected through structured cabling and networking equipment in local and wider area networks. Siveco Romania S.A. will provide multimedia equipment, educational software applications and installation and training services.

RCC and UNDP organize the next eSEE- bSEE meetings

On 27-28 October, 2008 — The Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) Secretariat will for the first time under its umbrella host a meeting of the eSEE IWorking Group and bSEE Taskforce, at its premises in Sarajevo. The aim of the meeting, organized together with the UN Development Programme (UNDP), is to ensure synergy between these mutually reinforcing initiatives and to learn more about the status of implementation of specific components of the eSEE Agenda+. The Agenda+ is the regional action plan for eGovernance and ICT development signed by nine Governments at the Regional eSEE Ministerial Conference in Sarajevo last October. The event will be opened by the RCC Secretary General, Hido Biscevic, followed by introductory remarks by the UNDP Resident Representative and UN Resident Coordinator for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Christine McNab, and the Croatia-based Chair of the eSEE Initiative, Diana Simic. The eSEE Agenda+ is designed to assist the region in its efforts towards achieving the objectives of the European Union's i2010 programme and becoming a full participant in the global Information Society. The bSEE Taskforce is working to promote regional broadband infrastructure in support of the implementation of eGovernance programmes. This meeting will be followed by a meeting of the Programme Advisory Committee of the newly established Centre for eGovernance Development (CeGD) and the preparatory meeting of the Regional eGovernance Advisory Taskforce (REGATA) of the UNDP's eLeadership Programme for the Western Balkans, which will aim to introduce important innovations for Southeast Europe to capitalize on the benefits of ICT use in the governance processes.

Albania experiences continued IT market growth in 2007

16 October, 2008 — Albania's IT market continued to grow solidly in 2007, fueled by increased spending in the government, finance, and telecom sectors, falling equipment prices, and favorable economic development. According to a recent IDC study, Albania's IT market reached $89.34 million in 2007, representing 28.3% year-on-year growth. In local currency, the market expanded 16.3% year on year. "We expect IT spending in Albania to grow dynamically in the midterm, albeit from a low base, driven by an expanding economy, structural reforms, privatization, and inflow of foreign direct investments," said Lindita Shomo, the manager of ISCS, IDC's research agent in Albania. "Additionally, competitive pressures associated with the globalization processes will spur an increase in IT spending in Albania in coming years." The Albanian IT market is heavily hardware-oriented due to its relatively early stage of development. Combined revenue from shipments of PCs, severs, storage devices, and hardcopy peripherals amounted to about 80% of the market in 2007. Nevertheless, IT services was the fastest expanding IT market segment in 2007, recording 49.3% year-on-year growth. IDC expects the Albanian IT market to expand at an annual average of 16.7% over the next five years to reach $193.4 million in 2012. Source:<http://www.idc.com/getdoc.jsp?containerId=prCZ21480208>
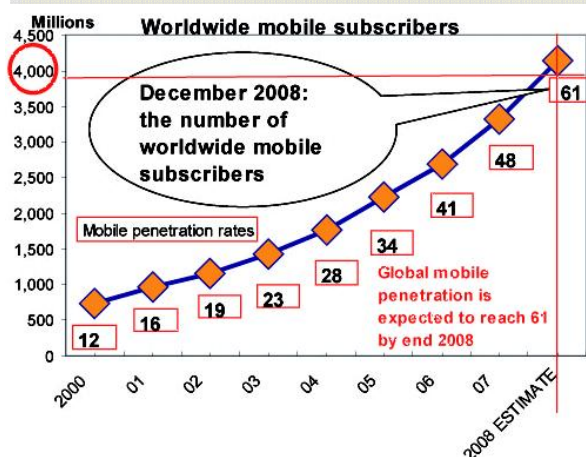
5th conference on the quality of public services in EU

From 20 to 22 October in Paris — the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union hosted the 5th conference on quality in public services in Europe. This meeting, first held in 2000, is organised by the country holding the presidency of the Council of the European Union and brings together providers of public services in Europe to discuss a specific topic.

This year, the debates and discussions were focused on citizens. How must and how can public services improve the quality of life of citizens? How can the latter take part in public decision-making and are they ready to play a role in the provision of public services? How are their needs perceived by government departments? The plenary sessions, round table discussions and practical workshops aimed to respond to these questions over the three-day conference. This 5th "Quali-conference" reaffirms the key role that citizens play in the implementation of public policies, of which they are the primary beneficiaries, and sometimes the initiators. One of the topics addressed were the coproduction, i.e. the participation of citizens in the provision of public services. This shared responsibility is proof of a new relationship forming between citizens and government departments. By playing an active part in the provision of certain public services (public health, early childhood, neighborhood safety through the creation of prevention associations, etc.), citizens can help to improve their quality and range with regards to users. Through exchanges, discussions and by sharing good practices on very specific cases, the 1,500 participants, most of whom are public stakeholders managing modernisation projects in their country, were able to share and compare their experiences, knowledge and procedures.

Worldwide mobile cellular subscribers to reach 4 billion mark late 2008

Worldwide mobile subscribers

December 2008: the number of worldwide mobile subscribers

Mobile penetration rates

12 16 19 23 28 34 41 48 61

Global mobile penetration is expected to reach 61 by end 2008

2000 01 02 03 04 05 06 07 2008 ESTIMATE

ITU Secretary-General, Mr. Hamadoun Touré announced in New York that worldwide mobile cellular subscribers are likely to reach the 4 billion mark before the end of this year. Dr Touré was speaking at the high-level events on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in New York, where he also participated in UN Private Sector Forums addressing the global food crisis and the role of technological innovation in meeting the MDGs. Since the turn of the century, the growth of mobile cellular subscribers has been impressive, with year-on-year growth averaging 24 per cent between 2000 and 2008.

While in 2000, mobile penetration stood at only 12 per cent, it surpassed the 50 per cent mark by early 2008. It is estimated to reach about 61 per cent by the end of 2008. Impressive growth of mobile cellular subscribers is mainly due to developments in some of the world's largest markets. The BRIC economies of Brazil, Russia, India and China are expected to have an increasingly important impact in terms of population, resources and global GDP share. These economies alone are expected to account for over 1.3 billion mobile subscribers by end 2008. Broadband uptake enables a range of socially desirable and valuable online services, specifically targeting the MDGs in areas such as e-government, e-education and e-health. Their use can help overcome many of the basic development challenges faced by developing countries. Source: <http://www.cellular-news.com/story/33811.php>

The 4th Council of Europe Forum for the Future of Democracy

15-17 October 2008—The 4th Council of Europe Forum for the Future of Democracy gathered 400 parliamentarians, government officials, local and regional representatives, NGOs, academics and experts in Madrid on 15-17 October under the theme "E-democracy who dares?" to discuss the potential of the ICT to strengthen democracy and increase participation. The meeting was organised by the Council of Europe and hosted by the Spanish Government and the City of Madrid. In his opening remarks Mr. Terry Davis, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, said that "technologies offer tremendous opportunities, but they are not, in themselves, a miracle cure for the democratic challenges. The fact is that high tech is no antidote to low trust". General Rapporteurs of the Forum highlighted that e-democracy can help restore the declining interest in politics and the democratic process. With regard to recent developments in e-voting, the Rapporteurs called on national policy-makers to devote increased attention to certification and observation of elections to guarantee security and transparency, and to build trust in the electoral process. The final report also underlines that e-democracy involves risks – such as the digital divide and e-discrimination, which need to be addressed by political decisions, investments and solid risk assessment and management. "People will only trust e-democracy if they are confident that the information and data they disclose in the context of e-democracy processes are not used or stored for any other purpose", it states. The conclusions of the Forum will set the agenda for the future work of the Council of Europe in the field of e-democracy.