

Commissioner Mr. Erkki Liikanen, ministers, Heads of delegations, ladies and gentleman,

Our two days meeting at the ministerial conference has approached the end. I hope you felt well in Ljubljana and that you found the conference interesting and stimulating for further actions in the development of information society in our countries.

Ministerial conclusions have been presented to you and indeed there is very little that I can add to this. Nonetheless let me allow few personal comments in addition to the document.

- Progress report and the conclusions clearly show, that in all our countries significant progress has been achieved since the adoption of the «Europe+». Yet in almost all domains of information society, as indicators show, we are still behind the EU average not to speak of most advanced EU countries. Additionally the pace of change is still too slow to make more decisive progress and eventually to catch up with the EU countries.
- As we know the negotiations for EU membership accession countries are in process of completion for (ten) them. The accession which is »behind the corner« urges more decisive information society policies if we want to cope with the increased competitiveness within EU.
- Therefore I believe there is a lot of work we have to do. Firstly we have to put information society policies higher on the priority agenda in our countries. Apart of the problems we still have with general access to the internet we have to put more emphasis on education system. The investment into ITK infrastructure, hardware and software and particularly in education and training is precondition for grounding of the knowledge based economy.
- I also believe that there are relatively big unexploited opportunities of the private sector involvement into the informational policies. The strengthening of the public-private partnership would engage the knowledge developed in private sector for public purposes and it will alleviate financial burdens of the state.
- Commissioner, colleagues, dear participants, I would like to thank you for your valuable contribution at this conference, and I apologise any inconveniences that have happened (I hope they were only few), hopefully they have not affected our work. Particularly I would like to express my thank to Commissioner Mr. Erkki Liikanen for his personal engagement and contribution to this conference and to the EU Commission and DG information society specifically because, for the past few months we have been working closely together and we learned a lot from this co-operation. Thank you very much. We will have the opportunity to discuss some topics at the ministerial lunch - with those who invited - that follows later.