

European Ministerial Conference



Information Society ★ Connecting Europe

Ljubljana, 3-4 June 2002

MINISTERIAL CONCLUSIONS

Ljubljana, June 4, 2002

***Ministerial Conclusions
of the
European Ministerial Conference Information
Society - Connecting Europe***

Ministers and representatives from EU Candidate Countries, EU Member States, and South-East European countries, European Commissioner Liikanen, representatives from the private sector, civil societies, research organisations, and international financial institutions met in Ljubljana on the 3rd and 4th June, 2002, at the invitation of the Slovenian Government and the European Commission for the European Ministerial Conference "Information Society - Connecting Europe".

1. At this crucial moment in Europe's political development we underline the importance of the Information Society in increasing social and cultural cohesion and in strengthening economic integration. Efforts by all European countries to modernise their societies and economies by making use of the opportunities offered by information and communication technologies should be seen in the context of the ambitious goal to turn Europe into the most dynamic, knowledge-based economy world-wide.
2. On the basis of political commitments at the highest levels, many countries have put in place specific national action plans and are progressing common goals in action plans such as eEurope+, eEurope2002, and the Northern eDimension. We reaffirm our joint interest in developing and achieving such common goals by means of further co-operation and exchanges in the public sector, the private sector, and civil societies making use of existing instruments and methods of co-ordination. These common Action Plans play an important role in the Information Society - Connecting Europe.
3. We are pleased to note that the efforts undertaken in Europe have achieved recognition world-wide and have resulted in many requests for co-operation and assistance. Therefore Europe is expected to play a leading role in the UN World Summit on the Information Society that will take place in Switzerland in 2003

and in Tunisia in 2005. We fully recognise the important impetus this Summit can give to the development of the global Information Society, as well as the role Europe can play on the basis of common objectives and extensive, coherent Information Society policies, and we agree that close, joint preparations of European countries are both essential and beneficial. In that context, we welcome the Government of Romania's offer to host a European preparatory conference in the latter half of 2002.

4. However, Europe's leadership can only be maintained if significant, focussed, and continued work is undertaken in the further development and effective implementation of Information Society policies.
5. In that context, we welcome the publication by the EU Candidate Countries of the first progress report on the implementation of the eEurope+ Action Plan, applaud the efforts undertaken, and recognise the results achieved. The progress in the context of the eEurope+ Action Plan is yielding first, concrete and positive results in the EU Candidate Countries and provides a solid basis for the joint work to be undertaken by all members of the enlarged European Union in the context of the proposed eEurope 2005 Action Plan.
6. We note that Ministers of the EU Candidate Countries reaffirm their commitment to the eEurope+ Action Plan launched at the EU Göteborg Summit on 15/16 June 2001. The support this plan brings to the EU accession process is a fundamental reinforcement to the collaboration and co-operation between the EU Member States and the Candidate Countries. It draws on the strengths of each country to bring a positive impact on the social, cultural and economic exchanges between the European Union and the Candidate Countries. Furthermore, it aims to significantly reduce any remaining disparities, particularly in areas such as affordable access to communications and, in particular, Internet, education, and e-commerce.
7. We note that the Ministers of the EU Candidate Countries fully support the intentions of the proposed eEurope 2005 Action Plan and request that the European Summit of Seville takes full account of their interests in participating in the Action Plan.
8. We also welcome the initiative of the South-East European countries to develop, within the framework of the e-SEE initiative of the Stability Pact, a common agenda on the Information Society and urge the political leaders of these countries to undertake the essential political commitments, particularly in some of the core policy areas such as telecommunications, ecommerce, e-government and education, thereby aiming to achieve an early convergence of policy and regulatory frameworks in Europe.
9. We are confident that the European economic growth is again on the increase and that there is refound confidence in European markets. We welcome the efforts of the private sector players in the European market and their continued commitment to assist in achieving our policy goals. We are convinced of the importance of the contribution of the information and communications technology sectors to overall progress towards the knowledge economy.

10. In order to further support these positive developments, and taking into account the discussions with the private sector, civil society, academics, and local politicians at this European Ministerial Conference, we:

- agree that particular attention needs to be given to implement policies, activities, and programmes that will make concrete and tangible contributions to narrow the digital divide within Europe;
- underline the importance of effective, enabling policy and regulatory frameworks and urge the further development and implementation of Information Society related policies across Europe;
- welcome in particular the new EU regulatory package for electronic communications services and recognise the value of its implementation in the wider Europe thereby providing a large measure of regulatory convergence in one of the most important pillars of the Information Society;
- point out the crucial importance of youth and education to Europe's future and that further, immediate and focused, progress is needed in developing school curricula taking full account of the technological possibilities, connecting schools to Internet, providing electronic text books, training of teachers, and increasing computer literacy; and agree on the need for a special effort in education and life-long learning through further benchmarking of results and systematic exchanges of experiences;
- recognise that the core priorities of the proposed eEurope 2005 Action Plan: promoting attractive content for all Europeans; providing modern public services on-line particularly e-government, e-learning and e-health services; pursuing digital inclusion for all Europeans; progressing a dynamic e-business environment, promoting a faster Internet and deployment of a broadband infrastructure; and ensuring trust and confidence in cyberspace, are of common importance to all countries in Europe and that these areas need to be adequately addressed in the next period, in addition to the existing policy aims;
- recognise the need to stimulate further development of interactive, multi-media rich, multi-lingual, content as one of the most important drivers for broadband deployment, and declare our intention to increase the availability of, and access to, public sector information;
- appeal to the infrastructure and content industry players to jointly address the challenges of broadband infrastructure and services deployment, in close collaboration with the public sector;
- recognise the new challenges in relation to information and network security as well as cybercrime as part of a short-term effort to counter unauthorised access and illegal usage of information, in favour of common security and the need for additional, joint efforts to address these challenges immediately;
- underline that the continued, significant contribution of the Information Society to overall economic growth and the creation of employment should be reinforced by, for example, more and better use of life-long ICT training in order to improve employability and adaptability in the labour markets and

addressing the needs of the unemployed and disabled to requalify them and improve their chances on the job market;

- note the lack of suitable indicators and datasets, collected on the basis of coherent methodologies across Europe, as input to the Information Society policy making process and urge national statistical offices and Eurostat to increase their efforts, notably in areas such as e-commerce, content, social and employment effects, and education;
- underline the increasing role of local and regional administrations to stimulate the use of ICT as a means to address local and regional needs, with extended local participation and involvement;
- welcome the continued support of, and collaboration with, the international financial institutions;
- encourage the private sector, civil societies, and non-governmental organisations to strengthen their capacity for even closer involvement in addressing Information Society matters;
- agree on the value of a broader European co-ordination and preparation, in co-operation with the private sector and civil societies, of the UN World Summit on the Information Society to be held in December 2003 and in 2005.

Ljubljana, 4 June 2002
