



Report on the Meeting of the eSEE Working Group, Brussels 15 May 2006

Key points of the meeting

The second meeting of the eSEE Initiative in 2006 was held in Brussels on 15th May, 2006. **Ms. Marijana Vidas- Bujanja**, *Chairperson of eSEE Initiative*, welcomed the participants specially thanked the Stability Pact Secretariat in Brussels for hosting the meeting.

Director of WT II **Mr. Guye** stressing importance of the eSEE Initiative mentioned that this Initiative has many synergies with other actions of the Stability Pact, having in mind that through the single free trade agreement in SEE, concrete fields of cooperation with eSEE Initiative could be achieved in e-customs, e-procurement, trade facilitation, e-government issues etc. **Mr. Guye** invited the WG members to dedicate time to devise how to continue the transfer the ownership to the region, adding that a positive side of this group is that Chair and Secretariat are from the region.

Ms. Vidas- Bujanja praised the effort invested into making of the eSEE Agenda Plus, thanking **Mr. Gadžo**, the UNDP Office in BiH and the Secretariat. Document is assessed as good in substance but also very ambitious. The Chair also emphasized that valuable input to the bSEE Action plan was received from the representatives of Montenegro, Serbia, Greece, Croatia and INA Academy, while coordination and integration of text was carried out by Stability Pact Office and Secretariat. Chairperson also informed that Call 6 of the Framework Programme 6, the special section of which was allocated for the Information Society development in the Western Balkans, had a wide participation by the SEE region. The FP6 Call was taken as an exercise for the forthcoming Call 7, which will have a much larger budget and rather ambitious goals. In a relatively short timeframe, several projects were actually created in application for FP6 Call 6 by using the platform of eSEE Initiative.

Head of eSEE Secretariat, **Ms. Nera Nazecic** informed group about significant qualitative and some quantitative improvements recorded in the SEE region since March meeting. Analysis has shown that out of 64 fields we have 39 YES, 15 NOs and 8 semi YES fields (no information is available on two fields), the latter of which mostly refer to the by laws that are needed in order to make possible the implementation of the adopted laws. The status of the Laws is rather affected by current region specific political climate, referendum in Montenegro on 21 May, the 5 July elections in FYROM and 1 October elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This current climate is delaying several laws that are drafted, but got delayed in the adoption procedure longer than usual.

The overall changes across the region as a result of latest progress in implementing the eSEE Agenda were presented. In Moldova an elaborate plan is being developed for implementation of e-Government system through UNDP and Japanese Government scheme. Serbia is currently developing e-Government framework through actions taken



by the Agency for Information Technologies and Internet. On the practical note, Croatia continues with implementation of HITRO.HR programme with introducing the eVAT service for businesses. In Macedonia eProcurement, Bureau for Public Procurement has launched its web portal insight into the level of development of information society in 2005.

Representative of EC from DG for Information Society and Media **Mr. Jean-François Soupizet**, emphasized that ICT is not only important, but rather that it is at the core of the Lisbon strategy. In the EU, the countries have set the priority of working on the application of legislation, although there is a record of difficulties when it comes to implementation of regulatory aspects. What makes a difference between EU and other regional projects is notably the work on implementation, reporting, benchmarking and introduction of exchange of best practices as a compulsory mechanism, " **Mr. Soupizet** remarked.

Regarding to Broadband Agenda, the EU experience is linked to a good regulatory environment and strong competition. It is interesting to see that regulation leads to competition, and then to investment. The regional cooperation, represented through the eSEE Initiative, is important and may be viewed as the main added value, because one of key criteria is the capacity to contribute to regional cooperation and integration. There is a need to monitor the situation of the regulatory framework, not merely to provide oversight of the process, but to pay close attention to the situation in the market.

Representative of the UNDP **Mr. Tarik Zaimović** informed the group that UNDP Office in Sarajevo offered to co-host the Regional Ministerial eSEE Conference with the BiH Ministry of Communications and Transport and the Stability Pact in order to provide the platform for the signing of eSEE Agenda Plus. Working Group that should decide on the date and pass the formal conclusion for further practical and logistics actions in organization Ministerial Conference.

Director of INA Institute **Ms. Despina Anastasiadou** presented the current version of draft bSEE Action Plan, stressing that the purpose of this text is to identify important points of action and to make proposals and suggestions regarding broadband development in SEE.

The first line of action would be to formulate and adopt National Broadband Strategies, including the following actions: creation regional guidelines and recommendations for national broadband strategies; organizing workshop on methodology and best practices for developing a national broadband strategy; set specific goals in introducing broadband in education, health and public administration; identify and introduce specific programs for underprivileged and disabled citizens etc.

The second line of action, would focus on assessing the status of national broadband services. In this process, the existing e-services and their use would be assessed, followed by assessment of the processing capabilities and identification of major stakeholders in broadband content development.

Regarding to Broadband Infrastructure, the focus would be on assessing the existing broadband infrastructure in each country including identification best practices and develop a roadmap related to broadband infrastructure and to facilitate regional/national consultations and research on the suitability of technological solutions that take into consideration the geographical particularities of the underserved areas.



The focus of the fourth line of action is on initiating regional projects that provide broadband connectivity between SEE governments and education and health institutions; organisation of a region wide broadband promotion and awareness raising campaign; launch an online bSEE information centre and suggest and prepare specific studies and projects for target populations.

Mr. Dragan Stojović, Expert in WT II informed the group about participation of the Initiative at the First Broadband Conference in April in Belgrade and that **Mr. Zoran Miljanić**, member of the executive board of the event, expressed strong interest to continue cooperation with both eSEE and bSEE.

Finally, two case studies were presented on the meeting: 1. Project of Geographic Information Network of Serbia – GIN Project, by **Ms. Mirjana Prljevic**, consultant in Menora Consulting, France and 2. Presentation of activities of MASIT – FYROM Association of Information Technology by **Mr. Marjan Gusev**, researcher in Institute for Informatics in Skopje.

Recommendations for the next meeting

- Coordinate activities on finalizing eSEE Agenda+ and bSEE Action Plan and prepare final versions of these documents for the next meeting in Budva.
- To define concept and optionally dates for the next Ministerial Conference – in coordination with Ministry of Communication and Transport of Bosnia and Herzegovina and UNDP Office in Sarajevo.
- Continue interacting with DG Information Society and Media and private companies regarding activities of eSEE and bSEE Initiatives.

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