



**Report on the Meeting of the eSEE/bSEE Working Group
Opatija/Croatia May 2007**

Key points of the meeting

Representatives from Albania and Macedonia were not present.

1. The meeting of the eSEE Initiative in 2007 was held in Opatija on 23rd May, 2007. Ms. Marijana Vidas-Bubanja, *Chairperson of eSEE Initiative*, welcomed the participants and specially thanked the Croatian Ministry for the Sea, Tourism, Transport and Development for hosting this meeting.

The overall changes across the region as a result of latest progress in implementing the eSEE Agenda were presented. Mr. Gadzo (BIH) and Mr. Ostojic (Serbia) agreed to make adjustments in the current eSEE Matrix in order to include the informative data in the area of Telecommunications and Cabinet Level Bodies in charge for IS.

Mr.Radman (Microsoft representative) elaborated the concept of establishing the eGovernment Centre. Parties agreed to submit comments on the new version of MoU comprising the contributions of SRC.SI in two weeks. ASPOs agreed that eSEE Chair will represent the interests of the eSEE initiative by taking part in the Supervisory Board of the Center in the initial stage. It is also agreed to facilitate with their respective Governments the assignment of the expert to the eGC Programme Committee. This task should be assigned to an expert in the area of eGovernance rather than a political person. The role of the expert would be to help identify the needs of their countries in the area of eGovernment, so that the eGC programme could be tailored to the demands of each country. Mr.Radman took a note of suggesting to prepare the ToR for the expert with the aim to facilitate the work of ASPOs.

It was also agreed that, since eGC initially envisaged as an NGO rather than intergovernmental institution there would be no formal signing of the eGC MoU on the Ministerial level. The signing would be carried out only by the Stakeholders group of the eGC who will take part in the Supervisory Board of the eGC. Stakeholders group will be bound by certain commitments and obligations either in financial aspect or know how. Therefore eSEE countries will be able to benefit from the eGC programme at this stage without obligations. Those countries that still wish to be included in the stakeholders group may opt to sign the MoU. Also it was suggested that the MoU needs to precisely state that no financial commitment is expected from the eSEE member state governments. Moreover, it was agreed that the MoU should indicate more information on the current sources of funding and the potential future funding prospects to demonstrate the potential for sustainability of the eGC.

It was decided that a paragraph on eGC would be included in the Ministerial Declaration and that there would be no Ministerial signing of the eGC MoU (unless the country would opt to be a part of the stakeholders group or the Ministerial Declaration. Therefore, the ministries would only approve the declaration and not sign it.

Mr. I.Konstas informed the group about the INA Academy's application for Hellenic Aid funds to support the eGC. The ASPOs (except for Croatia and Moldova who are not eligible to apply for these particular funds) agreed to send the support letter signed by their Government officials in charge.



Romania expressed the interest to join the stakeholders group of the eGC.

Regarding the next Ministerial conference, Mr. Gadzo announced that the BiH Ministry of Communications and Transport is of the opinion that the Ministerial conference should be postponed for end of September or mid October 2007. The group expressed the strong interest to receive the 2-3 proposed dates from BiH Ministry of Communication and Transport preferably by the end of May.

Romania expressed interest to officially sign eSEE Agenda Plus.

eSEE Chair, Head of eSEE Secretariat and Mr. Gadzo agreed to prepare the first draft of the conference.

The group supported the proposal of Mr. Radman to combine the launch of eGC with the Ministerial Conference in order to capitalise on the high level political and expert presence and in order not to organize two eSEE related events in short time frame, particularly since the launch of the eGC is also anticipated in October 2007.

2. The bSEE Taskforce acknowledge the gradual progress in the area of broadband in bSEE taskforce member states and steady implementation of the bSEE Action Plan across the region. The key challenges still remain the aggregation of the demand and local content, to overcome the lack of awareness of the decision makers about the importance of broadband development. It was noted that the frequent problem with the ministries in the region is understaffing.

In particular the group agreed about the importance of having the National Broadband Strategy and Action Plan in place as the prerequisite for coordinated and planned broadband development.

Moreover, the group agreed to jointly design concrete projects with the regional impact and to make use of the opportunities for funding that will be available through FP7.

INA Academy invited the participants to send the list of topics of interest in the area of broadband to be included in the ITU Centre of Excellence workshops and trainings. Mr. Konstas stressed the role of cooperating with the National Regulatory Agencies in the SEE region, announcing the next meeting to be held in October in Sarajevo. He also said that drawing funds from the Hellenic Aid programme, may help secure the funds for training on regulatory issues.

The group thanked Mrs. Ivancica Urh for successful coordination of bSEE Taskforce in year 2006/2007 and agreed that the Coordinator of bSEE Taskforce from now on shall be Montenegro.

The next meeting will be held as back to back meeting to eSEE working group meeting.

3. The Broadband Day was organized on 22 May by Ministry of Sea, Tourism, Transport and Development of Croatia. It was well attended and it featured the broadband perspectives in Croatia with the special guests and successful story presentations from France. The broadband solutions were presented by the Alcatel-Lucent, Cisco and the outlook for broadband development in SEE region in the EU context by Cullen International.



Recommendations for the next meeting

- Coordinate activities on finalizing the eGC MoU and prepare final version of this document for the Ministerial Conference.
- To define concept and optionally dates for the next Ministerial Conference – in coordination with the Chair of eSEE Initiative, Ministry of Communication and Transport of Bosnia and Herzegovina and eSEE Secretariat in Sarajevo.
- Continue interacting with DG Information Society and Media and private companies regarding activities of eSEE and bSEE Initiatives.

WT II, ARR 4/06/2007