



# **Electronic South East Europe Initiative: Guidance Note on National e-Strategies**

April 2003  
Draft Dated: 4/24/2003

## OVERVIEW: THE ESEE AGENDA

In June 2002, the member countries of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe (eSEE) formally agreed to pursue a common vision for developing an "Information Society" for all. The *eSee Agenda* recognized that Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) are fundamental to the development of the region and its eventual integration into the European Union – which itself is rapidly moving from an industrial to a knowledge society. It also underlined the critical role of governments, which must undertake assessments, set policies and enact strategies that will nurture a proper enabling environment for appropriate ICT diffusion and appropriation at the national level, while also adjusting all policies and approaches to facilitate both regional integration (amongst Stability Pact countries) and eventual accession into an expanded European Union.

To this end, the *eSee Agenda* commits member states to addressing four priority areas necessary for moving towards integration within the broader European Information Society:

- **Organization** – to establish the necessary institutional framework for transition to a knowledge society.
- **Legislation** – to adopt and implement new legislation necessary to support innovation, competition and safeguard the rights of the individual (such as the right to privacy and equality of opportunity to benefit from the Information Society)
- **Regulation** – to encourage liberalization and privatization in the provision of services and infrastructure.
- **Promotion** – to encourage multi-stakeholder participation -- civil society, non-governmental organizations, academia and the private sector -- in the development of e-Governance, e-Learning initiatives on regional-wide scale.

In addition to outlining a common vision and plan of action, the *Agenda* also specifies a timetable for member states to implement legislative and regulatory reforms that are consistent with the norms and standards being put in place by the European Union under the eEurope+ process. To meet these obligations, member states further undertook to follow a harmonized approach to the preparation of National Information Society Policies (NISPs) and Action Plans to ensure that the objectives of the *eSEE Agenda* are tried to national realities and linked to nationally-driven political processes. The intent is that these activities will help all member states to adopt harmonized NISPs and Action Plans by 30 October 2003.

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## *The Purpose of this Document*

This present document is one of the inputs to the process of developing regionally coordinated guidelines for the creation of National Information Society Policies (NISP). Its purpose is to stimulate discussion among stakeholders in the eSEE member countries about basic principles for engagement and issues for consideration when embarking upon a National Information Society Policy formulation process --- from declaration of intent through to development of a normative framework and operationalization of a detailed Action Plan.

The practical aim of this document is to bridge one of the gaps that separates the intent of the eSEE Agenda from its desired outcome. This is necessary because although the eEurope model provides a roadmap for standard legislative and regulatory reform, it does not address or highlight certain of the more contextual and political issues that may hinder or even derail the reform process.

## *Challenges to Developing NISP in the eSEE region*

As with any governmental policy-making process, the challenges of articulating and negotiating an NISP are many. However, one could argue that the challenges involved in deriving a wise policy framework to harness ICTs for national development are especially complex, for four reasons. First, because the "newness" and rapidly-changing nature of the technologies make it difficult to acquire full and up-to-date information on which to base sound policy choices for future directives. Second, because the wide-ranging types and applicability of ICTs, with their potential to "enable" all development sectors, requires a cross-sectoral and holistic approach. Third, because embarking upon a transition towards a knowledge-based economy through the effective leveraging of ICTs requires multi-faceted, cross-cutting, but also inter-locking policy decisions. And fourth, because, the process of pursuing socio-economic transformation will inevitably alter the existing institutional order and its present balances and power arrangements, and these changes can be seen as potentially too disruptive, or even threatening, to certain players.

Moreover, within the eSEE region, popular awareness of the relationship between ICTs (as technologies) and the policy frameworks required to shift towards knowledge-based economies, remains relatively underdeveloped and demands special attention. Harnessing ICT for development is definitively *not* about simply procuring more equipment and training: technocratically-driven solutions will do nothing to foster an enabling environment for the development of knowledge economies throughout the region. Rather, the process of articulating ***a strategy that promotes the emergence of an Information Society requires nation-wide and inclusive engagement: to raise awareness and understanding; to imagine the possibilities but then true these with what is possible and desirable; to define the contours of a national vision and prioritize its respective goals; and, to engender commitment across all sectors of the economy and society.***

This task is difficult enough for any country, but even moreso for those of the eSEE region, given the past decade of turbulence and the very real dilemmas that see the investments required to unleash the future potential of ICT being weighed

against the more tangible demands for immediate employment, security and stability.

The guidance notes contained in this document are grouped in two parts:

**Part 1. National Information Society Policy: Notes on Objectives and Process**, provides some background to National Information Society Policies -- their objectives, components and formulation process -- and outlines five over-arching issues that should be kept in mind when embarking on the strategy-making process.

**Part 2. National Information Society Action Plan: From Strategy to Implementation**, raises key process and content issues to consider when attempting to implement a National Information Society Policy.

## PART ONE

### NATIONAL INFORMATION SOCIETY POLICY: OBJECTIVES AND PROCESS

#### *What is a National Information Society Policy?*

A National Information Society Policy (NISP) is a declarative document that captures the national vision for moving towards an “Information Society” and sets out its basic parameters. Its purpose is to provide the essential normative framework enabling countries to move towards more knowledge-intensive economies. As such, NISPs need to embrace a holistic approach to defining the inter-relationship between technology, government policy, human resources, economic incentives and institutional regimes. As a framing document, NISPs need to define basic goals and objectives, such as the means by which they intend to meet national development objectives, and to achieve national consensus around the steps and priorities that are needed to implement the vision.

Pared down to its bare essence, the NISP should provide a framework that:

- Articulates a vision that frames the role of ICTs in achieving key national development priorities (or that establish “transition to a knowledge-based economy” as a national priority in and of itself);
- Establishes the legislative roadmap necessary to creating the appropriate enabling environment for achieving the vision;
- Identifies existing opportunities, challenges, and constraints;
- Defines key strategic resources and initiatives that will be required; and,
- Specifies a timeline and agenda for action.

#### *NISPs: Some Background*

##### a) NISP: A policy tool for development in the global era.

NISPs and their associated Action Plans are relatively new policy tools employed by governments worldwide as a means for addressing the centrality of ICTs to the prosperity of countries in the global era.

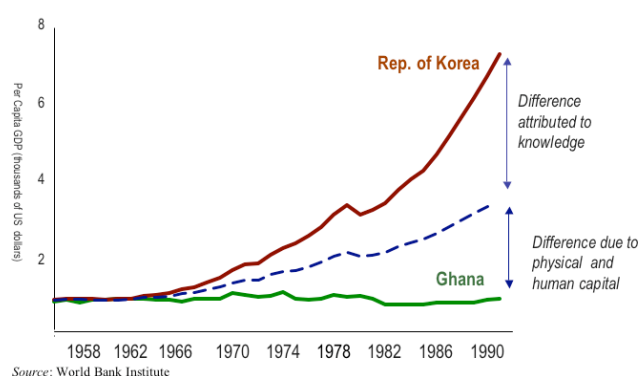
As information handling tools, ICTs are important drivers of the “knowledge revolution”. In the modern era, there are few activities in which ICTs do not play a direct or indirect role: they impact on any activity in which organization, information processing, or communication is important. ICTs form the “nerves and arteries” of the global information economy, facilitating global flows of information, capital, ideas, people and products. As such, they have helped transform business, markets and organizations, revolutionized learning and knowledge-sharing, enabled greater participation and engagement by citizens and communities, and contributed to other efforts that have promoted economic, social and human development. They can also be important tools for individual empowerment through the means they make available for acquiring and leveraging knowledge and thus broadening the scope for individual and collective agency. Consequently, the issue facing countries is not whether ICTs are a development priority, but rather but how their potential can be harnessed to

leverage the benefits arising from the transition to a knowledge-based economy (see Box 1).<sup>1</sup>

### Box 1. Knowledge, Development, ICT and NISP.

Knowledge has long been recognized as a key factor driving economic competitiveness, prosperity and improved living standards. Recent World Bank and OECD studies have established knowledge as a key determinant of development, and identified the ability to leverage knowledge as a factor responsible for differential rates of poverty and prosperity within and between countries.

**Knowledge as a Factor in Income Differences between Countries:  
Ghana and the Republic of Korea, 1956-90**



Building knowledge economies is a complex long term societal task dependent on four essential factors:

- appropriate institutional regimes and incentive structures;
- effective systems for education and life-long learning;
- a dynamic national information infrastructure; and,
- an efficient system of innovation comprised of public and private institutions, and partnerships.

National Information Society Strategies provide a framework for countries to address the transition toward knowledge-based economies by:

- articulating a national vision,
- establishing an appropriate *enabling environment*; and,
- providing a road-map for action.

### b) The Okinawa Declaration: A global vision and call for action

The current emphasis on developing NISPs and Action Plans is a recognition of the need to harness ICTs as a means to leverage knowledge in development. The publication of the Charter for a Global Information Society at a meeting of the G8 in Okinawa, Japan, in June 2000, signalled a recognition by the world's leading industrial powers that national governments and stakeholders, (and other development actors) had a responsibility to help narrow a "digital opportunities divide" that threatened to further exacerbate disparity between rich and poor between and within countries. At its core, the "Okinawa declaration" was a global

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Digital Opportunities Initiative, UNDP June 2001.

call to action, calling on all countries to develop effective policy responses to ensure that ICTs could be harnessed to address the challenges of development.

Prior to Okinawa, most development activities involving ICTs focused on the "pinprick" deployment of ICTs within specific development projects (such as schools, individual government ministries, or training on computers). However, these "stand-alone" efforts invariably hit barriers that arose from the environment in which the ICTs were deployed – limitations in the availability of trained human resources, infrastructural inadequacies, unhelpful regulatory environments, etc. In some countries, for example, laws protecting local telecommunications monopolies served to inhibit diffusion and use of telecommunications services.

These experiences fostered a growing awareness that the wider development potential of ICT is tethered to a highly complex mix of international, national and local conditions, with the policy environment playing a critical role. The Okinawa declaration articulated a shift in the understanding of how ICTs impacted on development, by arguing that a more strategic, coordinated and "holistic" approach to harnessing the benefits of ICTs could drive a "development dynamic" that in turn could have positive results for economic growth and further movement towards the knowledge economy. Following Okinawa, the importance of policy-level decisions has been reinforced and substantiated through a series of international initiatives, reports and fora (G8 Digital Opportunities Task Force, UN ICT Task Force, UNDP Global Human Development Report, World Bank Development Gateway) and by the experience of developing countries who have embarked upon NISP initiatives.

#### c) Rapid change and the challenge of effective policy-making

While the Okinawa declaration signalled a fundamental shift in the understanding of the role ICTs in development by recognizing the importance of government policymaking, it did not address some of the fundamental challenges that governments face when designing and implementing such policies. First and foremost of these is the challenge of dealing with a rapidly changing technological environment, which can create transformations that outstrip the ability of public institutions to adapt. As ICTs make possible new forms of association and bring into being new kind of markets (such as the global capital market, made up of interconnected financial institutions and exchanges), they have contributed to various erosions of sovereignty. This has forced governments to reorganize, modernize and transform their institutions to adapt to new networks of regional, global and non-state actors, and to the new levers that bind their national economies to distant markets. Moreover, simultaneity of these processes has meant that policy-makers are left to grapple with the challenge of designing complex public policies that require specialized knowledge at a time when such expertise often resides outside the competence (and writ) of existing state institutions.

#### d) The importance of adapting to local realities

It is important that each NISP is tailored to the grounded realities and needs of the local context in which it is deployed. As the process of developing NISPs is relatively new, it is important to bear in mind that there is no "proven" formula for arriving at, let alone implementing, a "successful" NISP. To date, NISP documents vary enormously. Some documents are broad "visionary" statements, while others

are more narrowly focused sectoral priorities. Consequently, no clear “best practice” has yet emerged, especially given that the implementation stage -- which is the true test of any strategy -- is only just beginning in most countries.

As a consequence, testing and adjusting to local and national realities is important in any NISP process. It is particularly important in countries of the eSEE region, which are emerging from a decade long “triple transition” -- from state socialism to market capitalism, authoritarianism to democracy, and conflict and territorial realignments to relative peace and regional reintegration. Moreover, the speed and depth of these transitions is being accelerated by the need to rapidly qualify for accession to the now enlarged European Union. These transitions, and particularly the pressure to meet criteria for European integration, are a challenge to state institutions at a time when, in many eSEE countries, the pressures for modernization and democratization in the face of inadequate resources, make even the enforcement of existing laws difficult. It is therefore important that NISPs in the eSEE region take into account these local realities, and adjust the ambitions and plans accordingly. Not to do so risks developing NISPs that set unrealistic goals and expectations.

### *Components of an NISP*

As outlined in the preceding section, there is no one clear model or template for a successful NISP document. That said, some NISPs have enjoyed greater success than others. In general, the more successful NISPs (to date) have articulated a clear and realistic vision, and were derived on the basis of a structured consultation involving a cross-section of national stakeholders. While it is difficult to determine what a NISP *should not* encompass, most successful NISPs possess three key elements:

- a) National vision: Forward looking and inclusive  
The vision should be clearly linked to national development priorities and articulate a fairly concrete set of objectives that the country would like to achieve by some point in the future. These would include, a statement of the role that ICTs are to play in achieving a national development priorities or an outline of the desired characteristics of the national knowledge-based society that the NISP is designed to hasten. An NISP will also usually define the special role envisaged for ICTs. In some, for example, this could mean that the ICT sector is itself prioritized for development. In others, ICTs are given more pervasive attention, as wide-ranging enablers of national development goals, such as the modernization of state institutions, enhanced education, or commerce. More detailed strategies may supplement this overall strategic vision by setting targets across several sectors -- including those outside of the state sector -- and engaging a wide-range of stakeholders (e.g., private enterprise, NGOs and academia) in the process.
- b) Assessment: The rationale for action.  
The rationale should substantiate the feasibility of the vision, by way of a hard-nosed assessment of the current situation (baseline data), and specification of the type and scale of resources and inputs necessary to achieve the vision of the future. In some documents, the rationale is developed on the basis of comprehensive standardized measures that examine the state of the country’s “e-readiness” (see Box 2). These studies, which address such factors as the legal and regulatory environment, infrastructure, human capacity, access and

awareness, help to pinpoint the critical areas for priority development as well as the country's comparative advantages. At present, there is wide variety of e-readiness methodologies to choose from, although many focus mainly on quantitative measures, with insufficient analysis of important qualitative factors including the local political environment. Whichever methodology is applied, the most important outcome is to "ground" the vision in a reality that is practical and achievable.

*Box 2. E-Economy versus E-Society*

E-readiness assessment tools and models can be divided into two main categories: those that focus on basic infrastructure or a nation's readiness for business or economic growth; and, those that focus on the ability of the overall society to benefit from ICTs. These two categories – which this report describes as 'e-economy' assessment tools and 'e-society' assessment tools – are not mutually exclusive. However, 'e-society' tools incorporate business growth and use of ICTs as part of their larger analysis, and consider business growth necessary for society's e-readiness. E-economy focused tools also include some factors of interest to the larger society, such as privacy and universal access. These rough categorizations are as follows:

**E-Economy**

- WITSA E-Commerce Survey
- APEC's E-Commerce Assessment
- McConnell International's E-Readiness Report
- Mosaic's Global Diffusion of the Internet Framework
- Crenshaw & Robinson's Cross-National Analysis of Internet Development

**E-Society**

- CID's E-Readiness Assessment Guide
- CSPP's E-Readiness Assessment Guide
- The various models for evaluating e-readiness from 'digital divide' reports
- CIDCM's Negotiating the Net Model

**Source:** Taken from Bridges.org, a South African-based NGO, that prepared a comprehensive tool kit assessing the relative strengths and weaknesses of each methodology. The toolkit can be accessed at the following website: <http://www.bridges.org/ereadiness/report.html>.

c) Intended outcomes and strategic benchmarks,

These should consist of a realistic set of criteria against which to measure concrete progress and achievements related to the national vision, including general benchmarks by which to assess the impact of specific policy choices and initiatives with respect to achieving national development goals, or movement towards a knowledge-based society. As the NISP is a visionary document, outcomes do not necessarily need to be detailed down to the levels of specific programmes. This level of detail is usually reserved for Action Plans (see Part 2 below). However, NISPs should provide a clear roadmap, which specifies the more strategic-level milestones and criteria against which progress can be assessed.

For the eSEE countries, the eEurope benchmark indicators of "information society" are an important reference. At present, these indicators consist of 14 policy indicators, and 22 supplementary indicators grouped into five categories: Internet indicators, on-line public services, e-business environment, secure information infrastructure and broadband (see Box 3). While these indicators have been tracked within the EU since 2000, the set of benchmark indicators continues to evolve and is being adapted to reflect the specific context of the 10 new member EU countries.

### *Box 3. E-Europe Benchmarking Indicators*

*(by category and primary policy indicator)*

#### **A. Internet Indicators**

##### Citizens access and use of the Internet

- Percentage of households or individuals having access to the Internet at home
- Percentage of individuals regularly using the Internet

##### Enterprise access and use of ICTs

- Percentage of persons employed using computers connected to the Internet, in their normal work routine.

##### Internet access costs

- Costs of Internet access broken down by different frequency of use: 20, 30, 40 hrs/month, unmetered rates.

#### **B. Modern On-line Public Services**

##### e-government

- Number of basic public services fully available on-line

##### e-learning

- Number of pupils per computer with Internet connection (broadband/non-broadband)

##### e-health

- Percentage of population (aged 16 and over) using Internet to seek health information whether for themselves or others.
- Percentage of general practitioners using electronic patient records

#### **C. Dynamic e-Business Environment**

##### On-line commerce

- Percentage of enterprises' total turnover from e-commerce

##### e-business readiness

- e-business index (composite indicator)

#### **D. Secure Information Infrastructure**

##### Internet users' experience with usage and ICT security

- Percentage of individuals with Internet access having encountered security problems
- Percentage of enterprises with Internet access having encountered security problems

#### **E. Broadband**

##### Broadband penetration

- Percentage of enterprises with broadband access
- Percentage of households or individuals with broadband access
- Percentage of public administrations with broadband access

**Source:** EU Benchmarking Europe website,  
[http://europa.eu.int/information\\_society/eeurope/benchmarking/text\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/information_society/eeurope/benchmarking/text_en.htm)

### *Process: Arriving at an NISP*

The process by which a national ICT strategy document is arrived at can be just as important as the document itself. The reasons for this are simple: ICTs are a fast-evolving range of technologies whose impact and influence is multi-sectoral. Often there is not enough knowledge or expertise among government decision-makers to take informed decisions regarding the most appropriate policies and priorities. Moreover, ICT-related issues have implications far beyond the realm of technology alone: as a cross-cutting set of information gathering, processing and communicating technologies, ICTs raise issues ranging from privacy rights and national security through to real economic dilemmas like short-term layoffs and longer-term structural change and adaptation.

Within the eSEE region most populations will have some familiarity with ICTs of one form or another, with the majority having some appreciation of how these technologies affect their daily lives. However, the capacity to peer into the future is limited. Few would understand, for example, how policy decisions may expand or limit the future development potential of ICTs within the country. And yet, appreciating these consequences is essential for informed and strategic decision-making.

Experience drawn for other countries suggests that some approaches for elaborating an NISP have been more effective than others in ensuring that the resulting document embodies both a statement of declaration and a roadmap for future actions. Several factors appear to be particularly significant indicators of “successful” engagements:

a) Political commitment.

As with all government initiatives, choosing to embark upon a national ICT strategy process requires a strong political commitment. However, given the additional burden of dealing with a complex, multi-sectoral set of issues that are not easily understandable by the population at large (as opposed to other, more everyday concerns such as employment and security), a lack of political commitment from the highest levels can seriously decrease the chances of success.

b) An open, participatory process.

Processes that have tended to be “in house” – meaning within the existing ministerial process and away from broader consultative mechanisms -- have often produced limited, and therefore not really strategic, visions. In some cases, for example, the resulting documents allocate resources against limited projects and programmes, but ignore the need to reformulate public policymaking as a whole (and in all dimensions: governance, economy, security) in order to bring it in line with the realities of an increasingly globalized international environment. Conversely, open and participatory processes have generally mobilized different sectors of society – civil society actors, academia, the media, and the private sector -- whose engagement has helped to broaden the perspective and to ensure a close focus on national development priorities, while also mobilizing broad-based political support for the resulting strategy, which is critical for underpinning tough political choices.

c) Awareness-raising.

Some countries have successfully used the strategy-making process as a means for building wide-spread awareness of the potential role of ICT in national development. As noted above, this awareness and engagement is crucial for sustaining political commitment to longer term goals and objectives, especially when the decisions required invoke difficult tradeoffs.

*Key Issues for Consideration and Engagement*

Arriving at a viable National ICT strategy is neither a simple nor straightforward proposition, and cannot conform to set-piece rules. Rather, it is a process of political engagement which is subject to the same range of risks and pressures as other high-level governmental decision-making exercises. To date, much of the literature dealing with the strategy process has not addressed these political intangibles that affect the strategy-making process, despite the fact that these factors often critically affect the "success" or "failure" of resulting directives and policies. While an exhaustive listing of these factors is beyond the scope of this paper, a few of the more significant issues for consideration are as follows:

a) NISPs are a political, as well as a policy, process.

NISPs compel decision-makers to make choices that affect the lives of everyday people by forcing them to confront tradeoffs in how to best allocate limited state resources. Investment in e-government systems, for example, needs to be offset against the cost of lost government jobs and rising unemployment.

On another front, nurturing the growth of ICT often requires difficult policy decisions. For example, reducing restrictions on foreign ownership may stimulate needed foreign investment, but may also cause problems in terms of increased volatility resulting from foreign ownership over critical national infrastructure and political backlash against foreign companies buying up national assets and property.

These kinds of choices entail consequences that are not always possible to capture within the constraints of rational technocratic planning. Rather, they belong to the realm of the political. While the eSEE process places certain constraints and expectations on member countries (such as the timetable for implementing legislative and regulatory reform) it should be understood that achieving these aims will require the forging of a domestic political consensus that will entail confronting challenges and tradeoffs such as those listed above and may not occur in a linear, "rational" or straight-forward fashion.

b) NISPs need to fit within existing national development means and objectives.

This principle is related to point (a), above. NISPs need to be realistic and achievable within the bounds and context of limited human and material resources.

Recent experience suggests that NISPs which diverge from realistic goals have tended to become "dead letters," regardless of the rational needs they encompassed. Moreover, NISPs must also be grounded in existing national priorities, and development objectives. While the goal of reaching integration

with the European Information Society may be at the heart of the eSEE agenda, there should be a recognition and acknowledgement that this process will be differentiated among the member countries and subject to existing nationally-set commitments for integration across other dimensions of development. Information Society is only one of the measures of development.

In addition to dealing with the legacy of the former communist past, many of the countries of the eSEE are also dealing with the social, economic and political consequences of a decade of war and dislocation. While ICTs are playing a vital role in this recovery, they have not always been strategically exploited, nor have they figured prominently in existing large-scale efforts aimed at post-conflict reconstruction and normalization. The national ICT strategy process should account for this reality, and ensure that resulting objectives are harmonised with the specific priorities and commitments of existing plans and programmes

c) NISPs are not “magic” solutions to underlying structural problems.

While ICT can serve as a vital enabler of the development process, it is not in and of itself a “magic” tool or solution for addressing underlying structural or political causes of systemic dysfunction. For example, while ICTs can play a role in deepening democratisation by making institutions more transparent and accountable, they can only do so if the commitment to greater democratisation exists, and if ICT-systems that enable greater transparency and accountability are supported by other non-ICT based reforms, incentives and frameworks (see Box 4).

*Box 4. Lessons learned: ICTs cannot resolve underlying institutional deficiencies*

A recent review of donor-funded e-government projects found that most ended in total or partial failure. The main reason for this failure was the inappropriateness of “grafting” technical and managerial “solutions” from one national context into another and failing to take into account that local conditions may operate under assumptions and rules that often differ from those in which the “solution” was developed. These factors, however, are not unique to developing countries. Recent studies of IT applied to organizations in advanced industrial societies suggests equally high failure rates. What these studies suggest is that applying ICTs to organizations plagued by dysfunctional information flows, results in bigger, faster dysfunctional information flows. The problem does not reside in the technology, or logic of the proposed solution, but rather in the underlying information environment of the organization, and bureaucratic incentives that encourage hoarding rather than sharing of information.

An excellent source of information on “lessons learned” in achieving success/avoiding failure in e-government projects can be found at University of Manchester’s **eGovernment for Development** website:  
<http://www.egov4dev.org/topic1.htm>

d) NISPs can help address the important normative questions that define the citizen-state relationship.

A pressing issue is redefinition of the citizen-state relationship which previously was heavily in favour of the state. While in recent years this social contract has been redressed in the eSEE region, ICTs pose a number of fundamental challenges that lie outside of the legislative agenda set down by the eSEE process.

One such issue is the question of legally defining the rights of individuals to privacy. While ICTs can greatly expand the agency of individuals, they can also vastly augment the surveillance power of states and other entities (such as the private sector) that are capable of generating and archiving large amounts of data. While existing EU legislation defines normative standards and models for data protection, the NISP process in eSEE countries should address this question in terms of securing a fundamental definition of the right to privacy in national legislation that includes the new means made possible by ICTs, and to ensure that dependent legislation is likewise harmonized to reflect these rights.

The eSEE process lays down a roadmap for harmonizing national legislation with existing European directives. This process is expected to smooth integration into the European Information Society (see Box 5)

*Box 5. eSEE Roadmap for Harmonization with EU Directives*

March 2003

- Ratify and implement Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime

November 2003

- Adopt legislation on electronic communications infrastructure and associated services
- Adopt legislation on electronic commerce, electronic contracts and electronic signatures

2004 (end)

- Adopt and implement Intellectual Property Rights legislation for Copyright, Databases, Patents, Software and Semiconductors
- Adopt and implement ongoing legislation for the personal data protection including protection of privacy on the Internet

e) NISPs should take into account emerging international standards and norms.

While the existing eSee agenda is based around a process of adopting and harmonizing the legislative and regulatory environments across the eSEE region (and the EU), the rapid evolution of new technologies as well as the exigencies of the eSEE region (e.g., some members border on non-EU countries) may require maintaining a flexible approach to the adoption of emerging international standards. In areas such as wireless broadband or business-to-business (B2B) e-commerce, rapidly emerging technologies will require policy-makers to have the capacity to make informed decisions. NISPs should address the issue of how eSEE member states develop and retain such a capacity.

## PART TWO

### NISP ACTION PLAN: FROM STRATEGY TO IMPLEMENTATION

#### *What is a NISP Action Plan?*

As discussed, a NISP is a declarative document laying out a vision for the role of ICTs in national development, with clear directions, objectives and strategic benchmarks that are grounded in a realistic assessment of capabilities, resources and potential. By contrast, an Action Plan is a detailed planning and implementation document, typically in the form of legislation tabled by the government or a state programme, which details how the objectives and goals of the strategy will be implemented, by whom, and with what resources.

Thus, while the NISP answers the question “what”, the Action Plan answers the question “how” and “by whom”. As such, Action Plans are always organized around a logical series of steps, sequenced over time and space to achieve the outcomes enshrined in the strategy. Each of the strategy’s general objectives and outcomes are now specified in terms of measurable results or deliverables, and these are often accompanied by a detailed timetable and indication of process to be followed.

In most cases, the Action Plan takes the form of a government planning document, specifying activities with time-sensitive deliverables. It will include assignments of responsibility for the outputs / outcomes sought, criteria of achievement or performance for measuring achievement and quality as well as detailed budgets for each of the stages, broken down into capital and operational expenditures.

As Action Plans must deliver outcomes within specific politically-set time-frames, and must operate within limited and defined resource envelopes, they are usually constructed around several key strategic programmes or activities. The exact nature of these strategic programmes is governed by numerous factors of which the achievement of the vision laid out in the strategy document is usually paramount. But as Action Plans carry real political consequences, they are also invariably subject to less tangible but nevertheless equally important political factors concerning how, and by whom, state resources are to be used.

#### *Implementing an Action Plan*

A key factor affecting the success of Action Plans is the implementation and coordination arrangements – that is, the mechanisms put in place to ensure that all strategic programmes are harmonized and coordinated across all the requisite sectors. This is a particular daunting challenge in the ICT area, given the organically multi-sectoral nature of ICTs.

The eSEE Agenda document provides a partial Action Plan, in that it sets out a clear timetable and milestones for member states to pursue regional harmonization of NISPs and other policies and programmes (see Box 6). However, the Agenda does not elaborate the exact coordinating mechanisms, because these will vary from country-to-country depending upon different factors, including: the

structure of government; the relative priority accorded to the Action Plan; and the type of programmes it encompasses.

*Box 6. Implementation Timetable for the eSEE Agenda*

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- Adopt National Information Society Policy and Action Plan, based on the eSEE Agenda and NISPs, with clear goals, responsibilities and timelines for implementation
- Establish a Cabinet-Level State Body for Information Society responsible for implementation of national Information Society policies, strategies and regulation, including those pertaining to e-Governance-based public administration practices and to coordinate introduction of Information Society curriculum, and standards between the ministries and relevant regional and international participants

2004 (end)

- Regional automated information systems covering goods traffic, free movement of citizens, measures against contraband and terrorism, based on the integration of national identification population registers and a network of national centers of exchange of information.
- "At cost" interconnection of national electronic communications networks.
- Public information access infrastructure for free access to public information;
- A regional telecommunications Service Level Agreement (covering standards and universal service).
- A regional skills-based electronic labour exchange (to promote regional distance employment of knowledge workers through Internet and other electronic communication mechanisms).
- A regional backbone connecting National Academic and Research Networks and a regional educational electronic information exchange (to promote greater coordination in curriculum, examination and grading standards and joint project work among teachers and students in the region).
- Negotiate tariffs for regional cross-countries commerce in ICT products and services.
- Regulation on firm creation, operation and taxation (designed to promote domestic and direct foreign investment in the ICT sector).

*Three Models for Implementing an Action Plan*

While there is no definitive guide for developing a successful action plan, several "models" for addressing the problem of coordination and implementation have emerged in recent years, each of which has advantages and disadvantages.

1. Creation of an inter-ministerial body or council.

Usually such a council is constituted by the head of state (or the head of government) to coordinate the implementation across all sectors of the economy. Often this council will include the participation of experts from outside of the government, including representatives of civil society organizations, academia and the private sector. While these councils are rarely granted executive powers, they act as an

independent oversight and coordinating body for a range of ministries and other institutions responsible for implementing specific components of the plan.

Advantages: maintains the political profile at a high enough level to ensure that inter-ministerial rivalries do not threaten to derail the intent of the strategy.

Disadvantages: in the case of changing political priorities, the structure may weaken and its lack of direct influence over ministries and stakeholders may mean that the effort quickly loses relevance.

2. Designation of a “lead” ministry responsible for coordination and implementation.

In cases where the ICT strategy focuses on specific sectors or programmes (such as development of the ICT sector of the economy, or launching a Government on-line initiative), a single existing government ministry may be designated to oversee or coordinate the implementation of the action plan. In most cases, this will be a ministry with sufficient experience and resources to manage the process such as a ministry of economics, science and technology or communications.

Advantages: existing ministry experience, networks and political weight can effect rapid changes in policy.

Disadvantages: ownership by a single ministry means that programmes can be high-jacked by bureaucratic (or political) interests in ways that may not always conform with the spirit and intent of the strategy.

3. Creation of a new ministry or agency responsible for ICT issues.

In some cases -- for example when ICT is considered a major priority for national development, or where existing structures are not deemed competent or capable of taking on the range of tasks necessary to implement the action plan -- a new ministry or agency may be created for the task.

Advantages: a new agency can act as a central broker for expertise and resources necessary for implementation of the plan.

Disadvantages: a new agency will have little experience in competing for resources and authority with existing powerful ministries, and lag times between the creation of an agency and its ability to deliver may be lengthy and overtaken by subsequent political developments.

### *Key Issues for Consideration and Engagement*

In the eSEE region, the *Agenda for Information Society* provides a roadmap and timetable for harmonizing the legislative and regulatory base needed for meeting the standards set for European Integration under the eEurope +programme. As

such the normative base – and specific benchmarks -- for accession to the emerging EU information society is clearly and substantively addressed. Thus, eSEE countries are beholden to prioritize reform of the telecommunications sector, increased access to broadband, and modernization of state institutions and processes (e-governance).

However, while harmonization is a necessary precondition for integration, it is not in and of itself sufficient to ensure that the objectives of the eSEE Agenda are met. National Information Society Policies and Action Plans are the means to bridge this gap between the objective prerequisites for eventual European integration, and the national political process that will be necessary to mobilize and sustain the commitment of resources needed to achieving this vision. However, strategic programmes such as the implementation of e-governance on a wide scale are costly and fraught with difficulties. Some studies suggest, that the majority of e-government projects do not achieve their desired objectives. Moreover, in the context of post-socialist countries, where the state sector continues to generate a large percentage of jobs, measures aimed at cutting civil servants may not be the most politically expedient. Other, “softer” factors, such as the value of information or the sheer revenue-generating potential of local telephone monopolies also play a role, and cannot be excluded as important elements that affect and influence the shape, character and eventual success (or lack thereof) of these efforts.

Finally, it is important to remember that we are at the very beginning stages of developing policy tools that nurture the development of an information society. We should guard against elevating our assumptions or our expectations to the level of “rules.” In the three years since Okinawa, the over-investment and “hype” created by the Internet and telecoms bubble has forced the write-off of more than two trillion dollars in stockholder value from the books of major global telecommunications carriers and precipitated the loss of more than half a million jobs.

While technologies such as the Internet and mobile telephony have become hallmarks of the contemporary “information society”, it is important to remember the rapidity with which these technologies emerged and how quickly and fundamentally they affected our previously stable assumptions, while also transforming the existing regulatory environment. The point here is that while action plans may be the best vehicle for concentrating and focussing political attention to a given end, they should be seen as a step along the way of a constantly iterative and vigilant process of adapting to the unfolding realities of the information age.

## FURTHER READING.

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### Websites

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[www.europa.eu.int/information\\_society/eeurope/benchmarking/text\\_en.htm](http://www.europa.eu.int/information_society/eeurope/benchmarking/text_en.htm)
- OECD ICT portal  
<http://www.oecd.org/EN/home/0,,EN-home-13-nodirectorate-no-no--13,00.html>
- UNDP Bratislava UNDP, Europe and CIS (Bratislava Service Center)  
[www.ecissurf.org](http://www.ecissurf.org)
- University of Manchester's eGovernment for Development portal  
[www.egov4dev.org/topic1.htm](http://www.egov4dev.org/topic1.htm)
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[www.worldbank.org/wbi/knowledgefordevelopment/](http://www.worldbank.org/wbi/knowledgefordevelopment/)