

# EUROPEAN MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

*INFORMATION SOCIETY  
ACCELERATING  
EUROPEAN INTEGRATION  
WARSAW 11-12 MAY 2000*

## CONFERENCE CONCLUSIONS

May 16, 2000

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On 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> May 2000, at the invitation of the European Commission and the Polish Government, ministers from many European Countries, from the EU presidency and EU Commissioner Liikanen met in Warsaw with representatives of industry, research organisations and financial institutions for a two day meeting, the “European Ministerial Conference: Information Society - Accelerating European Integration”.

### **The Conference recognised:**

1. the conclusions of, and new strategic goal agreed at, the Special European Council of Lisbon, 23<sup>rd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> March 2000, and that these are relevant also to non-EU countries.
2. that the use of ICT in all relevant sectors will have great impacts in accelerating the process of European integration.
3. the significance of the eEurope initiative in seeking to bring the benefits of the ‘Information Society’ within reach of all Europeans.
4. the effectiveness of the collaboration between the EC and Central and East European Countries (CEECs) on IS issues that has continued since the first EU-CEEC IS Forum in Brussels in June 1995.
5. the work performed by the EU-CEEC Joint High Level Committee and the progress made by the CEECs in implementing the recommendations and conclusions of the Third EU-CEEC Information Society Forum (Brussels, October 1997). This progress is documented in two reports produced by the JHLC: a ‘Summary Progress Report’, and the consolidated ‘CEEC Progress Report’.
6. that all of the PHARE countries have grasped the importance of the Information Society and are making significant efforts to put in place national policies and action plans. However, even when bearing in mind the difficulties that some of the countries are experiencing in the reform process, the lack of progress in developing national action plans will be a restraining factor in future economic development.
7. the principle of preservation and promotion of cultural diversity in all its aspects as well as the strategic relevance of ICT tools to support national languages.
8. the progress made in the telecommunications regulatory framework in the EU and in some CEECs. Especially the liberalisation that took place in the EU in 1998.
9. the European Commission’s 1999 Review of communications policy and its recommendation on the unbundling of the local loop.
10. that the rapid growth of the mobile communications market has exceeded expectations and that use of the Internet is growing at an accelerating rate.
11. that accession negotiations with twelve EU candidate countries are now in progress.
12. that effective regulation and rebalancing of tariffs is a vital condition for liberalisation and for the achievement of universal access.

The Conference emphasised the need to continue the common efforts and

**Each CEEC Government is invited to:**

1. revise its National Action plan for the Information Society to take account of the strategic goals outlined at the EU Lisbon Summit and the objectives of the eEurope initiative.
2. complete both the harmonisation of their telecommunications regulatory frameworks with that of the EU as soon as possible and also the liberalisation of the market in order to attract investment.
3. accelerate the adoption of the *acquis communautaire* in all areas crucial to ICT industries and e-Commerce, for example: IPR, Software Directive, digital signature and consumer protection.
4. participate in EU-wide activities intended to alleviate the European ICT Skills shortages, in order to create, maintain and expand a competitive ICT industry in the CEECs.
5. initiate programmes to raise awareness of the Information Society amongst the general public, industry, public administrations and NGOs and foster the uptake of e-business by SMEs.
6. establish electronic means of communication and open access of information between, to and from public administrations to enterprises, NGOs and citizens through the Internet by, for example, providing public access points.
7. ensure interoperability where secure access is provided, for example with health cards and electronic identification.
8. improve the environment for private research investment, research and development partnerships and high technology start-ups, through favourable tax policies, venture capital and EIB support.
9. ensure that all schools, higher education establishments and universities have access to the Internet and multimedia resources, that curricula are adapted to the new challenges and that all teachers are skilled in their usage, and take advantage of public private partnerships and EIB support.
10. ensure that regional development policies, plans and projects include Information Society objectives.
11. take full advantage of the funding offered by EU programmes, for example the PHARE Programme, in support of Information Society projects and to develop its regulatory institutions.

**The European Commission is invited to:**

1. continue the process of integrating the CEECs in the work of the EU IS Forum.
2. continue the work of the EU-CEEC Telecommunications Policy Forum covering regulatory issues.
3. enlarge the participation of CEEC cities in the Global Cities Dialogue and take specific actions to mobilise CEEC cities to participate in it.
4. include EU associated countries in the second phase of the IDA Programme.
5. contribute to awareness raising activities by setting up knowledge networks to facilitate and enable the exchange of best practices in IS applications on a sustainable basis.
6. assist CEEC organisations, particularly industrial enterprises and notably SMEs, in building up capacities for preparing proposals for the 5th Framework Programme and facilitating the formation of joint EU-CEEC project consortia by, for example, putting in place mentoring schemes to link partners from the EU with CEEC organisations.
7. facilitate the connection of the Research and Education Networks of the CEECs to the present TEN-155 interconnection network. The EC IST Programme co-finances the upgrade (code name

GÉANT) of TEN-155 to a world-class network with capacities in the Gigabit/s range. The Research and Education Networks of the CEECs are eligible for participation and funding. The new interconnection network will provide the European research community (EU and CEEC) with a tool of unprecedented quality.

8. develop co-financing schemes for IT infrastructure investment and Information Society Services deployment through established financial instruments.
9. assist CEEC public and private universities, schools and training institutions in preparing proposals for the specific actions on ICT supported learning that the Education Programmes Socrates and Leonardo de Vinci will be calling for in the context of the eLearning initiative.

**The business community in the EU and in the CEECs is invited to:**

1. make available low cost, high-speed interconnected networks for Internet access and foster the development of state-of-the-art information technology and other telecommunication networks as well as the content of those networks.
2. reduce connection costs to foster individual user access and ensure as wide as possible access to the internet through provision of physical connections and user-friendly multilingual interfaces.
3. become pro-active in changing the R&D culture, identifying market driven R&D opportunities, in exploiting R&D results and promoting technology transfer within the CEECs.
4. support the rapid dissemination of standards, increased investment in IT networks, training of teachers and public administrators.
5. improve productivity and competitiveness by using digital technologies and adapting corporate structures to operate in the global market place.

**The European Commission and CEECs are invited jointly to:**

1. monitor progress in candidate countries towards integration with the EU internal market and produce regular status reports. The topics to be monitored include, for example, interconnection charges, Universal Service and affordability; telecommunications tariff rebalancing; local loop unbundling, Internet access costs; cross border telecommunication tariffs; and e-Europe targets.
2. continue the work of the JHLC in reviewing the implementation of the recommendations of the 3rd EU-CEEC IS Forum.
3. extend the JHLC's mandate to agree upon a work programme that leads to the implementation of the conclusions and recommendations of this Ministerial Conference.
4. follow the approach of the eEurope initiative and that the JHLC should take the lead in establishing a work programme for actions in the CEECs in the areas of the eEurope initiative by the end of the year 2000. Progress in defining the work programmes will be reviewed in a JHLC workshop in Hungary during November 2000.

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