

Next steps in Cross-border eRegion Development: Living Lab Perspectives

*Contribution to the meeting by Dr Jože Gričar,
University of Maribor, Slovenia*

We Need Action:

Innovation through Simplification of Cross-border Processes of SMEs

In her speech (http://ec.europa.eu/ireland/press_office/speeches-press_releases/geoghegan-quinn-innovation-summit-mar10_en.htm) in the Lisbon Council Innovation Summit 2010 on March 5, 2010, Mrs. Máire Geoghegan-Quinn, Member of the European Commission, Directorate-General Research and Innovation, has indicated several directions in research and innovation in the European Union:

As I said during my parliamentary hearing, we need to connect up and speed up innovation along the whole policy chain, from research to retail. Equally, more attention should be paid to other forms of innovation, such as business model or management innovation, design and marketing, and services innovation, all of which are largely unrelated to research spending.

We are seeing the emergence of a new type of business, which co-innovates with its customers and even its competitors, and which, rather than relying solely on its own employees, puts some of its data into the public realm, to leverage the talents and insights of the global research community.

The secret to success now lies in collaboration across borders and cultures. At the same time, I want a strong focus on industry-driven, applied research in the next five years. We must strengthen the links between all three sides of the knowledge triangle – higher education, business and research centres.

And public private partnerships are often the best means of mobilising resources to meet our objectives. So, we must build a fully functioning 'Single Market for Innovation.' That means tearing down the barriers to cross-border trade in services, and the cross-border provision of venture capital.

I agree with the sentiment expressed in the e-brief that the old models of industrial planning are largely redundant, and that it makes more sense to focus on giving citizens the skills they need to tap into global innovation networks. This must apply to all citizens. All must have access to the training and education they need. We cannot allow an 'Innovation divide' to open up. We are all innovators now – and the task ahead is to build, not just the "i-conomy", but a cohesive and prosperous "i-society."

Since Mrs. Máire Geoghegan-Quinn is very practical person, a 'doer', someone who wants to bring about real change on the ground, and to make a real difference to people's lives, we would like to contribute to her vision and action.

As proposed in the "EU Strategy for the Danube Region: Position Paper of the Alpe Adria Danube universities Initiative – ALADIN" <http://eLivingLab.org/CrossBordereRegion/EUDanubeRegionStrategy/ALADINPositionPaper> (April 2010), we believe that especially in the extremely dynamic field of eBusiness and enabling eTechnologies, rapid business model innovation and prototyping as applied in the Living Labs approach play a crucial role. Focus should be put on the creation of innovative eServices for SMEs and inter-organisational eServices in a cross-border context, which will help to substantially reduce administrative burdens for SMEs and micro-enterprises.

We are proposing to innovate through the cross-border processes simplification and by implementation of already proven, or new internet-based technologies in the daily operations of the SMEs. A development of simple and cost-effective eSolutions and eServices as the prototypes to be implemented in an experimental mode allowing for learning, improvement and implementation is needed. Engaging the existing Living Labs, and supporting a creation of the new ones in the Danube Region will provide for a needed organizational mechanism. Cooperation with national and international ICT providers will allow for the latest technologies to be tested and implemented in innovative ways. The stakeholders are the SMEs and large organizations as their customers and suppliers; national and local government organizations; national and European Parliament members; universities and research institutions.

The area of our interest is the Danube Region. However, in order to be successful, we would like to learn from other regions, the Nordic and Baltic Region, for example. We would like to contribute to the eRegion creation and share our experience with similar regions: Mediterranean, Black Sea, Caucasus and others. We are seeing the future eDanube Region on the eAmber and eSilk Roads.

Now we need action: Innovation through simplification of cross-border processes of SMEs!