

**Next steps in Cross-border eRegion Development:
Government & European Commission Perspectives**

*Intervention of Jan Komarek,
European Commission, Information Society Directorate General*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the discussion concerning Danube Region on the eSilk & eAmber Roads Meeting. Regions are and will be key players in delivering the benefits of the digital society. Let me mention their growing importance in the European context.

The Europe 2020 strategy provides framework for Commission priorities. This strategy announces seven flagship initiatives.

One of them is Digital Agenda for Europe, which was adopted in May 2010. It mobilises policy, regulatory and financial instruments in view to make the most of Information and Communication Technologies.

They have many implications for all areas of life and work, however we have not used them adequately to address societal challenges. Still Some 30% of Europeans do not fully benefit from the information society, they are not online, they do not have the digital skills. Many of them are elderly, people with low income, low education, or disabled! Such challenges are even more pronounced in the Danube Region. The Digital Agenda highlights the ICT-enabled applications, which bring significant social and economic benefits in areas such as ageing, independent living, quality and sustainability of healthcare, support for groups at risk of exclusion. Local institutions and businesses can make efficient use of existing technologies in these areas, because they are close enough to the end users to mobilize all forces.

Another flagship initiative still to be adopted are European Innovation Partnerships. They will be challenge-driven, therefore focusing on societal benefits and a rapid modernisation of the associated sectors. Their aim will be to

- (i) step up research and development efforts;
- (ii) coordinate investments in demonstration and pilots;
- (iii) anticipate and fast-track any necessary regulation and standards; and
- (iv) mobilise 'demand' in particular through better coordinated public procurement to ensure that any breakthroughs are quickly brought to market.

European Innovation Partnerships will streamline and simplify existing instruments and initiatives. They will complement them with new actions where necessary. This should make it easier for partners to co-operate and achieve better and faster results compared to what exists already.

Both flagship initiatives in combination with the use of structural funds have to deliver the most of the benefits of the information society to the citizens of Europe. In this respect, EC would like to appeal to you, to become the leaders in implementing e-inclusion actions in the Danube Region. We look forward to your support.

Thank you for your attention.