

European Initiative – Danube Region on the eSilk&eAmber Roads
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Brussels, 1st June 2010.

- The "Europe 2020" strategy adopted in March 2010 provides the political framework for future European Commission activities. This strategy announces seven flagship initiatives, including a "Digital Agenda for Europe", which was adopted in May 2010 and defines the main orientations of future EU policy on the Information Society.
- This policy mobilises policy, regulatory and financial instruments in view to make the most of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to transform society and improve quality life. In particular, ICT are an essential part of the response to major societal challenges relating to EU competitiveness and cohesion.
- While high-quality ICT connectivity is a pre-requisite, namely fast and secure broadband, ICT-enabled applications bring significant social and economic benefits in areas such as:
 - Ageing, independent living, well being.
 - Quality and sustainability of healthcare.
 - Social inclusion, support for people with disabilities and groups at risk of exclusion.
 - Education and training (N.B around 30% of EU the population never used the internet).
 - Citizens' interaction with administrations and political participation.
 - Environment and energy management.
- The European Commission has been supporting for years work in these areas, notably through the research programme, the competitiveness and innovation programme (for instance, for some examples of projects on e-inclusion, ageing and disability see http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/einclusion/research/projects/index_en.htm) as well as the structural funds.
- Living labs and cross-border cooperation are very useful approaches when it comes to societal ICT-enabled applications in the areas mentioned above. In this context, the EU strategy for the Danube region provides a good framework to leverage the potential of ICT for socio-economic development.