Newsletter - *Calibrated for Creative Communications*

Vol. 4, no. 1, Spring 2006

Spring is in the Air

Which Way?

Soon after IT STAR was founded on 18 April 2001 in Portoroz, Slovenia, two jokes were cracked at its expense:

- Is it a resurrection of the Habsburg Empire? (the Computer Societies of Austria, Hungary, Italy and Slovenia were first to join.)
- Is it just another society that sponsors "scientific tourism"?

It's still not clear who will have the last laugh, but 5 years down the road (in April 2006 IT STAR will celebrate its 5th Anniversary), the membership has grown from 4 to 13 societies and there are another 3 societies that have indicated their wish to be considered. As to "the scientific tourism" bit, it's human nature to be "curious", besides, the two annual face-to-face meetings are a good way to identify common interests and seek partnership in one of the fastest growing regions of Europe. Additionally, there are agreed IT STAR financial arrangements, which provide for the participation of representatives from the smallest societies without the heavy burden of expensive travel to "exotic" faraway places.

It might be that the IT STAR "no frills" attitude is too frugal for the jetsetters of the region. However, pragmatism in Central, Eastern and Southern Europe (CESE) is currently highly valued and "Economics" is the neural center and norm for priority setting. Therefore, it is important for IT STAR to be seen as a provider of a range of quality services, and not as an Academic Club.

The countries of the CESE region are experiencing an impressive economic upheaval. The CEE forecasts for 2006 and 2007 indicate that GDP growth (%) will remain more than 2 times higher compared to the EU-15, while inflation and unemployment, with some minor exceptions, will be comparable to the EU-15. The 10 new EU members have integrated smoothly. Bulgaria and Romania are expected to become EU members in January 1, 2007. Croatia and Turkey would probably be the next in line. EU negotiations with the countries in the Western Balkans and with other CEE countries are under way.

For the new and future EU-CESE members, the issues related to the Information Society are of critical importance. Most of these countries are ranked within the "High" and "Upper" categories of the ITU Digital Access Index (*see p. 9, Vol 3, no.2, Winter 2005/2006 issue of this newsletter*).

Much more effort and synergies, however, are necessary to sustain a competitive economy and catch-up with the leading countries.

IT STAR representatives:
Austria/OCG - V.Risak, **Bulgaria**/BAS - K.Boyanov, **Croatia**/CITS - M.Frkovic, **Czech Rep.**/CSKI - J.Stuller, **Greece**/GCS - S. Katsikas, **Hungary**/NJSZT – B.Domolki, **Italy**/AICA – G.Occhini, **Lithuania**/LIKS - E.Telesius, **Macedonia**/MASIT - P.Indovski, **Romania**/ATIC – V. Baltac, **Serbia & Montenegro**/JISA – G.Dukic, **Slovakia**/SSCS- I.Privara, **Slovenia**/SSI - N. Schlamberger.

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With this in mind, IT STAR is ideally positioned to play a leading role in CESE on matters related to ICTs and the Information Society:

- For a relatively short period it was successful in establishing itself (*see Snapshot – p. 11*)
- Its members are the leading ICT Societies in the region;
- It has a cross-society outreach and the capacity to involve in its activity government, academic and business leaders and to offer a network for interaction at the national, regional and Pan-European levels.

The issue is not whether IT STAR is relevant, as there is certainly a great need of an organization representing a cross-section of CESE civil society that promotes a broadly targeted agenda on the Information Society. The issue is whether the Association's member societies are ready to invest more effort in supporting IT STAR further downstream from its current place as a meeting point and a clearing house. ■

Letters to the Editor

[We publish below some extracts from letters to the Editor with regard to the last issue of our NL. Your comments and suggestions are most welcome. The coordinates are given on p.1]

"We have an AICA Bulletin sent monthly on-line to more than 10,000 people. We could inform of the availability of the issue giving them the item index, so they can access your site if interested."

Giulio Occhini, IT

"I looked at the template of the new "IT STAR NEWSLETTER". It looks very nice. I propose you use Verdana or Arial instead of Times as standard font. On screens, especially with low resolution, fonts without serifs are more legible."

Veith Risak, AT

[The decision to use TNR was based on the fact that many of the leading magazines, journals, etc. actually use "Times". We hope societies and individuals will subscribe to the hard copy version or print a copy (rather than read it online), but in all cases, following this suggestion, we will revisit the matter -PN.] ■

EDITORIAL POLICY

This Newsletter aims to maintain a world-class standard in providing timely, accurate and interesting material on ICT and Information Society activities from the perspectives of Central, Eastern and Southern Europe (CESE) within a global context. It strives to facilitate the information and communication flow within the region and internationally by supporting a recognized platform and networking media and thus promoting and improving the visibility and activities of the IT STAR Association.

The entities and stakeholders whose interests this newspaper is addressing are

- IT STAR's member societies and members;
- ICT professionals, practitioners and institutions across the broad range of activities related to ICTs in government, business, academia and the public sector in general;
- International organizations.

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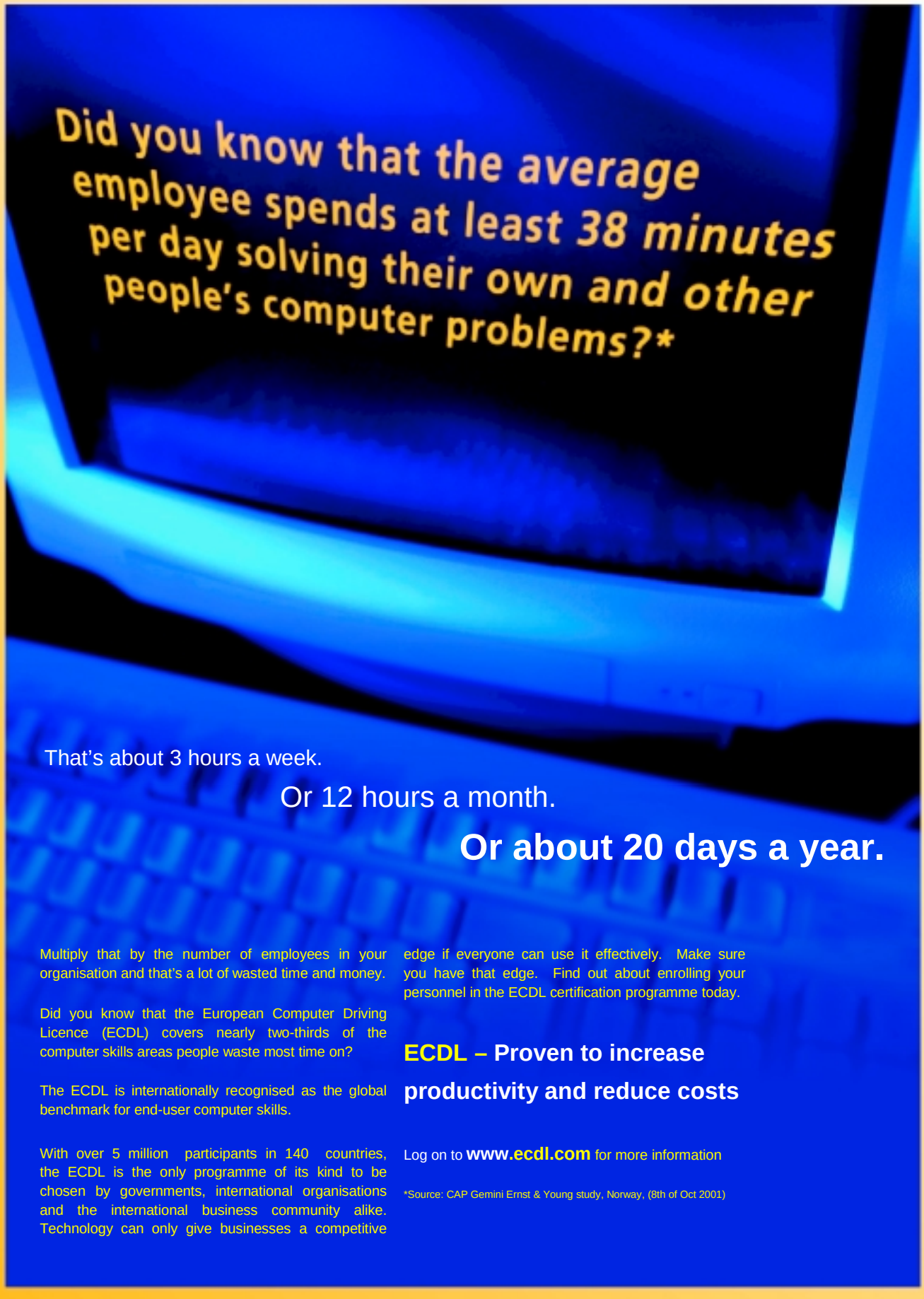
Special arrangements for the production and circulation of the Newsletter can be negotiated.

The newsletter is circulated to the leading CESE ICT societies and professionals, as well as to other societies and IT professionals internationally. Everyone interested in CESE developments and working in the ICT field is welcome to contribute with original material. Proposals for articles and material for the Newsletter should be sent two months before the publication date to editor@starbus.org. ■

Articles Welcome

This newsletter is circulated to the leading ICT societies and professionals in Central, Eastern and Southern Europe (CESE), as well as to many other societies and IT professionals around the world. Everyone interested in CESE developments and working in the ICT field is welcome to contribute with original material. Proposals for articles should be sent to editor@starbus.org



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*Source: CAP Gemini Ernst & Young study, Norway, (8th of Oct 2001)

The Advent of the Information Society

WSIS 2005 – World Summit of the Information Society

TUNIS COMMITMENT

During the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Tunis, 16-18 November 2005, the participating counties adopted a Tunis Commitment and a Tunis Agenda for the Information Society [both at http://www.itu.int/wsis/newsroom/press_releases/wsis/2005/18nov.html].

The main commitment is to work towards a people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The document outlines principles, issues and priorities, such as:

- Assert freedom of expression and free flow of information, ideas, and knowledge;
- Create synergies and reciprocity in the activities of governments, the private sector, civil society, the United Nations and other international organizations;
- Ensure wide access to information sharing and creation of knowledge;
- Develop awareness of the fundamental role of ICTs in economic growth as important instruments for sustainable development ;
- Develop human capacity and create ICT applications and digital content in local languages;
- Support activities for bridging the digital divide, taking into account different levels of development, so as to reach internationally-agreed development goals;
- Create public systems of information on laws and regulations, envisaging a wider development of public access points and supporting the broad availability of this information.
- Support equitable and affordable access to ICTs so that their benefits are truly inclusive**.**
- Recognize and provide for the special needs of marginalized and vulnerable groups of society with special attention to the particular needs of people from all countries;
- Ensure the long-term preservation of the digital information;
- Develop partnership with the private sector, based on open or interoperable standards affordable and accessible to all, available anywhere and anytime, to anyone and on any device, leading to a ubiquitous network;
- Protect and promote cultural diversity, as well as cultural identities;
- Promote with the utilization of ICTs peace, and prevent conflict.

Heads of delegations for WSIS ' 05 from the countries of the IT STAR Region

AUSTRIA: H.E. Mr Franz **MORAK**, State Secretary, Federal Chancellery, Vienna
BULGARIA: H.E. Mr Nikolay **VASSILEV**, Minister, Public Administration and Administrative Reform, i.slavova@government.bg
CROATIA: H.E. Mr Stjepan **MESIC**, President, President of the Republic of Croatia, protokol@predsjednik.hr
CZECH REP: H.E. Ms Dana **BÉROVÁ**, Minister, Ministry of Informatics
GREECE: H.E. Mr Michael **LIAPIS**, Minister of Transport and Communications, Delegation of Greece, yp@yme.gov.gr
HUNGARY: H.E. Mr Kálmán **KOVÁCS**, Minister, Ministry of Informatics and Communications
ITALY: H.E. Mr Lucio **STANCA**, Minister, Ministère de l'Innovation et des Technologies, mission.italy@ties.itu.int
LITHUANIA: Mr Antanas Zenonas **KAMINSKAS**, Chancellor of the Government, a.kaminskas@lrvk.lt
ROMANIA: Mr Zsolt **NAGY**, Minister, Delegation of Romania, zsolt.nagy@mcti.ro
SERBIA & MONTENEGRO: H.E. Mr Zoran **SAMI**, President, Assembly of Serbia and Montenegro
SLOVAKIA: Mr Pavol **PROKOPOVIC**, Minister, valentina.michalkova@telecom.gov.sk
SLOVENIA: Dr Janez **MOZINA**, State Secretary

The Role of ICT in Asian Growth: Implications for Europe

by Annaflavia Bianchi

[A Bianchi is an Italian economist currently working as a senior research fellow at EC DG JRC-IPTS Institute for Prospective Technological Studies ICT Unit, Seville, Spain. She was previously busy at Telecom Italia research centre in Venice, at CURDS, Centre for Urban and Regional Development Studies, University of Newcastle, UK, at ASTER (Agency for Technology Transfer of Emilia-Romagna) and at Nomisma, a private Italian research institute, both in Bologna, Italy. Her main research interests lie in the fields of development factors at the micro- and macro-economic level, local economies, international integration and technology dynamics.]

After two recent research projects[1] exploring the nature of Information Society developments across the Enlarged Europe, the ICT research team of the Institute for Prospective Technological Studies, a research centre of the European Commission based in Seville (Spain), is now involved in a study with a different geographical scope – Eastern and Southern Asia – but

[1] See both *TIGERS* and *New Entrants* project at http://fiste.jrc.es/pages/enlargement.htm.

with a very similar set of questions: What is the nature, and the conditions for *success* in a Global Knowledge-based Economy? Is the observable Asian economic growth only a threat to Europe, or does it offer many other, positive, implications?

Four trends that change our world

Such questions find their relevance within present and future trends that determine change at world level. In line with the work already accomplished by the team of European and Asian research institutions involved in this project[2], four major trends have served to map out the most relevant transformations:

- the emergence of the Global Knowledge-based Economy, wearing a very important informatisation component[3], where ICT are to be seen as tools to access and consume information contents;
- the long-awaited Convergence of technologies and markets implying a refocus from technology supply to demand for applications, which carries broad implications, such as a new level of complexity of interactions, becoming of the many-to-many kind; a spread of use from the 'high-tech' product arena to remaining sectors of advanced industrial economies and a spread of input sources, including those for 'technology' but also for the market-based areas of knowledge, as part of the new demands on 'dynamic capabilities';
- the renewal of the Regional world-wide base, from the three dominating economic areas (USA/Japan/EU) to the rise of China (mainly) and India (perhaps): the effects of scale and market power seem to be evident in the overshadowing impact of the rise of two new superpowers;
- The transformation of the political economy base towards collaboration with competition, the rise of new integrative roles for multinational companies, as key drivers of new organisational structures goes in parallel with interactions within government to prepare 'joined-up policy' to meet complex demands through 'internal alignment' or 'external alignment' involving additionally new kinds of interactions between states and markets.

The conditions and the nature of (Asian) success

The study launched today by IPTS focuses on a number of selected areas in Asia to better understand the potential role of information and communication technologies (ICT) in generating both economic and social development in Asian areas which are competing globally.

This generic question can be declined in the two following issues:

- What are today the **conditions** for high economic growth – especially when based on the use or production of ICTs under globalisation conditions,
- What are the essential **changes** observed and how these changes affect **society and the quality of life** in the short and longer terms. Hence, what is the nature of the change?

The basic assumption of this study is that the conditions and nature of *success* result from the balance reached between two types of tensions: on the one hand, the global and the local sphere, and on the other hand, public policy and business strategy, turning them into leverage for economic growth, social equity, quality of life and individual satisfaction.

Using the fairly consolidated theoretical and empirical literature on new growth theory[4], systems of innovation[5], governance[6], system dynamics[7] approaches, and social systems of accumulation,[8] a set of countries were selected and will be examined, each with a dedicated thematic focus:

- In **China** private companies dominate the production of ICT hardware but the state remains in control of the still low diffusion of internet technologies, raising issues of technological/market convergence and new modes of public/private governance. On top, its regions show very different diffu-

[2] The research consortium is coordinated by SPRU – University of Sussex, and involves TNO ICT and Fraunhofer ISI.

[3] We refer here to the intensification of the production and dissemination of information and knowledge based on ICT usage, and to the wide-scale usage of ICTs in all spheres of economic, political and cultural life meant to enhance the efficiency of information and knowledge usage.

[4] Romer, P. M. 1986. "Increasing Returns and Long Run Growth," *Journal of Political Economy* 94: 1002-1037. Romer, P. M. 1990. "Endogenous Technological Change," *Journal of Political Economy* 98: S71-102. Lucas, R. E. 1988. "On the Mechanics of Economic Development," *Journal of Monetary Economics* 22: 3-42.

[5] Dosi G. 'The Nature of the Innovative Process'. In: Soete L. *Technical Change and Economic Theory* (Pinter Publishers, London, 1988, p222); Edquist C. *Systems of Innovation: Technologies, Institutions and Organisations*. (Pinter Publishers, London, 1997.

[6] A working definition of Governance is provided by The Governance Working Group of the International Institute of Administrative Sciences 1996. "Governance refers to the process whereby elements in society wield power and authority, and influence and enact policies and decisions concerning public life, and economic and social development. Governance is a broader notion than government, whose principal elements include the constitution, legislature, executive and judiciary. Governance involves interaction between these formal institutions and those of civil society. Governance has no automatic normative connotation. However, typical criteria for assessing governance in a particular context might include the degree of legitimacy, representativeness, popular accountability and efficiency with which public affairs are conducted. "

[7] Forrester, J. W., 1961. *Industrial Dynamics*. Waltham, MA: Pegasus Communications.

[8] Kotz D.; McDonough T.; Reich M, *Social Systems of Accumulation*, Cambridge and New York: 1994.

sion rates in ICTs generation, production and consumption, with potential significant social costs.

- **India's** fame as one of the world's leading centres for outsourced software and services is now challenged by other countries on low-cost advantages. India must search for new ways of maintaining competitive advantage, perhaps in upgrading processes.
- **South Korean** development has been largely driven by its large and diversified companies (chaebol) such as Samsung and LG. Is this strategy still consistent with global dynamics and corporate governance?
- **Taiwan** developed largely on the basis of OEM[9] production by numerous small companies, but as labour and other costs have risen the labour-intensive activities have been outsourced to other countries, especially Mainland China (with political consequences) and Taiwan is trying to move upstream into higher value-added products and technologies.
- **Singapore** developed as an 'island economy' or city-state, making use of foreign direct investment and foreign-owned companies 'leveraged' by the state to establish its own knowledge-based economy. Now the rise of China threatens this strategy and generates a search for new 'niches' for content development.

What can European countries learn from this?

The study envisages three domains that might offer useful elements for strategic thinking and policy-making in Europe:

- What could be the lessons learnt from present Asian successes and failures, taking in account their relative transferability, particularly in terms of policy initiatives?
- What will become the world positioning and role of Europe, and of each of its Member States, in terms of competitiveness at a global level?
- How do we, as Europeans, assess the Asian societal transformations, developed under technological and growth pressures, and how do we benchmark those in the debates about the European societal model on Growth, Cohesion and Sustainability?

All three issues can offer dedicated answers for the variety of country sizes and competitive conditions which characterise the European Union. This even more so, if we consider that at the regional level, as in most member States, regional Governments also participate with the national ones in the formulation of IS strategy, Innovation, Economic policy, etc., or to policies relating to social inclusion, employment and education. ■

[9] OEM means Original Equipment Manufacture, one of the organizational innovations attached to the electronics sector.

Book Review

[The publication on Prospects for a Knowledge-based Society in the New Member States and Candidate Countries (ISBN 973-27-1319-4) was published in January 2006. A Chapter is based on the IT STAR-FISTERA joint workshop in Prague (Oct' 2004 and there are some further contributions by IT STAR activists. The volume is compiled by the FISTERA network as a contribution to the analysis of the development and requirements for IST foresight at a European level. An online version is available at http://fistera.jrc.es/pages/books/Content%20NMS%20book/NMS%20book.htm. The Editors were kind to present the following material for the NL] ■

Prospects for a Knowledge-based Society in the New Member States and Candidate Countries

by Corina PASCU and Ramón COMPAÑÓ
European Commission, Joint Research Centre, Institute for Prospective Technological Studies

C. Pascu is currently a scientific officer in JRC/IPTS, carrying prospective research on ICT policy related areas. She has been running the FISTERA Thematic Network - a pioneering ERA-based project aimed at bringing together national foresight exercises in Information Society Technologies. She assisted the Commission as expert-evaluator in the EC's IST programmes since 1997. Previously, she managed the PHARE TEMPUS programme in Romania and spent some years in research on IST and teaching computer science and telecommunications classes.

R. COMPAÑÓ has worked on micro-electronics and nanotechnology for most of his career, having joined the Commission in 1993. He was initially in DG XII (now DG RTD) and then DG III (ENTR) when the Esprit Programme was based there, moving to the Future and Emerging Technologies (FET) Unit in DG INFSO in 1999. He transferred to Gérard Comyn's Strategy Unit in the same DG at the end of 2002. In the ICT Unit he is working on FISTERA and other areas of the Foresight on IS.

Many experts are confident that the ten States that joined the European Union on 1st May 2004 are willing to take full advantage of the benefits of the ICT revolution and have the capacity to do so. They also believe that these countries will soon catch up with the "core economies". Some experts, however, point out that the differentials in their economies and levels of technological development pose considerable challenges in both the short and medium term. Nevertheless, proper

development and promotion of the ICT industry and the use of IST will contribute positively to critical socio-economic challenges. Effective implementation of key e-applications by local ICT industries and governments could make this happen. Different national contexts, however, need different remedies and these need to be investigated. The FISTERA[10] network assessed a series of prospective studies on Information Society Technologies (IST) in the New Member States and Candidate Countries (NMS & CCs) and consulted numerous national experts. This book summarises FISTERA's work. The intention of the authors was not to deliver a complete description of all aspects of the IST in these countries, but to complement the insights gathered in previous publications[11] and synthesise those insights, which are relevant at European level. Information from national foresight initiatives has been included. Few fully-fledged foresight exercises have been completed in the NMS & CCs so far, with the notable exceptions of Hungary and the Czech Republic. In addition, Romania and Poland have recently launched similar activities and other countries are planning to do so in the near future. This seems to indicate that foresight is becoming an increasingly important instrument for strategic policy making in the NMS & CCs, reflecting the wish to use new methods to enhance transparency and active participation in the decision-making process. Today's finished prospective studies have made a serious analysis of the current and future IST capacity in industry and academia in their respective countries. They have assessed policy options in the framework of national R&D and innovation strategies. Each country's analysis of its position with respect to other European countries and its future development towards an Information Society (IS) and Knowledge Society (KS) varies, but there are also some interesting commonalities. For instance, they all stress the importance of facing up to the challenges of building their IS/KS in terms of dedicating the necessary time, skills and education. Interestingly, they also agree on the importance of a number of applications fields, i.e. those for health, education and e-Government. Chapter 2 presents an overview of critical IST issues for all the New Member States and Candidate Countries. This is complemented in Chapter 3 by the findings of a Workshop on "ICT and the Eastern European Dimension", organised by FISTERA and IT STAR to identify challenges and bottlenecks specific to the NMS & CCs. Poland and Romania were invited to talk about specific IST issues in Chapter 4 and 5 respectively. In these times of globalisation and the transition from the Information Society to the Knowledge Society, we believe that Europe is currently at a turning point. Decisions made now will shape the future. It is hoped this book will contribute to the discussion on which actions should be taken so that Europe can fully benefit from the forthcoming "Golden Age"[12] of the current ICT revolution. ■

[10] FISTERA stands for Foresight in Information Society Technologies in the European Research Area.

[11] FISTERA book on 'Visions on the future of IS in an Enlarged Europe', C. Pascu , Fl. Gh. Filip (eds)., Sept. 2005 ISBN 973-27-1199-X. See also other background research on ICT & Enlargement available at http://fiste.jrc.es

Joke of the Issue

The European Commission has announced an agreement that English will be the only official language of the European Community (EU) rather than German (the other possibility). This proposal was strongly supported by the French representatives.

As part of the negotiations, Her Majesty's Government conceded that English spelling had some room for improvement, and has accepted a 5-year phase-in of new rules that would apply to the language and reclassify it as Euro-English or Deutch-Frenglish, to be more precise.

The agreed plan is as follows:

- During the first year, the soft "c" will be replaced by "s". Sertainly this will make the sivil servants jump with joy. Simultaneously, the hard "c" will be replased by "k". This shall klear up konfusion and keyboards kan now have one less letter;

- During the second year there will be growing publik enthusiasm when the troublesome "ph" will be replased by "f". It will reduse "fotograf" by 20%;

- During the 3rd year, publik akseptanse of the new spelling kan be expekted to reach the stage where more komplikated changes are possible. Governments will enkourage the removal of double letters, which have always ben a deterent to akurate speling. Also, al wil agre that the horible mes of the silent "e" in the language is disgrasful, and they shall eliminat them;

- By year 4, peopl wil be reseptiv to lingwistik korektions such as replasing "th" with "z" and "w" with "v" (saving mor keyboard spas);

- During ze fifz year, ze unesesary "o" kan be dropd from vords kontaining "ou", and similar changes vud of kors be aplid to ozer kombinations of leters. After zis fifz year, ve vil hav a reli sensibil riten styl. Zer vil be no mor trubls or difikultis and evrivun vil find it ezi to understand ech ozer.

And ze drem vil finali kum tru!!!

[Visit www.starbus.org/jokes *for the best anecdotes on the Internet!]* ■

[12] In, "Technological Revolutions and Financial Capital: The Dynamics of Bubbles and Golden Ages" (2002), the economist Carlota Pérez argues that the full deployment of the ICT technological revolution is still to come.

Member Society News

Bulgaria, Romania bid for Telecom Europe 2007

During its March 20 meeting in Hong Kong, the ITU TELECOM Board will make recommendations on the venue selection for the ITU TELECOM EUROPE 2007 regional event. Candidates to host the event include Sofia, Bulgaria, Bucharest, Romania and Geneva, Switzerland. Bulgaria and Romania are expected to join the European Union in January 2007. More information on the event is available from the International Telecommunications Union at http://www.itu.int

Croatia - Croatian Information Technology Society (HIZ) celebrates 30th Anniversary

Since its foundation in 1975, HIZ is an independent vocational association of institutions interested in the development, promotion and advancement of application of information and related technologies in Croatia. This basic goal remains and HIZ is an umbrella association of information science experts, companies, institutions and associations in Croatia, active in the field of information and communication technologies. The association is self-financed with more than 800 institutional members and over 2,000 registered members.

A festive celebration of the **30th anniversary of the Croatian Information Technology Society** was held on Friday, December 30 2005 at the Croatian Chamber of Commerce.

Hungary - John von Neumann Computer Society (NJSZT)

In 2005, NJSZT cooperated with three other civil organizations in the preparation of a document entitled **Info-communication Industry Policy Recommendations** and intended as a contribution to the creation of the National Development Plan for the EU planning period of 2007-2013.

ECDL continues to be a big success in Hungary with some 400 accredited Test Centers, over 220,000 registrants and 120,000 diplomas. It is now a nationally accredited training for public servants and teachers. Secondary school students may get ECDL as part of their final examinations (matura). The training and testing program for people with special needs is also developing well. A new ECDL module on digital photography has been developed on the initiative of NJSZT (see http://www.ecdl.hu/).

A successful initiative of the John von Neumann Computer Society is the **Software Technology Forum**. Started in mid 2002, this quarterly event under the scientific leadership of *Les Belady*, incorporates a talk by an internationally renowned expert on an actual software technology topic, followed by a local presentation describing related activities in Hungary. (see http://www.inf.u-szeged.hu/stf/)

In July 2005, the **12th Central-European Olympiad in Informatics** was organized by NJSZT in the historic town of Sarospatak in northeastern Hungary with the participation of over 50 students from 13 countries.(see details in http://ceoi.inf.elte.hu/ceoi2005/).

In November 2005, two important **international conferences** were organized in Hungary: European Software Process Improvement and Innovation Conference (EuroSpi) and the International Symposium on Business Information Systems (ISBIS'2005).

There is much interest in a newly established special interest group on Embedded and Ambient Systems.

The most important event of 2006 will be the IX National Neumann Congress, to be held in Györ on June 27-29.

Slovenia – Slovenian Society INFORMATIKA (SSI)

Forthcoming 2006 events: 30th Anniversary of SSI and Days of Slovenian Informatics, Portoroz, 19 – 21 April 2006. ■

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EU Candidate Bulgaria – IS Profile

Bulgaria has a past record of active partnership on IT matters within intergovernmental organizations and has some important contributions to international IT cooperation, including as a founding member of UNESCO's Intergovernmental Informatics Program, initiator of the International Olympiad on Informatics and other. The country's most important international objective is EU membership in January 2007. Once this is achieved there is no reason to suspect that it will not integrate quickly. Future "visions" of an affluent Bulgaria would not be sustainable if they do not incorporate the Information Society paradigm. Bulgaria is located on a geographical crossroads and that has important implications with respect to information and communication. The political situation in the Balkans has more-or-less stabilized and the EU-membership of Bulgaria and Romania will be a further confidence building factor. The country's economy is currently expanding and there are some major international projects in the pipeline which have direct positive influence on IS in Bulgaria.

Information Society Technologies (ISTs) are widely recognized as important instruments for the future development of the country. The government, the private sector, NGOs and individuals alike, are in agreement on their strategic importance. There are constraints of economic nature but it would be important to stress that there is a developing momentum and a qualified workforce as a foundation to build upon. On the other hand, there is a vast digital divide between rural and urban population and between age groups.

The conclusions of the IT STAR-FISTERA workshop on "ICT and the Eastern European Dimension", Prague '04, adequately apply in the case of Bulgaria. With the current projections for stable economic growth, a solid track record towards EU-membership, it should be expected that Bulgaria's IS indicators will improve.

A significant asset in the IS development is the high percentage of the Bulgarian population with tertiary education. According to the National Statistical Institute, it increased from 18.1% in 1998 to 21.6% in 2003, while the population with upper secondary education increased from 47.8% to 49.8% during the same period. 71.4% of the population between 25 and 64 years has a higher or upper secondary education which shows a slightly higher value than the 2002 EU-15 average.

To augment our survey we sought the opinion of **Acad. Blagovest Sendov**, presently Ambassador of Bulgaria to Japan, mathematician and computer scientist (also past Rector of Sofia University and former President of the Bulgarian academy of Sciences Past Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Bulgarian Parliament:

Q.1. What scenarios could you envisage for the future development of Bulgaria and in particular, the Information Society in the country?

B.S. - As a member of the European Union from the beginning of 2007, the future of Bulgaria and the Information Society in the country will follow the character and the standards of this Union. As a country with traditionally very good education in mathematics and informatics, Bulgaria will help to improve the competitiveness of the Union in the world information market. A next breakthrough in information technology needs originality and creativeness. I am sure that many intellectual grandsons and granddaughters of John Atanasoff will be born in Bulgaria during the 21st century.

Q.2. What are the main challenges, drivers and threats to the Knowledge Society in Bulgaria?

B.S. -The main drivers are the talent and intellectual gift of the Bulgarian people, combined with good education and wisdom. The threats are common for all people in Europe and the World. Knowledge and wisdom have to go hand in hand. Wisdom without knowledge is powerless, and knowledge without wisdom may be dangerous.

Q.3. How would you summarize the Bulgarian self-perception?

B.S. - Bulgaria is a country with old culture and self-confidence. We have to work very hard to become a respected Member of the European Union.

[This material was prepared during the project work on NMS &CC IS Insight -. see http://fistera.jrc.es/pages/books/Content%20NMS%20book/NMS%20book.htm and *article by Prof. A. Skulimowsk in IT STAR Newsletter Vol. 3.no. 2. Winter 2005/06]* ■

DNEVI SLOVENSKE INFORMATIKE 2006
Portorož, 19. - 21. april 2006

YOUR INVITATION TO

http://www.dsi2006.si

Venue: Grand Hotel Bernandin http://www.h-bernardin.si/en/home
Portoroz http://www.portoroz.si/EN/
April 19 – 21, 2006

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE SLOVENIAN SOCIETY "INFORMATIKA"

Dear Friends,

I am proud to present the Annual Conference of the Slovenian Society INFORMATIKA, to take place in the agreeable Mediterranean environment of Portoroz, Slovenia. This year's conference is the fourteenth in a row, which is also an achievement in its own right. The content of the conference is tuned to informatics as a basis for professional excellence. The event is recognized as the most important professional IT happening in Slovenia, a witness of which is the remarkable number of papers that were received to date - over 140. It is true that the conference is a national event, and hence most - but not all - presentations will be delivered in Slovenian. However, there are notable invited foreign speakers and it is not inconceivable that non-Slovenian speaking participants could profit from being there, all the more given that all papers will be available in the Proceedings.

On this page there is information on the event and the venue. Further information is available at **http://www.dsi2006.si/Urnik.asp** and this will be regularly updated. However, if you need further assistance to decide to visit the event I will be glad to provide the necessary information.

Sincerely,
Niko Schlamberger

SNAPSHOT

REGIONAL ICT ASSOCIATION IN CENTRAL, EASTERN & SOUTHERN EUROPE

Type of organization

Regional non-governmental and no-profit professional association in the ICT field.

Web-site

www.starbus.org

Date and place of establishment

18 April **2001**, Portoroz, Slovenia

Membership

Countries represented (*see next page for societies*), year of accession, representatives

- Austria (2001) V. Risak, G. Kotsis
- Bulgaria (2003) K. Boyanov
- Croatia (2002) M. Frkovic, M. Glasenhart
- Czech Republic (2001) O. Stepankova, J. Stuller
- Greece (2003) S. Katsikas
- Hungary (2001) B. Domolki
- Italy (2001) G. Occhini
- Lithuania (2003) E. Telesius
- Macedonia (2003) P. Indovski
- Romania (2003) V. Baltac
- Serbia and Montenegro (2003) G. Dukic
- Slovakia (2001) I. Privara, B. Rovan
- Slovenia (2001) N. Schlamberger

Statutes

IT STAR Charter
(http://www.starbus.org/download/charter.pdf)
adopted on 23 October 2004 by the IT STAR Business Meeting in Prague, the Czech Republic.

Mission

"To be the leading regional information and communication technology organization in Central, Eastern and Southern Europe which promotes, assists and increases the activities of its members and encourages and promotes regional and international cooperation for the benefit of its constituency, the region and the international ICT community."

Governance

IT STAR is governed according to the letter of its Charter by the **Business Meeting** of MS representatives, which convenes biannually:

2005 Herceg Novi, **Serbia & Montenegro** (June)
Vienna, **Austria** (November)

2004 Chioggia, **Italy** (May)
Prague, **the Czech Republic** (October)

2003 Opatija, **Croatia** (June)
Budapest, **Hungary** (October)

2002 Portoroz, **Slovenia** (April)
Bratislava, **Slovakia** (November)

2001 Portoroz, **Slovenia** (April)
Como, **Italy** (September)

Coordinators

2003 – Niko Schlamberger
2001 – 2003 Plamen Nedkov
(IT STAR Advisor since 2003)

Major Activities

- IT Professional Pool Database (in progress)
- Establishment of an IT STAR Event Series (in progress)
- Workshop and publication on National Experiences related to the EU's 5th and 6th FP http://www.starbus.org/download/supplement.pdf
- Joint IT STAR – FISTERA Workshop and Publication on ICT and the Eastern European Dimension http://fistera.jrc.es/pages/roadshows/prague%2004/FINAL%20REPORTrevised.pdf
- Support to Member Society initiatives and events

Periodicals

The IT STAR Newsletter (nl.starbus.org) published quarterly. ■

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