

DECLARATION

ON LOCAL AND REGIONAL INFORMATION SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT

We, representatives of local and regional governments and their associations of V4 countries and other Acceding countries and the current Member States of the EU,

gathered together on the eve of the European Union enlargement – one of the most important opportunities for the European Union at the beginning of the 21st century – in the cities of Prague and Hradec Kralove, on the occasion of the ISSS/LORIS 2004 (Internet in Public Administration/Local and Regional Information Society) and DIS-V4 (Developing Information Society in V4 Countries) conferences held between March 28 and 30, 2004,

AWARE that

the potentials of information and communication technologies (ICTs) should be further exploited in order to achieve the goals of the Lisbon strategy to make the European Union the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy with improved employment and social cohesion by 2010.

CONVINCED that

It is at the local level that the impact of ICT on government and citizens relationships, community building and social and economic development and inclusion, can be the most effective. Local and regional governments play the irreplaceable role in the modernisation of public administration and in the provision of services for business and their citizens.

The precondition for this is an active approach, dialogue and cooperation between all levels of public administration – local and regional governments, national governments and EU institutions. We place special emphasis on collaboration between European networks and self-government associations, and mutual cooperation between towns and regions, especially in countries with geographic, historical and cultural proximity, as well as on a wider international scale.

RECOGNISING

The principles for an approach to the Information Society adopted by the international community, in particular:

- *e*Europe 2005 Action Plan – Information Society for All
- Declaration of the World Summit of Cities and Local Authorities on Information Society (Lyon, December 2003)
- Conclusions of the European Ministerial Conference on the Information Society “New Opportunities for Growth in an Enlarged Europe” (Budapest, February 2004)
- Helsinki Declaration – the base for Global Cities Dialogue (Helsinki, 1999)
- A Charter of European eRights – Public Administration on the Information and Knowledge Society (TeleCities/Eurocities, Porto, November 2003)

- The EISCO 2003 Communication “Modernising Local and Regional Public Service Delivery in the Framework of eEurope 2005” adopted by ELANET (CEMR) (Aalborg, November 2003)
- Memorandum of Understanding adopted at the ISSS/LORIS 2002 Conference (Hradec Kralove, March 2002)
- Prague Declaration on Information Society Development (ISSS/LORIS 2003, Prague, March 2003).

COMMIT OURSELVES to

- **Support information society development** in close collaboration between local and regional authorities and cooperation with national governments and EU institutions and the European networks backing up our efforts in the interest of citizens and our administrations.
- **Improve the quality and availability of services through modernising self-governments** and using the e-Government principles, enhance the effectiveness and transparency of public administration, as well as foster the development of democratic processes and active civic society. Our objective is to further develop the conditions for economic and knowledge growth.
- **Strive for more comprehensive involvement of citizens** in co-decision-making on communal policy and in municipal life. One of the ways of attaining these goals is to use new technologies and working methods that will best contribute to improving the overall quality of life in a community.
- **Monitor actively the objectives and practices of EU and national strategies** for information society development and public administration modernisation, with the use of ICTs. **To take part in the discussion during their preparation** so that the role of local and regional governments, their goals and needs are sufficiently taken into consideration.
- **State the objectives and priorities of EU and national strategies into our own policies** and plans (e-Strategy) based on the analysis of the actual situation and possibilities.
- **Ensure effective methods for the preparation, financing and management of projects**, to secure feedback and to set indicators for monitoring and evaluation of the results.
- **Provide more and better training opportunities** for the upgrading of the e-skills of the public administration´ workforce.
- **Provide available on-line services** for all citizens and businesses, **address the development of people’s basic skills to use and benefit from ICTs** and play an active role in the knowledge-based economy;
- **Contribute to avoiding digital divide** in the society and ensure accessibility to electronic services for handicaped citizens;
- **Ensure to increase broadband coverage** in under-served areas and ensure **a safer on-line world**;
- **Use, where appropriate, combination of financial resources**, including instruments of the EU, such as Structural Funds, IST and other programmes supporting research and

innovation in the field of the Information Society at regional and local level, *eContent*, *eTEN*, IDA programmes and others;

- **Create conditions for effective cooperation** with other public administration bodies, scientific and educational institutions, the private sector and consortia, which implement citizens' developing initiatives towards increase of life quality and the scale of local employment. To strengthen cooperation between public administration subjects, primarily towns, municipalities, regions and national associations and international networks for exchange of experience, preparation and implementation of joint projects, evaluation and bench learning/benchmarking methodologies, as well as for promotion and replication of best practices.

CONCLUDE that

To fulfil the above mentioned goals and commitments, it is necessary within a short-term perspective **to carry out the following activities:**

- **To draw up and update information strategies and the respective implementation plans** of local and regional governments and their associations, as well as citizens initiatives groups, taking into account the objectives of the EU and national governments for information society development. Pursuant to specific conditions and priorities, to implement programmes and projects in practice, to monitor the fulfilling of targets and give publicity to the results.
- **To analyse the development** of the information society in towns, municipalities and regions, placing emphasis on **dissemination of best experience and best practice**, to take an active part in **benchmarking activities and sharing the results** attained with other subjects.
- **To enhance mutual communication and exchange of experience** by using different tools, e.g. conferences, seminars and websites, lists of contacts, events, projects and other mutually shared information.
- **To identify common goals and priorities**, to seek solutions in the form of joint projects and provision of the necessary resources with the use of EU funds.
- **To be actively involved in the operation of national associations and international organisations of municipalities and regions** focused on information society development issues. **To collaborate** in a similar manner **with professionally oriented associations**, primarily the IT associations of public administration employees as well as IT associations of non-profit nongovernmental organizations employees.
- **To be actively engaged in discussion on strategies and programmes of the EU and national governments**, namely, in the preparation and implementation phases, to ensure participation in selected structures, to ensure linkage to the needs of information society development on the local and regional level.

CALL UPON

National governments and the European Commission to:

- Observe and take into account the needs of information society development on the local and regional level in the EU and national governments strategies and develop partnership with self-governments and their associations;
- Create the necessary legislative environment, methodologies, standards, support for information exchange and best practices' promotion and award;

- Support the proactive approach of local and regional governments in form of programmes and financial incentives.

Local and regional self-governments and their associations of Acceding and Candidate countries and the current Member States of the European Union to come into line and sign this declaration.

Hradec Kralove, 28.3.2004

The signatory cities and associations subscribe to the above mentioned principles and on this basis commit themselves to work tirelessly together to implement a programme of activities that will help to fulfil goals and commitments of the eV4/LORIS Declaration adopted at the occasion of the ISSS/LORIS/V4DIS 2004 conference as a fruitful initiative for the Information and Knowledge Society in the third millennium.

Date:

Organization Name

Signature