

Miroslav Sklenar

speech to delegates of the conference EUROCITIES Knowledge Society Forum – TeleCities, Prague, 13 October 2005

Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of Prague City Hall, I would like to welcome you to our city for this conference which we have prepared on the theme of 'Interoperability and greater cost-effectiveness of the provision of public services'. This theme was chosen after careful consideration. Not only does it reflect trends in eGovernment, but it is also an area we have to cope with in our day-to-day work within the relatively complex structures of city administration and our relations with the state. The theme also reflects our conviction of the need for, and usefulness of, cooperation with other cities in the Czech Republic and abroad.

Prague has long been a steadfast proponent of international cooperation. It has been an active member of the TeleCities network and the EUROCITIES Knowledge Society Forum for four years. We all appreciate the fact that you have accepted our invitation and that we are meeting on these City Hall premises.

I have been informed that some TeleCities members have already visited the Czech Republic and Prague as delegates of the ISSS/LORIS conference, the main working section of which was held in Hradec Králové. This cooperation first realised in 2000.

Today's meeting is conceived as a combination of two events. The central part is this conference of the EUROCITIES Knowledge Society Forum – TeleCities 2005 Autumn Event, which our city – as an active member of this organization – is holding as part of the long-standing tradition of regular quarterly TeleCities conferences in cities throughout Europe. In order to strengthen the mutual cooperation among Czech cities and cooperation with our closest neighbours, yesterday we also held a seminar in this hall on eGovernment in Czech and Slovak cities.

Prague City Hall and this room have hosted a number of events on the information society. For example, a year ago the e-Leaders Forum was held here, followed this spring by a meeting of the steering committee of the Global Cities Dialogue organisation. Coincidentally, in exactly a week's time the Prague City Assembly will meet here to discuss the adoption of the city's Information Strategy. This document was approved by the Prague City Council a week ago and is destined to become the main guide for the project Towards an ePrague by 2010.

We consider today's conference to be a significant milestone on the way towards an ePrague, a path which we share with other cities and where we are aware of the targets and commitments defined in the city's eStrategy and in documents jointly adopted with other partners. Further evidence of our earnest interest in sharing information and in common action can be seen in the publication *Czech Cities Towards an Information Society*, which was published in connection with the LORIS Declaration and Survey and the eCitizenship for All benchmark report.

The LORIS Declaration and the *EUROCITIES Charter on Rights of Citizens in the Knowledge Society* will surely be mentioned in the afternoon session, which will also be attended by Mayor Pavel Bém of Prague. Incidentally, the mayor is just now preparing to leave from a meeting of the Committee of the Regions in Brussels, which he has been attending along with other Czech local governmental representatives.

Ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of Prague City Hall, I would like to thank the representatives of the EUROCITIES Knowledge Society Forum – TeleCities once more for accepting the offer to hold this conference in our city. I also thank our partners who supported the implementation of this event, the European Commission, which supported the conference as part of the Town Twinning programme, the Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic, the eUser project implementing team, and everyone else. Naturally, our thanks are also extended to the speakers who accepted our invitation. I wish you all a successful conference full of fascinating information, and I hope that you take home with you further interesting experiences from Prague, a city famous for its culture and monuments.

Thank you for your kind attention.