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— Posted by DG INFSO's team attending the Future Internet Week

Last week hundreds of delegates - top researchers in Future Internet architectures, services and applications from across Europe and beyond - met up for the Future Internet Assembly [4] (FIA) which took place as part of the Future Internet Week [5] in Poznan, Poland.

Over the past three years FIA has left no stone unturned during its discussions of how the Future Internet should be built, how it should work and what it should offer society in the coming decades. Which makes the people filling the lecture halls and meeting rooms very special people indeed. "*If we all agree that that ICT is the main drivers of the economy in Europe then perhaps it is not an overstatement that ICT researchers are an irreplaceable human asset*," noted Maria Elżbieta Orłowska [6], Poland's Secretary of State for Science and Higher Education, in her opening speech. "*We should treasure this group, and I say this not to make you feel good but to highlight the importance of this human capital*."

At this FIA there was a real sense of expectancy and anticipation. And given the current economic crisis, a great desire to 'get it right'. Jonathan Cave [7] of RAND Europe stressed the economic importance of the Future Internet for Europe, although he admitted that it was all but impossible to predict exactly what that impact might be. "*The Internet is complex and it is evolving*," he remarked. "I*t has emergent behaviour that we cannot predict nor are we able to monetise its impact*." But Cave did have some clear messages. For example, he believed that the involvement of SMEs in the Future Internet could be a source of Europe's economic recovery.

From economics to people, Professor Bolesław Szymański [8]described some of the dynamics of social networks, both on and offline. He argued that technological networks can change the way human interact and also their opinions. His research has shown how a minority of people highly committed to

a particular opinion can rapidly sway the opinions of a large majority ‘sitting on the fence’. The Internet has given a large, global platform to such influencers.

Proving some of Professor Szymański’s theories on social networks, the FIA delegates spent two days mixing with ‘people like them’ in a number of parallel sessions where they have heard about recent progress made by projects funded through FP7 including the Future Internet Public Private Partnership.

But even after three years of debate, one question remains unanswered: **what will be the architecture of the Future Internet?** The researchers all agree that the current iterative approach of ‘bolt-on’ solutions to specific problems cannot continue. There is also wide consensus on the main requirements and design principles for the Future Internet.

But the cry goes out: we want to see implementation and deployment! “*We must not lose momentum*,” concluded Theodore Zahariadis [9] in the final session of the event. “*FIA has made good progress, but we must not be having these same discussions about requirements in two years time*.”

It is now time for the Future Internet to show its face, to try out different guises, and demonstrate just what it can do.

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