



EUROMED MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY
Dundalk, 10/11 April 2005
FINAL DECLARATION

Ministers thanked the Irish Government for hosting the Euro-Mediterranean (EUROMED) Ministerial Conference on the Information Society in cooperation with the Luxembourg Presidency of the EU and with the European Commission. They welcomed the results of the EUROMED Senior Officials and Experts Meeting on ICT and Sustainable Growth in 2004 including the general agreement reached at this meeting:

- that ICT has an important role as enabler for the development of the economies in the Mediterranean region and
- that security, cultural identity and linguistic diversity are essential issues to be addressed in relation to the Knowledge Society.

Ministers considered that the Ministerial Conference was an important step forward on the way to a new regional dimension of the Information Society within the Barcelona Process. They recognised the need to intensify cooperation in this field of the partnership in order to contribute to the sustainable growth of the region. The efforts of the EU and the Mediterranean partners towards harmonisation of policy and regulation for Information Society networks and services are also in line with the political objective of preparing for the EUROMED Free Trade Area by 2010.

The Ministers

1. affirmed their commitment to achieving the main objectives of the Barcelona Process, in particular the implementation of the principles of partnership and co-ownership as well as creation of a EUROMED space of shared prosperity, including a Free Trade Area.
2. welcomed the fact that the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) will intensify the cooperation towards more economic integration between the European Union and its partners and, in particular, reiterated the important role played by the Mediterranean partners within this policy.
3. supported the implementation of the ENP Action Plans which have already been adopted, noted the European Commission proposal to develop a new European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument to fund the implementation of these plans in the Mediterranean area and encouraged the elaboration of Action Plans



- with the remaining Mediterranean partners as they ratify Association Agreements with the EU.
4. welcomed the social and economic progress made by the Mediterranean partners in an uncertain and difficult global economic environment; they also noted the progress since the launch of the Barcelona process in structural reforms and market liberalisation.
 5. noted the accomplishments of bilateral and regional projects under the MEDA programme aiming at regulatory reform of the electronic communications sector and at improved networking between the information technology and research communities and therefore encouraged the extension of the EUMEDIS project on the creation of a such a network (Eumedconnect) beyond 2006.
 6. affirmed their conviction that the benefits of the Information Society will not be achieved while a digital divide persists between those who have and those who have not access to ICT, declared that digital inclusion requires solidarity between all stakeholders, such as governments, civil society, private business and international organisations, and recognised the role of public/private partnerships in the development of the ICT sector.
 7. emphasised the need for liberalisation of the electronic communications markets, for a comprehensive regulatory framework which takes into account the EU framework and for a favourable environment for the widespread use of ICT; this will encourage investment for the benefit of the economic and social development of the region and for the improvement of the citizen's quality of life.
 8. noted that several EU and Mediterranean countries have developed technical platforms and services for the better implementation of e-Government. Ministers also noted that several Mediterranean countries have identified e-Government as a priority area for policy and programs of applications and enhancing efficiency and transparency of government operations and noted that several EU Member States are providing technical and financial assistance to support these processes.
 9. re-iterated the common vision of an Information Society for all along the lines of the declaration of principles adopted at the WSIS Geneva Phase of 2003, which recognised the potential of ICTs to promote the development goals of the Millennium Declaration and reaffirmed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as an essential foundation of the Information Society; the Ministers emphasised their intention to implement these principles and expressed their commitment to cooperate and contribute to the success of the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) to be held in Tunisia from 16-18 November 2005.



10. recommended to encourage cultural and linguistic diversity in the development of the Information Society.

11. agreed to take steps to prepare and implement the following actions:

- create a Euro-Mediterranean dialogue on the development of the Information Society including electronic communications regulation, the promotion of broadband infrastructure and online services based on benchmarking and good practices. This dialogue could be developed by a Working Group on the Information Society, which should also prepare a work programme on regulatory harmonisation, promotion of online services, etc., to be submitted to the next Ministerial Conference;
- exchange knowledge and experience on questions related to trust and confidence in ICT, in particular concerning network and information security, combating cyber crime, consumer protection, spam, and privacy-related issues; this exchange should aim at a consensus around these questions, facilitating the access to the benefits of Internet for all citizens;
- consider that e-Government should be a priority area for co-operation and assistance to the Mediterranean countries, and recommend that the European Commission explores the possibility to include this in the future initiatives, in coordination with programs and projects supported by EU Member States;
- agree to encourage a EUROMED initiative on promoting greater use of ICT in education in collaboration with the Global e-Schools and Communities Initiative (GeSCI).
- review the current EUROMED cooperation in the field of the Information Society, including the technical assistance projects under the MEDA Programme
- develop a joint strategy for development, to allow the Mediterranean Partners to fully benefit from the positive effects of the new information and communication technologies.