

## Webcast

**Monday 12 June**

**08:30 Welcome and keynote addresses**

**Ina Gudele**, Minister for Special Assignments for Electronic Government Affairs, Latvia

The Minister welcomed delegates to Latvia. She celebrated the equality and diversity in Europe, notwithstanding large or small, old or new member states. She presented some of the characteristics and challenges for Latvia within the European Information Society. Latvia is managing its identity within its geographical position between Russia and the EU. The nation is highlighting ICT contributions to economic growth, while taking care to address inclusion issues of maximising access to ICTs for those who are poor, elderly, geographically isolated, or socially excluded. Developments must be firmly placed in the context of democracy and human rights.

**Viviane Reding**, European Commissioner for Information Society and Media

The Commissioner thanked the Austrian Presidency of the EU, and the Republic of Latvia, for their contributions in making this conference possible. She stressed that the EU Information Society must focus on respect, participation, and the improvement of everyday life and work for all European Citizens.

She noted that the eInclusion policies of the Commission aim to address the participation gap through two major foci. First, by building on cultural diversity and values, accessibility and participation must be increased. Second, physical, mindset, and technological barriers should be overcome. Where this has occurred in Europe through broadband access, research shows that there is an additional 1% increase in employment growth.

Ms. Reding noted that the i2010 action plan aimed to deliver the best regulatory frameworks for inclusion, to channel research strategically to deliver added value, and to promote better services and content.

However, the challenges are significant. Without a coherent eInclusion strategy there is a risk that 30-50% of EU citizens will be marginalised in the Information Society. At

present only 16% of EU citizens over the age of 55 have Internet access, only 3% of public sector Websites comply with basic accessibility standards, 15% of the overall population has some form of ability challenge, and only 13% of the EU population has access to broadband. In addition, recent unrest in some EU cities demonstrates that eInclusion strategies are important contributions to overcoming social and economic exclusions.

Nevertheless, she stressed that these are political challenges, not political problems. The ageing population presents a huge potential market, both at European and global levels, and combined with the wider community that is covered by eInclusion, there is an opportunity to make access and accessibility central themes in the delivery of services (both government and business) to citizens.

Ms Reding stressed the contribution of legislation in stimulating inclusive approaches in the Information Society, and she informed delegates that a Communication on ICTs and Ageing is being prepared for the Autumn of 2006, and that the electronic communications framework is being reviewed in the context of eInclusion.

The EU is mindful that ICTs do not always deliver linear benefits to all in society. Europe will need also to research and debate the undesirable, and unexpected, outcomes of ICT adoption, and importantly to place ICTs in the wider context of potential de-humanisation of care of the elderly, of the potential to reduce privacy and dignity of citizens.

The Commissioner concluded by inviting all stakeholders to join forces, to mobilise ICTs to maximise inclusion, and to partner with others in the world.

**Viviane Reding**, European Commissioner for Information Society and Media, then chaired a discussion session with two speakers on the theme Fighting Exclusion – Personal Experiences

**Yvonne von Beck Katsambi**, Director, Mewcat (Milos Educational Women's Collaboration for Activities in Tourism)

**Javier Romañach**, Member, Foro de Vida Independiente

Javier Romañach presented what he termed 'the challenged from the wheelchair'. He noted that even this Conference Website initially had a registration page that was not accessible to people with sight problems. He asked 'why did people not care' to make sure that the registration page was fully accessible from the outset? He argued that too often people do not have the needs of ALL firmly in their mindset, and that there are prevailing human rights issues that must be prioritised through better

education and training. He argued that everyone in society is 'different at different times' in the contexts for example of mobility, hearing, and sight, so it is in the interests of all to improve the overall mindset. He stressed overall that a better mindset is needed so that the dignity of all people is maintained in the Information Society.

Yvonne von Beck discussed her experiences in eInclusion of women on a small Greek island. The geographical isolation of the island was compounded with the physical isolation of women in the home. To upgrade their skills in tourism distance learning was used to deliver language training. This has not only improved the skills and knowledge of the women, but it also has significantly improved their self-esteem, and this point linked effectively to the dignity statement of Mr Romañach.

In summary the two contributors identified the need to combine both large structural initiatives with small, local-level projects.

## **09:15 Plenary 1: eSkills – a doorway to new opportunities**

**Minister José Mariano Gago**, Portugal focused on the Geographical Coverage of Broadband

Mr Gago noted that education and inclusion functions on two levels. First, the formal scientific and technical education underpins economic activity and technical innovation. Second, and this was his focus today, is the more informal education activities that focus on citizen skills in the Information Society. The informal eSkills present an opportunity to overcome significant differences in formal education through the EU, and also differences at national levels where the percentage of citizens aged 25-60 who participate in education and training varies from 2% to 30%. eSkills can help to deliver enhanced socialisation, encourage network learning between excluded groups.

**Gerold Reichle**, Director General, Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology, Germany, focused on Inclusive eGovernment – no-one left behind

Mr Reichle addressed the broadband gap, noting that the term broadband itself was unevenly applied throughout the EU, and in comparison with other countries in the World. For example Germany defined broadband as being a download of 256kb/sec, whereas South Korea defines it as 100 times faster – 20mbits/sec.

He noted the challenge of a Digital Divide, both in access and usage, underlining the points made by the previous speaker that education and training must be linked with the provision of physical access, because the removal of geographical exclusion to Internet access does not imply the removal of underlying exclusions. He detailed initiatives in Germany, and stressed that any government interventions must be carefully planned in the context of EU competition rules, and the need to balance state and private activities – indeed he noted that State aid for access should be an activity of ‘last resort’.

**Reinhard Posch**, Austrian Federal Chief Information Officer, addressed the theme of Inclusive eGovernment

Mr Posch argued that Inclusion must not be just an add-on activity for eGovernment, but must move to be a central theme of eGovernment service delivery. Furthermore, it must also be central to the legislative framework, otherwise legislation itself may generate exclusive activities, and electronic forms must be available in all forms that maximise accessibility by all citizens. The achievement of inclusive eGovernment will be through strong government/industry collaboration, and Austria has established a conformance programme to encourage this process.

To date there have been emerging problems with eGovernment Websites where the use of complex interfaces, colour and detailed resolution has led to increasing exclusion of access for many citizens. While design and standards can help overcome

many of the problems, there also is an opportunity for intermediaries to provide assistance, and in this context Austria has strengthened attention to privacy and data protection.

Overall Mr Posh noted that inclusion through multi-channel delivery needed to focus away from the existing approach where a channel is used only if there is an economic business case, to the promotion of multiple channels because that maximised accessibility for citizens.

**Umberto Paolucci**, Senior Chairman, Microsoft EMEA, Vice President, Microsoft Corporation

Mr Paolucci provided the business approach, setting in context to the governance approach of the previous three speakers. From a commercial perspective ICTs were simply tools that people and their skills/initiative could use to deliver societal solutions. He highlighted the need for regulatory reform that maximised innovative capability, for public-private partnerships, and for enhanced life-long learning so that elderly citizens can continue to deliver economic and societal value. He noted that Microsoft 'Ease of Access' Centre advises the company about inclusive developments in Microsoft Windows. He noted that the growth of email was leading to potential information overload, and that new systems and channels for communication and interaction are needed.

## **10:15 Keynote: Dr.Vaira Vike-Freiberga, President of the Republic of Latvia**

The President welcomed delegates to Latvia, and stressed that Inclusion must be set in the context both of rights and opportunities. She observed that digital exclusion has exacerbated existing social and economic exclusions, and that there is an urgent need for coordinated policy initiatives such as the EU Ministerial Statement on eInclusion. Challenges exist at all levels, with significant between and within country differences in ICT usage, and also between and within sector differences.

Latvia is promoting an improved telecommunications infrastructure, better rural access to ICTs, integrated eGovernment services, and education and skills for all. The nation aims to create a critical mass of digitally literate citizens.

## **10:55 Plenary 2: eAccessibility – Removing Barriers to the Information Society**

**Minister Margaret Hodge**, Minister of State for Industry & the Regions, Department for Trade & Industry, United Kingdom, addressed eInclusion and cultural diversity. Ms. Hodge noted that the eInclusion agenda is about achieving a range of public policy objectives in areas of: wider access to services; enabling wider economic activity; and, celebrating cultural diversity and the promotion of national identity within the EU Information Society. She communicated three key messages to delegates. First, do not ignore those who cannot access ICTs, or that some 80 million EU citizens are disabled, and 50% of these are unemployed. Second, focus on developing technologies that deliver what citizens really need, by focusing on user needs before technology design. Third, develop solutions based on partnership approaches.

She noted commercial sector approaches that identify real commercial and societal benefits when inclusion is maximised. Tesco plc invested 50,000 euros in creating an accessible Website, and this unlocked 1.9 million new potential customers by making information about Tesco's services readily accessible to them. The UK government has welcomed the eInclusion Charter launched by the Citizens Online initiative, as well as the Guide to Good Practice for designing Websites produced by the Disability Rights Commission.

**Minister Jure Zupan**, Government of the Republic of Slovenia, Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology addressed eInclusion and cultural diversity. Mr Zupan stressed the opportunities for ICTs to promote the preservation of cultural heritage, and in maximising access to these resources for education and distance learning for the largest possible numbers of citizens. He noted that intellectual property and copyright issues needed to be addressed when widening access to resources, and activities such as the Digital Libraries Initiative, and the Creative Commons licensing approach, provided guidance about possible models to enable access to resources. He identified the role that Structural Funds, and Framework 7, can play in enabling eInclusion and cultural diversity.

**Minister Susanna Huovinen**, Ministry of Transport and Communications, Finland Increasing Access to Communications, addressed Opportunities for the Elderly. Ms Huovinen highlighted the human perspective that underpins eInclusion for the elderly. While the generic term categorises the 'elderly', this is a very large and heterogeneous group that needs highly diverse access to systems, training, and services, and where ICTs can play significant roles. Finland is placing significant

emphasis on the creation of trust among elderly people so that they feel enabled and willing to engage with ICTs. She also stressed that ageing is a major opportunity for the development of new networks and services. The Finnish Presidency will be organising an ENISA Conference in September, where eInclusion will feature as a major theme.

**Matthew Kirk**, Director External Relationships, Vodafone Group, provided an industry perspective

He stressed the underlying customer focus of the telcoms industry, and introduced two Vodafone policy documents. The first, which examined the impact of mobile telecoms in Africa, noted that mobile infrastructures were more cost-effective where landline systems were poor, and that simple communication facilities for farmers allowed them to contact markets about the potential for selling their products before undertaking lengthy journeys. The second, which looks at the potential of mobile telecoms in healthcare, noted that simple services, such as sending text message reminders about doctors and hospital appointments, could save the UK health service over 330 million euros a year.

The telecoms industry had inclusion issues firmly on their agendas, and the development of pre-pay mobile phones was one example where a pricing approach overcame an exclusion – those without credit ratings, or a bank account, were excluded from taking out a subscription to account phones. Research by Vodafone identified that exclusion to ICTs existed along an ‘accessibility continuum’ from ‘finds easy’, to ‘frustrated’, ‘has difficulty’, and finally ‘is excluded’. They estimate that 9% of EU phone users have remaining significant access problems, and that once business addresses their needs there will remain 4% of people for whom special equipment, and specific government interventions, will be required.

He gave three key messages in conclusion. First, encourage industry to set challenging eInclusion targets, and monitor performance. Second, do not define the targets too precisely, or specify how the targets should be met – let industry innovate. Third, focus government attention on the remaining 4% of citizens who need very special access facilities.

## 11:55 Ministerial Declaration PL3

**Ursula Haubner**, President of the Council of Ministers, Federal Minister for Social Security, Generations and Consumer Protection, Austria

The Minister introduced the Ministerial Declaration. There are challenging targets set. First, take more account of the needs of an ageing EU population. Second, reduce the geographical digital divide. Third, develop more user-friendly and accessible ICT networks. Fourth, Develop enhanced training and education for the Information Society. Fifth, promote cultural diversity. Sixth, continue to improve eGovernment services. In 2005 only 10% of EU citizens over 65 used ICTs, and new products and services are now needed. She noted that 2007 is the year of European Equal Opportunities, and that by 2008 the digital gap in the EU should be reduced by 50%.

The response to the Declaration was given by **Viviane Reding**, European Commissioner for Information Society and Media

The Commissioner warmly welcomed the declaration, and underlined that while there were challenging targets for 2008 and in the context of i2010, work and activity should be an immediate priority, and that the current Conference provided an important forum.

## 12:25 Keynote Presentations – eInclusion is good Business K1

**Mike Moore**, former Prime Minister of New Zealand and former WTO Director-General

Mr Moore welcomed the Ministerial Declaration. Integration of cultures and societies increased our dependence on each other. He highlighted the role that Europe should play as a global power, in promoting open markets, economies and societies that promote democracy, inclusion, and which deliver benefits to citizens. While some commentators worry about big government and control over citizens, he welcomed the ability of individual citizens to use the Internet, and access to information, in processes that hold government and business visibly accountable to their customers. Mr Moore stressed the importance of access to communication channels for citizens, noting a study by the London School of Economics that shows a direct relationship between government corruption and government control over communication channels. He welcomed the collaborative roles of government and industry, but advised that public-private partnerships did not imply that government lost its social responsibility. He advised the ICT and Inclusion Ministers to talk carefully to their International Development ministerial colleagues so that the benefits of the EU Information Society could be shared extensively throughout the World to reduce the potential for further marginalisation of developing nations. He concluded that an enthusiastic and engaged Europe is crucial to global development.

**Adrian Hosford**, Director, Corporate Responsibility, British Telecom (BT)

Mr Hosford argued that eInclusion is good for business, and business is good for eInclusion. He noted that there were significant attitude barriers among those citizens who did not use ICTs. One third of the EU citizens have yet to use the Internet, and of those over 40% were not interested and lacked confidence. Social barriers included lack of literacy skills, physical, auditory and visual impairment. The focus for BT was three 'c's – connectivity, capability, and content. He then outlines major BT initiatives such as; Everybodyonline, in connection with the Citizens Online charity, where a national hub provides resources to build Websites and services; the Notschools.net facility to encourage learning for those who cannot cope with conventional classroom environments; community content development projects for charities, where over 1000 sites have been built; BT Internet Rangers, where skilled young people provide advice, assistance, and learning for elderly people; and other projects that cover inclusive design.