Lithuania as the EU presiding country works towards Europe's digital future

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President Dalia Grybauskait opened one of the largest Lithuanian EU Presidency events - the European conference on information and communications technology "ICT2013: Create, Connect, Grow". The three-day event has attracted great interest - around 6,000 participants from all over the world are expected at the conference. It is the biggest such event in Europe this year.

"The future belongs to innovative and ambitious people. Europe should invest more in research, look for new solutions and show more resolve in implementing interesting ideas. Digital economy offers huge opportunities for growth, job creation and competitiveness. Therefore, Lithuania as the EU presiding member state devotes special attention and efforts to building the Digital Single Market. We hope this market will be fully operational by 2015," the President said.

She underlined that Lithuania is already among leaders in terms of developing the digital economy. We are well known for having an Internet speed among the fastest in the world; our mobile penetration is one of the highest in Europe. We are leaders in putting public procurement online. Lithuania has quite a few ICT champions that are known beyond our borders, such as GetJar or Pixelmator.

In building the EU Digital Single Market it is important to have well-developed infrastructure in place, but it is even more important to develop digital skills of European citizens. ICT has huge potential to solve Europe's biggest problem today - youth unemployment. Up to 900 thousand vacancies are expected in the ICT sector by 2015.

The National Digital Coalition will be launched on November 7 to deal with this problem. It aims to spread digital literacy and prepare more ICT professionals. For the purposes of this initiative a memorandum of cooperation will be signed among the alliance Window to the Future; the Ministries of Transport and Communications, Education and Science, Social Security and Labour; Kaunas University of Technology, and other organizations. Another national initiative "Women and Technology" was announced on November 5. It should help attract more women to ICT professions.

According to the President, when creating a convenient for Europeans digital space we must not forget cyber security. It is also vital to establish proper data protection rules. On the path towards digital Europe it is essential to effectively use the funding under Horizon 2020, the EU's new research program for 2014-2020. More than 70 billion euros are earmarked in the program for the development of innovation and research.

After her visit to a special pavilion - the Lithuanian Village - devoted to the best Lithuanian companies known for their innovative IT solutions, the President said she was delighted to see that Lithuanian businesses are creative and full of ideas that are in the public interest.

In the pavilion one can see a transport surveillance system enabling to follow transport activities round the clock; device which allows to measure and improve household energy efficiency without investing in insulation of a house; video game that enlivens rehab exercises for children; speaking assistant for deaf persons; sensor for protection against cyber-attacks; device for establishing the quality of meat, fish and poultry, and other smart solutions of Lithuanian companies.