

EETT's International Conference on Broadband

The International Conference of Hellenic Telecommunications and Post Commission entitled "The prospects of Broadband in the Mediterranean: A means to International Cooperation for the Benefit of the Market and the Consumer" was held successfully on May 2, 3 and 4 at Astir Palace Vouliagmeni.

The first day of the Conference was dedicated to the "International Cooperation for the Promotion of Broadband". Among the participants, were Regulatory Authorities' representatives in the sector of Electronic Communications of the wider Mediterranean region, high rank executives of the market and investment entities, as well as representatives of the academic community.

The Prime Minister of Greece, Mr. Kostas Karamanlis, sent a greeting message, underlining that "The various applications of broadband networking open new horizons, expand the perspectives and liberate any creative forces. The Hellenic State, through its competent institutional bodies (Ministry of Transports and Communications and National Telecommunications and Post Commission), has embraced the issue of broadband networking and has developed organized policies for its effective promotion. A special essence is attributed to the diffusion of broadband access to the internet with accessible terms aiming at the district and the students".

The opening speech of the Conference was given by the Minister of Transport and Communications, Mr. Michael Liapis, who among other things underlined the fact that "The objective is to increase the geographical coverage of broadband networking infrastructure up to 60% until 2008 from 13% which is today, and until 2008 to achieve the percentage of 90% from the current 65% in the population coverage of broadband infrastructures. The important experience that has been gained within the framework of participation in community procedures may be transferred to the countries of the Mediterranean region».

Moreover, the President of EETT, Profes-



Minister of Transport & Communications, Mr. Michalis Liapis



EETT President, Professor Nikitas Alexandridis

or Nikitas Alexandridis, emphasized that "Broadband networking constitutes the vehicle which is necessary for our country in order to become competitive in the global arena of digital information revolution. The relation of the Independent National Regulatory Authority (including its high level experienced work force) with the State, the Greek market and the respective bodies of foreign countries, render it a strategic associate of the State, that can contribute effectively, both to establishing a national strategy, and attempting to develop digital communications at broadband networks and applications level".

Finally, Mr. Ierotheos Papadopoulos, acting as Director of the European Commission Delegation in Greece, has addressed the message of Mrs Viviane Reding, Commissioner for the Information Society and Media. This message, stressed that "Although Greece has shown considerable progress since more than 100,000 lines have been activated, the country still has a long way to go, despite the fact that the usage stands today at 1.5%. The absence of competition in the Greek broadband networking market has been the basic reason for this delay. Now, EETT must act and ensure the correct and effective application of the regulating framework in Greece. This is the only way for the prices to be reduced, to encourage the

introduction of new operators, to encourage the operators to innovate and for the consumers' benefit".

The second day of the Conference was focused on "Broadband Networking Market and Technology". High ranking executives of the market and investment entities, Regulatory Authorities representatives and European entities of the Electronic Communications sector, as well as the academic community bodies have developed a constructive dialogue on the market contribution to the promotion of broadband networking.

More specifically, the Deputy Minister of Development Mr. Anastassios Nerantzis, underlined that "The cooperation of all the countries in the area of South Eastern Europe in the critical sector of electronic communications and at the institutional framework level, that rules the sector, contributes to the effort to create an "Electronic" South Eastern Europe and a "Broadband" South Eastern Europe. Greece can and deserves to play a dominating role in this area, laying the foundations of a cooperative effort and of a long-term strategic cooperation in a sector of urgent nature".

The subject of the third and last day of the Conference was "Broadband Networks and Citizens Society". The representatives of



From the left Mr. Andreas Avgoustis (General Director, Regulatory Authority of Bahrain – TRA), Panaghis Vourloumis (President & Managing Director, OTE), Nikolaos Koulouris (Electronic Communications Vice-President, EETT), Vassilis Takas (President, Telecommunications and IT Research Institute for the Countries of South-Eastern Europe – INA), Roberto Viola (General Director, Italian Communications Regulatory Authority – AGCOM), Martin Cave (Director, Centre for Management under Regulation, Warwick, UK)

Consumers Associations and Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) praised EETT's initiative to organize the Conference. More specifically, the third day constituted a "step" to the Citizens Society, while promoting broadband networking as an every day tool for the citizen. Also, the conference provided an opportunity to participate in the Society of Knowledge as well as a developmental mean for the NGOs. Moreover, the contribution of EETT to promote broadband networking in our country has been underlined. EETT has also contributed to fight for the rights of the Electronic Communications users.

The representatives of Consumers Associations and NGOs have made a reference to the new possibilities that broadband services provide both to the consumers and the enterprises. They drew attention to the fact that Greece holds one of the last places in broadband penetration and that the State, in cooperation with the market, may undertake the central role in terms of new technologies promotion, protecting at the same time the rights of the users.

In the Conference, the General Secretary for Consumer Affairs Mr. Athanasios Skordas, has highlighted that "Today, in our country, after many years of delay, a coordinated effort is made on two fronts:

On the one hand, an effort is made to cover the gap that exists with the developed countries on competitiveness, application of new technologies and access on behalf of the citizen. This gap in the case of broadband networks is huge, which actually condemns the country to technological illiteracy. On the other hand, an effort is made to handle the respective phenomenon, the so-called "consumption illiteracy", meaning the ignorance on behalf of the citizen as it regards to his/her rights as a consumer, the structures that support them, as well as the possibilities he/she has to make researches in the Market and reduce the cost of his/her transactions".

The Special Secretary for the Information Society, Professor Vassilios Assimakopoulos, emphasized the fact that "If we wish to liberalize the potentiality of the citizens, we have to discover the ways to bring broadband network close to our citizens. Cost is not the only issue. We lack in information. Most importantly, however, is to restart the conversation on broadband networks using every day, comprehensible terms and non technical ones. We must also bring out the utility of information, using simple examples touching the life of the citizens. The objective of broadband network shall be accomplished at the level of every day use on behalf of the citizens."

In addition, the representative of Coalition of the Left of Movements and Ecology, (SYNASPISMOS), Mrs Betty Batziana, attended the conference and gave her greetings.

Upon the completion of the tasks of the Conference, the Vice-President of EETT, Mr. Nikolaos Koulouris, addressed the contribution of all speakers and participants for the success of the Conference and he pointed out that both the opinions that had been expressed and the interventions that had been made, shall be thoroughly examined by EETT, so as to undertake the actions for the development of broadband.

In conclusion, it has to be noted that, within the framework of the Conference agenda, special attention had been given to the importance of broadband in the development of the Greek economy and the attraction of investments, as well as in the participation of the citizens in the Society of Knowledge. Moreover the conference gave an opportunity to bring out the central role that Greece should play in the wider region of the Mediterranean.

The web site of EETT includes the published texts and the presentations of the speakers (www.eett.gr, Section: Publications / Upcoming Events).