

## Digital Strategy 2006-2013: The Path Leading the Country to New Technologies

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Until March 2004, the utilization of information technologies in Greece was almost exclusively equalized with the Information Society Operational Program and confined itself in the "enumeration" of IT projects.

For the last two years, the basic concern of the Special Secretariat for the Information Society Operation Program, was to dynamically reverse this situation and to bring, through a more organized plan, IT and communication technologies to the every day life of the Greek citizen and Greek business.

This is the basic reason for the establishment of Digital Strategy 2006-2013 that came into force this year. Digital Strategy constitutes a structural intervention with positive consequences in the entire spectrum of society and economy and constitutes the first integrated proposal for utilizing new technologies in the country. The aim of the said strategy is to implement a "Digital Leap Venture in Productivity, a Digital Leap Venture in the Quality of Life" in order to recover lost time.

In order to implement this "Digital Leap Venture", the Special Secretariat for the Information Society Operation Program sets through its new Strategy, six specific objectives for the optimization of productivity and the improvement of the quality of life:

### Improvement of Productivity:

1. Promotion of the use of new technologies in enterprises.
2. Provision of digital services to enterprises – reorganization of Public Sector.
3. Support of IT and communication technologies sector.
4. Promotion of entrepreneurship in sectors that make use of new technologies.

### Improvement of the Quality of Life:

5. Improvement of every day life through the utilization of new technologies.
6. Development of digital services for the citizens.

The focal point of Digital Strategy is human capital. Interconnection is the main condition for accomplishing the objectives. Interconnection relates to broadband. For example, until 2008 a plan has been established on broadband, the so-called "Broadband Development Plan", consisting of three great action categories that pertain to:

- A. Development of broadband infrastructure.
- B. Development of broadband content and services.
- C. Enhancement of broadband services demand and familiarization actions of the citizens.

These three components that have an overall budget exceeding 450 million Euros, are interconnected and they all are necessary, in order for the country to be able to recover the lost time of previous years. The aim of broadband penetration in Greece has been increased from 0.1% of the population in 2004 to at least 7% until 2008.

In order to accomplish all 6 objectives, Digital Strategy proposes more than 70 graded practices and specific actions, out of which some of them have already started to be implemented. Indicatively:

- The setting up of a "Digital Leap Venture Capital Fund", with a total budget of 100 million Euros. This action focuses on Objective 4: Promotion of entrepreneurship in the technology sector. The drawing up of the Digital Leap Venture Capital Fund is the actual proof of the effort of the new strategy, for enforcing entrepreneurship in new technologies, according to the most state-of-the-art international practices.

The new Capital Fund pertains to financing new technology enterprises or enterprises operating at the initial operational stage and make use of IT and communication technologies, in order to become competitive.

Specifically, the Capital Fund for the Digital Leap Venture shall benefit through business capitals, any existing enterprises operating in the sector of IT and communication technologies and are at the initial development stage or they are newly established enterprises interested in deploying their business activity in the sector of IT and communication technologies wishing to expand their activities in this sector or these plans of theirs that pertain to the sector of IT and communication

technologies and concern enterprises operating in other sectors, and which obtain a comparative advantage through the use of IT and communication technologies.

- "Free Wireless Internet (WiFi) Hot Spot at Sintagma Square". The action is an indicative project and constitutes the practical implementation of Objective 5: Improvement of every day life through the utilization of new technologies. It is a project of differentiated philosophy aiming at familiarizing citizens with "fast internet". It allows free access to the Internet for the entire time of pilot operation of the network (until early 2008), to all citizens, by means of a laptop or a personal digital assistant (PDA).

- "Digital Government", amounting in total to 60 million Euros, constitutes an innovative intervention focusing on Objective 6: Development of digital services for the citizens. This intervention allows all Local Authorities, with no exception, to develop digital services for the citizens of their town. Such are the Electronic

Information and Service Portals, through which the citizens shall have access to information on services, documents, electronic transactions as well as access to practical information that pertain to their region. Additionally, municipalities shall have the possibility to develop geographical information systems in sectors such as urban transportation means management, parking management, or urban planning management, water supply networks etc. The same intervention includes information and familiarization of local population on new digital services to be deployed in order for the citizens of the municipality to enjoy the benefits of new technologies.

The aforementioned interventions constitute a small example of a wider action spectrum included in Digital Strategy 2006-2013. The philosophy of the new strategy is also differentiated by the fact that, in order for our country to implement the Digital Leap Adventure, it does not confine itself to community resources, but it also tries to utilize every available

tool, such as:

- > The existing Operational Program (OP) "Information Society", within the framework of CSF III.
- > The Operational Programs of Programming Period D (2007-2013), such as OP "Digital Convergence".
- > The possibilities for digital services development projects with Public – Private Partnerships.
- > The new Investment Law.
- > Strategic agreements with private sector enterprises.

Digital Strategy comes under a wider framework of governmental reforms aiming at a new development standard. It constitutes a basic tool of our country as regards the utilization of new technologies. For this reason every public or private entity, as well as enterprises and citizens are invited to undertake an active role in this framework, in order for the benefits of the new era to be noticeable in the every day life of our country.

