



Optical Fibers. The Future can not wait!

By the Secretary General for Communications, Dr. George Anastasopoulos

In recent years, we have all witnessed the great revolution that takes place globally and results in the change of our everyday lives, the economy and the living conditions of millions of inhabitants on the planet. The digital revolution and the unprecedented development in telecommunications is a phenomenon that concerns us all, and we ought, as individual citizens and as a State, to exploit, develop and shape the modern trends of the digital era. We ought to participate actively and decisively to this new era as a country, ensuring the greatest benefit possible for the citizens' development, social cohesion and quality of life.



Dr. George Anastasopoulos
General Secretary for Communications

Broadband spearheads developments!

Broadband currently represents the flagship of the digital era, multiplying the benefits and advantages for all. International data and research indicate that the diffusion of broadband may result in the increase of employment by 1.5% every year, significant synergies between enterprises, development of new markets, considerable increase in new companies, as well as substantial increase in productivity up to 31% in enterprises adopting techniques and tools such as e-commerce.

In most countries of the European Union, access to new technologies is considered a commodity which should be accessible to every citizen, regardless of residence, educational background or income. Greece should be the last to follow!

The Ministry of Transport and Communications, based on the philosophy and the guidelines of the National Digital Strategy 2006 - 2013, has elaborated a plan for the development of Electronic Communications and new technologies.

Our Strategy starts from a clear vision: to make Greece one of the countries that exploit, develop and shape modern trends in the digital era, with the maximum benefit possible for the development, social cohesion and quality of life of its citizens.

We invest in Infrastructures

Starting from today Greece has the possibility - and it is worth doing so - to invest in the development of the proper infrastructures, so that in the future, it won't have to follow the other European countries in the sector of Broadband but be among the leading countries, which will spearhead developments in the New Digital Economy in the years to come. For this reason, our Strategy revolves around 2 main axes:

- **Globally:** Greece could benefit from its geographic location in order to be rendered as an international communications junction.
- **In Greece:** The creation of infrastructures that will make **broadband connection** accessible and available **to every region in the country.**

With regards to international interconnection, our goal for Greece is to obtain an **adequate international network infrastructure**, which will enable it to offer data and information transfer telecommunication services from and to all countries of the Southeastern Mediterranean. Greece can become the main data transfer junction between the Far and Middle East and Europe.

That is why our plan focuses mainly on **concluding agreements with the countries of the Southeastern Mediterranean**, which constitute the ultimate point of Asian networks.



At the same time, we will seek to **expand high capacity cables from Greece to the neighbouring Balkan countries.**

The benefit for our country from such a development is evident, both in terms of economy and on a geopolitical level.

In Greece: The second major goal is the development of broadband networks in the country, with the use of the appropriate technologies, so as to ensure access to as many users as possible.

Many important steps have already been made towards this goal, as part of the Digital Strategy for 2006 - 2013. Without the infrastructures developed during the period 2005 - 2008, it would be impossible to make the subsequent steps, which our strategy includes. At the same time, the liberation of the telecommunications market itself and the substantial interventions of the Regulatory Authority, have brought about an unprecedented boom of Broadband in Greece with the number of connected users currently reaching 1,100,000. This number seemed intangible just 2 years ago!

There is a real thirst among Greek citizens to enjoy the advantages of Broadband Access. In a market where such a demand was not expected, in a market with several problems, Greeks require to experience the possibilities of modern applications and services. E-learning, E-government, telework-

ing, telemedicine, entertainment, information, limitless communication.

The direction of communications is a one-way street, Optical Fiber Broadband Networks...

Our needs grow day by day. It is evident. Only 4 years ago, 384 Kbps was an astronomical speed. Only 4 years ago! Today, 12 or 24 Mbps - a connection which is 30 times faster - are simply satisfactory. Tomorrow, 50 or 60 Mbps may not be enough. It is obvious that we must move on to the next stage. Talk about optical fibers. Just as anywhere else in the world. The thirst and need for new technologies, new possibilities, new services, has led all developed countries to adopting optical fibers and planning new programmes aimed at interconnecting their citizens to the new era.

Modern Optical Fiber Networks are designed and deployed so as to cover even the last mile of the end user's connection to the network. This is the famous Fiber to the Home.

In Sweden, half a million houses have been connected by means of this technology, whereas a plan is underway in Denmark for the connection of 967,000 residences, which corresponds to 33% of the total number thereof.



A National Strategy has been developed in France aiming at the connection of **4 million residences by 2012.**

Even countries which already have advanced networks, such as cable networks, make new investments by replacing them with optical fibers. In the USA, discussions are in progress for the elaboration of a programme that will cover **every home and every enterprise with a cost of 100 billion dollars!**

Therefore, having studied this experience, **we are oriented - as regards the large urban centres of the country - to the expansion of optical fiber networks.** In other words, we seek to join the backbone networks developed at present in many parts of the country, to the building block, the building or even the house of each user.

The Ministry's Strategic Consultant is already processing the data so that we will be able to present integrated scenarios in a Public Consultation, and that such a project, which will be financed by both state and private funding, may be viable, operational, open to competition and to the free market and most importantly able to guarantee the connection of 2 million households with optical fibers over the next 5 years.

We are aware of the difficulties and the risks of such a great venture. We know that such a plan should be well studied and organized, and even better implemented. Nonetheless, it requires responsibility from the part of the State and the organizations involved, as well as on the part of the private sector. However, we are optimistic as to the final outcome of our plan. Because this Strategy does not merely amount to a desk plan. It is the very society, the citizens of our country that show us the way. And they are our great allies, but also those who exert continuous pressure and lead optical fibers closer to their homes!