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Delegation
to BiH

EU Newsletter

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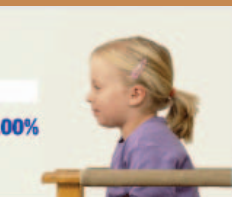
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Mr Reinhard Priebe, Director for Western Balkans in the EC Directorate-General of Enlargement, sent a clear message that the EC has noticed certain progress in the implementation of reforms in BiH, but were expecting more, stressing that police reform which completely fulfills the three established criteria is essential.



Success Stories in Regional Development

- Presentation of the brochure "Regional Economic Development - Success Stories in Bosnia and Herzegovina".
- Economic regeneration and tourism development projects funded by the EU through the RED Fund.
- Technical assistance project, EURED II, will continue to support Regional Development Agencies and will now also support the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations.

9 May = Europe Day!



This year's Europe Day was once again co-hosted by the Prime Minister of BiH, Adnan Terzic and Ambassador Michael B. Humphreys. Since this year marks the 250th anniversary of the birth of Mozart and Austria holds the rotating EU Presidency, the Youth Symphony Orchestra of South-East Europe prepared a special programme of Mozart's Overture Impresario, violin concerto in A-major, overture from the Marriage of Figaro and Symphony N°38 D-Major "Prague". Mr. Sinisa Markovic conducted the orchestra and this year's winner of the prestigious Lipizer Prize, Mr. Roman Simovic, was the soloist at the concert, which was also broadcast live on BHT.

In his speech PM Terzic stated that the citizens of BiH are already Europeans, who want to be citizens of the EU. He noted the great progress made since last year - when BiH was striving to fulfil the Feasibility Study - and this year - where two rounds of SAA negotiations have already been held successfully and the process is expected to be finished by the end of the year.

Ambassador Humphreys spoke about the period of reflection on the future and meaning of the European Union, as well as the preparations for further enlargement. He stressed that BiH has a challenging year ahead, and must make progress in a number of critical areas, notably police reform, if the Stabilisation and Association Agreement - the first contractual agreement between the EU and BiH - is to be signed by the end of this year or in early 2007.



The origins of Europe Day

It all started with the Schuman Declaration. In 1950, Robert Schuman - then Foreign Minister of France - proposed a new political arrangement for Europe, whose aim was to make war between Europe's nations unthinkable. With peace secured, prosperity developed.

Nowadays, the Union comprises 450 million citizens in 25 Member States. The EU now accounts for 20% of world trade and 25% of global GNP. It provides 55% of the world's overseas development assistance, while 55,000 European peacekeepers are deployed around the world.

Direct Dialogue with Civil Society

On May 26, representatives of NGOs and members of the local community met with Ambassador Michael Humphreys, in Pale, for a rare chance to hold a direct dialogue on current affairs and the importance of European integration for BiH as a whole, as well as for individual communities.

This is one of ten public fora which will bring together citizens in locations throughout BiH and Ambassador Humphreys, to discuss questions which will determine the country's future. The cycle is organised by the NGO Luna from Rudo and is funded by the European Union.



On-going Negotiations and Reforms Monitoring

Stabilisation and Association Agreement Negotiations continue according to schedule, with a technical round held on May 11-12 and an official round on June 15-16. The technical round focussed on free trade, financial instruments, State Aid, intellectual property and regional development, among others, while the official round addressed the mobility of workers, justice, freedom and security, among others. The Reforms Process Monitoring (RPM) meetings have also continued, with their scheduling linked to negotiation rounds.

At the RPM Press Conference on June 15, Mr Reinhard Priebe, Director for Western Balkans in the EC Directorate-General of Enlargement, sent a clear message that the EC has noticed certain progress in the implementation of reforms in BiH, but were expecting more. He appealed to the authorities to approach the reform process much more dynamically over the coming months, stressing that police reform which completely fulfills the three established criteria is essential.

The next technical round will be held on July 28, with another one to be held by mid-October, while the next official round is planned for the beginning of November.

Support to Fiscal Policy

On 30 May, 2006, the project 'EU Fiscal Policy Support to BiH' was officially launched. It is worth almost € 2 million for technical assistance and information technology, while the government of Austria has provided € 225,000 to finance the activities of the Macroeconomic Analysis Unit and the establishment of a Secretariat for the Governing Board. This is an important project that covers an area of great significance for BiH and its future European perspectives.

The European Partnership calls for BiH to establish a National Fiscal Council and to adopt procedures for its efficient functioning. It also demands strengthened co-ordination of economic policies, to produce comprehensive consolidated government accounts, as well as to strengthen the procedures for budget preparation, execution and accountability. This is essential to guarantee fiscal stability and to foster European integration. BiH should develop sound economic policy-making capacity for the country as a whole, as well as show capacity to establish efficient and effective state institutions.

Strengthening BiH macroeconomic and fiscal management is essential to send a powerful signal to international investors on the country's capacity to pursue sound, coherent and stability-oriented economic policy. For this to happen, BiH still has to complete an important reform agenda. Some progress has already been made: the government has established - with EU support - the Economic Policy and Planning Unit (EPPU), under the Council of Ministers.

The new project will support the Macroeconomic Analysis Unit of the Indirect Taxation Authority. Capacity-building will continue and will be broadened to include all key institutions with core responsibilities in fiscal policy management. It will also help consolidate last year's impressive achievements in fiscal data collection and will assist in reviewing the accounting and reporting systems at all levels of government, designing IT solutions where current reporting systems are inadequate.

Ambassador Humphreys stressed that the authorities need to address some of the remaining shortcomings, notably approving the draft law defining the legal status of the EPPU, which is on the agenda of the Council of Ministers since early June. The authorities should also start - without further hindrance - the discussion on the law on the National Fiscal Council, part of the commitment undertaken by the authorities in the European Partnership. He added that some amendments to the VAT law due to be discussed in the BiH Parliament, which aim at extending zero rates for exports and widening the scope of exemptions, are likely to have significant negative consequences on the budget revenue for 2006 and may ultimately represent a threat to macroeconomic stability.



Basic tasks of the Macroeconomic Analysis Unit:

- Collecting data on consolidating revenues and expenditures at all levels (state, entity, cantonal, municipal and funds) and creating reports based on the collected and processed data, in order to monitor the fulfilment of the plan of revenues, expenditures and budget.
- Preparing and producing macroeconomic and fiscal projections of revenues and budget, preparing a proposal on consolidating fiscal balance at all levels, preparing a proposal on the allocation of targeted consolidated balance between levels of administration.
- Analysing revenues, expenditures, foreign debt, government investment and debt, analysing the macroeconomic effects of the introduction of VAT, submitting a proposal for redefining taxation policy in the field of indirect taxes and others.

Who is where on the road to Europe?

SLOVENIA is a Member State of the European Union since May 1, 2004. It is **due to join the twelve-member Euro-zone on 1 January 2007**, making it the first of the ten new members to do so. Slovenia has met Euro-zone criteria for public debt, budget deficit and interest rates, and expects inflation to remain below the Euro-zone benchmark. The government hopes that euro membership will further boost tourism and foreign investment.

FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA - The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia signed the SAA in Luxembourg in April 2001, which entered into force in April 2004.

Macedonia applied for EU membership in March 2004 and **obtained candidate status in December 2005**. No date has yet been set for membership talks to begin.

CROATIA was the second country to sign a SAA, in October 2001, which entered into force in February 2005. It presented its application for EU membership in February 2003 and accession negotiations should have opened on 17 March 2005, but were postponed in the absence of confirmation of full cooperation with the UN International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). With a positive assessment from the ICTY in October 2005, EU-Croatia relations entered a new phase.

The first stage of the negotiations was the so-called "screening": an exercise which brought together experts from Croatia and the EC to explain the whole range of EU legislation in detail, and to examine Croatia's plans for its adoption and implementation. The screening enables the EU to decide upon the opening of individual chapters for negotiations.

On June 12, 2006, the EU approved the start of detailed membership talks with Croatia, which will cover the 35 policy chapters of the Acquis Communautaire.

The EU is urging Croatia to reform its judiciary and public administration, tackle corruption, ensure minority rights and keep co-operating with the ICTY.

ALBANIA - started negotiations in January 2003 and **signed the SAA on 12 June 2006**. The negotiations took three times longer than for Croatia and FYROM because Albania was moving too slowly on the fight against corruption and organized crime.

The SAA focuses primarily on:

- provision for political dialogue with Albania;
- provisions on enhanced regional co-operation, including the perspective of establishing regional free trade areas;
- the perspective of the establishment of a free-trade area between the EU and Albania within ten years;
- provisions on the movement of workers, supply of services, current payments and movement of capital;
- the commitment by Albania to approximate its legislation to that of the EU;
- provisions on co-operation in a wide range of fields, including justice, freedom and security.

- provision for the establishment of a Stabilisation and Association Council which supervises implementation, of a Stabilisation and Association Committee and a Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee.

Albania has not yet applied for membership.

SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO The Feasibility Report in April 2005 concluded that Serbia and Montenegro was sufficiently prepared to negotiate an SAA with the EU. **Negotiations started in October 2005 but were suspended on May 3, 2006**, due to lack of co-operation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY).

SERBIA is the successor of Serbia and Montenegro and, as such, inherits membership of the United Nations and other international institutions, as well as the process and status quo regarding SAA negotiations. Full co-operation with the ICTY is a pre-condition for negotiations to resume.

Kosovo - The European Partnership with Serbia and Montenegro adopted by the European Council in June 2004 included Kosovo - as defined by the UNSCR 1244 and established a specific SAP Tracking Mechanism (STM). The inclusion of the UN standards in the European Partnership has enhanced the EU's leverage on their implementation.

MONTENEGRO was **formally recognised by the EU on June 12 2006**, following the referendum of May 21 and the declaration of independence on June 3 by the Montenegrin parliament. The EU facilitated negotiations among political parties prior to the referendum and sent a special representative to help define and oversee the modalities.

Montenegro will now start its individual process towards a SAA, which could be reached during the course of this year. The EU wants Montenegro to do more to fight organised crime and to strengthen its judiciary.

BiH - in November 2003 the EC produced a Feasibility Study assessing BiH's capacity to implement a future SAA. The study concludes that negotiations should start once BiH has made progress on 16 key priorities. In October 2005 the EC estimated that BiH had made sufficient progress in the implementation of the Feasibility Study reforms and recommended starting **SAA negotiations**. Negotiations are ongoing - with the **second technical round held on May 11-12, 2006 and the second official round on June 15-16, 2006** - and could be successfully completed by the end of this year, if progress in key areas - notably police reform and Public Broadcasting reform - is forthcoming.

BiH has not yet applied for membership.

Bulgaria & Romania started membership talks in 2000, two years later than neighbours from Central Europe. In April 2005, Bulgaria and Romania signed the Treaty of Accession, which foresees their joining the EU on 1 January 2007. The EC presented Monitoring Reports on their preparedness in October 2005, in which a number of shortcomings were identified.

On May 16 2006, the EC announced it considers that Bulgaria and Romania could be ready for EU membership on 1 January 2007, provided they fulfil 10 more conditions - four for Romania, six for Bulgaria, to address a number of outstanding issues.

The SAP

The Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP) is the EU's policy framework for the countries of the Western Balkans. It supports their development and preparations for future EU membership by combining three main instruments:

- the SAAs,
- autonomous trade measures and
- substantial financial assistance.

Regional co-operation constitutes a cornerstone of the SAP.

The SAA

The Stabilisations and Association Agreement is a contractual relation between the EU and the signatory country, following a negotiation process, and is the first step toward membership in the EU.

The European Partnership

Within the framework of the SAP, the EU set up European partnerships with Albania, BiH, Croatia, FYROM, and Serbia and Montenegro including Kosovo. The aim of these partnerships is to prepare the countries for greater integration with the EU.

The EU decided to apply to these countries the same methodology as that followed for the new Member States which joined in 2004. The enriched SAP therefore remains the overall framework for the European course of the countries of the Western Balkans, all the way to their accession.

The European partnerships provide a framework covering the priorities resulting from the analysis of the partners' different situations, on which preparations for further integration into the EU must concentrate in the light of the criteria defined by the European Council and, where appropriate, the progress made in implementing the SAP, including SAAs and, in particular, regional cooperation.

Funding

The CARDS programme was devised to provide assistance to the countries of South-Eastern Europe, with a view to their participation in the SAP. It covers, in particular:

- reconstruction;
- stabilisation of the region;
- aid for the return of refugees and displaced persons;

- support for democracy, the rule of law, human and minority rights, civil society, independent media and the fight against organised crime;
- the development of a sustainable market-oriented economy;
- poverty-reduction, gender equality, education and training, and environmental rehabilitation;
- regional, transnational, international and interregional cooperation between the recipient countries and the Union and other countries of the region.

Candidate countries benefit from pre-accession financial instruments: Phare for institution-building and economic and social cohesion; ISPA for environment and transport infrastructures; SAPARD for agricultural and rural development.

As of 2007, funding will be through a new framework: IPA, the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance. Drawing on the lessons from the current accession process, the EU wants to rationalise pre-accession aid to potential members. The objective is to better prepare the candidate countries for the implementation of structural and rural development funds after accession.

SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO had the status as a potential candidate country confirmed in June 2003

SERBIA is the successor of Serbia and Montenegro and inherits the process and status quo regarding SAA negotiations, which were suspended on 3 May, 2006

BULGARIA & ROMANIA - On 16 May, 2006, the EC announced Bulgaria and Romania should be prepared for EU membership on 1 January 2007

SLOVENIA is a Member State of the EU since 1 May, 2004 and will join the Euro-zone on 1 January, 2007

CROATIA - On June 12, 2006, the EU approved the start of detailed membership talks

BiH - potential candidate status, SAA negotiations on-going

FYROM - obtained candidate status in December 2005

ALBANIA - signed the SAA on 12 June, 2006

MONTENEGRO was formally recognised by the EU on 12 June, 2006



Recognition for Professional Journalism

Journalists play a key role in disseminating information on European issues and in motivating their audience to think what BiH and its citizens must do in order to become a candidate country and, ultimately, a member of the world's largest economic and political union. To publicly recognise their endeavours, the EC Delegation once again invited journalists from printed and electronic media to submit a piece, this time produced in 2005, to compete for the prize for the best reporting on BiH-EU relations. The first prize was awarded to **Mr. Sefik Dautbegovic of Oslobođenje**, whose [December 25th article is reproduced below](#). Second place went to **Mr. Mirsad Bajtarovic** of BH Radio, with **Ms. Elvira Ahmetovic** of NTV Hayat finishing third. The prizes were handed out on May 9 by Ambassador Humphreys and his Excellency Mr. Werner Almhofer, Ambassador of Austria, which held the rotating EU presidency.

My Country - Which Way to Europe - Daring to Go Where Others Have Long Gone

The Bosnian bugaboo is no longer circling; Europe has opened the door ever so slightly and is waiting for us. There were many talks and agreements all over the world. And then there was the one in Washington. It was agreed that our country could go towards Europe. And there is no joking with Washington. Granted, our country is not that big; all of it fits in just two parts.

So, we have set off to go where normal people went long ago. And, since that's the case, I'm packing, too. I don't want to be late, because Europe doesn't tolerate carelessness or recklessness. But, I haven't got much to take, worries mostly, and I am pondering which way to go.

Several Merry Roads

If I head over *Trebevic*, it's dangerous. I'll run into a mine fields and that's a nuisance - might as well forget about getting to Europe.

If I head over the *Goat Bridge*, I will be in the other Entity in no time. The other Entity is still doing pretty well. Not even Washington got to it. But, as soon as I cross the bridge, my chances of running into *Cavic*, who might bore me to death talking about the RS as a Daytonian creation, significantly increase. So, I tell myself I am not going that way either.

Forget the opposite direction - that's not safe either. What if the progressive farmers put up their tents on the highway or, God forbid, dump their potatoes by the side of the road, or lay down on the pavement. I wouldn't be able to get past the progressive ploughmen.

The road leading south is not much safer. Down there, the Herzegovinian educators might take to the streets to tell the government to raise their salaries and pay for their hot meals, which would really come in handy with the weather being so cold.

They say they will shut down at least eighty schools. They have already bought the locks, sacrificing food to afford them. They don't care that they leave us uneducated and illiterate and, as such, unable to go to Europe.

I also don't want to take this road because there is a chance I might run into *Niko Lozancic* or *Ivo Miro Jovic*, coming back from some *HDZ* meeting in *Rama* or *Livno*. *Niko*, in particular, is a regular at these meetings, where he actually talks. They'd bore me talking about how Croats are endangered, and how Croatian is neglected in schools and how there is no TV channel for Bosnian Croats and on and on...

One thing I know is that *Niko* would not bother me talking about the Federation - the one, let it be known, he is the President of, but might as well not be. His behind has barely touched the seat he holds in the Federation nor does he ever appear in public, representing the Federation. You'd think he was the head of a local council, not an Entity, and the larger one at that. The *HDZ* is more important to him. And that's that.

Might be best if I waited a little. Europe is not going anywhere. It can wait. Better yet, they finally get *Karadzic* and *Mladic*, and then I can go to Europe with peace of mind. The investigators and *Carla*, they say, are trying but just can't find them.

But I know one thing: *Radovan* is not on some island like *Ante* was. If you think that *Radovan* is now on some beach, half-way across the world, drying his trunks, you are mistaken. Swimming has never been his strong suit. No, *Radovan* is not going anywhere near water. And they are searching the monasteries for nothing. They've searched them all and *Rasa*¹ is nowhere to be found. What would he do in a monastery? He'd get bored there.

It's more likely that, as soon as the weather turns nicer, he comes out of his den, sits under a beech and plays some heroic song on his *gusle*². He is enjoying the music of his childhood. What does he know about the Canaries and why would he go there when there are no *gusle*. I bet that's why he's not there.

Rasa was constantly trying to do something, albeit unsuccessfully. When he was young, he used to write poetry that no one liked because it really was not that good. One time, he tried to recite his poems, and right away we booed him off because his poems had no meaning, so he ran out of the room. Had *Carla* heard them, she would have run, too, just to not have to listen to them.

Still, many like-minded folks are helping him hide. There are those who - if they found *Radovan* asleep under some oak tree - not only would not turn him in, they would bring him tea and cover him with a blanket, so that he doesn't catch a cold, because this is vital for national interests. So, it doesn't surprise me that they can't find his den.

We will Export Ministers

I find comfort in the fact that there is something that we are rated number one for in Europe; no one comes close when it comes to the number of governments, ministers, prime ministers, deputies, assistants, advisors, commissions, councils, advisory boards, associations and so on. When we go to Europe, we could send at least two-thirds of them to those countries that are short of ministers and advisors. Many of them are not that smart, but if you haven't got any better, they're not bad.

We'd get rid of them and, if nothing else, our experts could teach those countries how to spend public funds, use official vehicles, build holiday homes and be compensated for this and that.

Those in the West don't know how to do this. They are so naive. They don't know how to get money from the budget; our guys could easily teach them.

They are experts at this. Those in the parliaments and those in the governments and those in the municipalities... I am surprised that they haven't figured out a way to collect a cost of living adjustment for living with their in-laws. They could use it.

There is a lot to be done before setting off for Europe. We need a broom to sweep up the dirt and tidy up the country, so that it looks like a bride on her wedding day.

But, who will do this, and how, when the time has come at the most inopportune moment.

Translation by: Ksenija Keivanzadeh

¹ Nickname for *Radovan* (translator's note)

² Traditional Bosnian musical instrument (translator's note)



Success Stories in Regional Development

On June 20, the brochure "Regional Economic Development - Success Stories in Bosnia and Herzegovina" was presented by Ambassador Michael B. Humphreys and Dr. Christian Schwarz-Schilling, High Representative and EU Special Representative.

The publication features some of the 47 economic regeneration and tourism development projects funded by the EU through the RED Fund and implemented by NGOs, local and regional development agencies or business associations, among others. They range from a state-of-the-art interactive web portal which promotes BiH as a tourism destination worldwide, to local community actions where the population carried out voluntary work to reconstruct their heritage sites and develop their tourism potential; from a human resources incubator to counter the brain-drain and favour the integration of young, educated entrepreneurs, to the development of an organic agriculture cluster which has significantly raised the profile of this potentially lucrative niche market. The RED Fund has provided co-funding grants worth a total of over €5.2 million over the past two years, with more Calls for Proposals already planned.

Ambassador Humphreys spoke about the importance of Regional Economic Development and about certain European funds which are

distributed not by country but, rather, on a regional basis, so as to achieve balanced growth. The projects featured in the brochure are an encouraging sign that BiH is slowly developing the necessary structures and absorption capacities to handle such funds in the future. In this context, the new technical assistance project EURED II will continue to provide support to the five Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and will now also support the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations, notably in the establishment of an Entrepreneurship and Development Council.

Dr. Schwarz-Schilling stressed the importance of a favourable business environment, which will not in itself bring prosperity, but which will allow enterprises to thrive and create prosperity.

Mr. Dragan Doko, Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations, welcomed the technical assistance and highlighted the importance of small and medium enterprise (SME) development and the key role of RDAs.

Mr. Srdan Ljubojevic, Assistant Director in the Directorate for European Integration, emphasized the importance of adopting the draft SME Strategy for BiH and regularising the legal status of RDAs.

GRASSROOTS PARTNERS



Mozaik's Heritage Trails

The "Community Development Foundation Mozaik" was established in 2000 and has implemented numerous community development actions throughout BiH. In 2002 Mozaik was involved in the implementation of the "Living Heritage Project" initiated by the King Baudouin Foundation. This experience was the basis for the "Heritage Trails" project submitted following the Call for Proposals for tourism development projects launched by the EC Delegation to BiH in August 2004.

EU funding from the RED Fund amounted to € 87,500, with co-funding by Mozaik. The project started in December 2004 and lasted seventeen months.

Heritage Trails thematically links the communities of Kraljeva Sutjeska, Vranduk, Travnik, Prusac and Visoko, which are rich in history and local traditions. The aim is to create a sustainable tourist programme which will preserve and exploit them, and will attract the increasingly popular niche market of eco- and ethno-tourism. The project is a combination of tourism development and local community actions, with voluntary community involvement in the reconstruction activities, so as to preserve and market their cultural and historical heritage. Training was also provided for tourist guides, local resource mobilisation and heritage marketing. The opening ceremonies on May 17 and 31 were lively demonstrations of the multiple attractions these communities have successfully developed as an economic resource.

The 2006 Visitors Programme

The European Union Visitors Programme (EUVP) is for young professionals and leaders aged between 25 and 45 from countries outside the EU, who receive a grant to visit EU Institutions and become better acquainted with the Union's goals, achievements and prospects. They gain a first-hand appreciation through a programme tailored for each participant's specific areas of interest. Candidates who have completed their university education and have career-related interests in the EU are short-listed by EC Delegations and chosen by a Selection Committee in Brussels.

The EUVP was established in 1974 by the European Parliament and the EC. It is governed by a Steering Committee under the joint Chairmanship of Mr. Alego Vidal-Quadras Roca, Vice-President of the European Parliament, and Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner.

In 2006, four participants from BiH are included in the programme:

- **Mr. Amir Zukic, Editor-in-Chief of BHT1 News**, the only nationwide public broadcasting news programme. European integration is high on the country's political agenda and journalists and editors play an important role in disseminating understanding of the structure of the EU.
- **Ms. Jasenka Perovic, Director of the E-Net Centre** at the Faculty of Economics in Sarajevo, an important local resource in the process of harmonisation with EU standards. It aims to become a major educational and training resource and, thus, have a significant impact on the country's development process.
- **Mr Sasa Magazinovic, President of the Youth Forum of the Social Democratic Party of BiH** and a key player in the bi-



monthly magazine "Dialogue", published in co-operation with the youth Social Democrats from Serbia and Montenegro. The magazine addresses important political and social issues, including European integration, and is supported by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

- **Mr. Elmedin Muratbegovic, Senior Assistant at the University of Sarajevo**, involved in studies of Justice and Home Affairs and the EC Feasibility Study for BiH. His position will ensure a valuable multiplier effect through transfer of his experience to University students.

EUROPE AND TECHNOLOGY

Promoting eHealth

Health-related information is one of the most sought-after topics on the internet, demonstrating how the Information Society can help people maintain their health by being better informed. There are also many healthcare information technologies (IT) which can improve patient care, while others can make health systems more efficient and responsive, so more funds can be spent on healthcare and less on administering it. This benefits citizens, as consumer of both health care services and health information.

The EC describes eHealth as the application of information and communications technologies across the whole range of functions that affect the health sector, from doctors to hospital managers, including nurses, data processing specialists, social security administrators and - of course - the patients.

The Member States' administrations are the key actors in achieving the objectives, for it is at this level that key decisions on implementation of IT infrastructure in health care provision must be made. However, a

European dimension to the challenge exists in the identification and dissemination of relevant benchmarking criteria for eHealth.

Since 2003, the EC consistently supports the organisation of eHealth High Level Conferences, as a successful way of fostering best practices exchange between European policy makers, experts and other stakeholders in eHealth. The first of these conferences took place in Brussels in 2003, while the fourth edition of the Conference was held in May 2006, in Malaga, Spain. This year's High Level Conference was devoted to reviewing and analysing the role that eHealth plays in the progress of Health policies in the Europe of the regions. The advance of eHealth applications and projects, and the wider level of implementation, oblige policy makers and other stakeholders to assess future developments, taking into account the need to build seamless informational networks across borders.

www.europa.eu.int/information_society/qualif/health/index_en.htm

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European Union home page: www.europa.eu

The EU's actions in BiH web page: http://ec.europa.eu/comm/enlargement/bosnia_herzegovina/index.htm

European Commission Delegation to BiH: www.europa.ba

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