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THE NAPLES DECLARATION Moving forward the Digital Local Agenda

DRAFT

If the Information Society for everyone and the efforts to reach the Lisbon strategy goal for 2010 of transforming Europe in a knowledge society with a leading position in the global market are to be reached, it is the time to take significant policy decisions that make these objectives tangible.

Recent macro-economic studies have demonstrated that the efficient development and use of Information and Communication Technologies account for an increase productivity of about 50% in the territories where it's being strongly deployed, an important number of new and qualified jobs, a better quality of life and sustainable development. It has also shown that the modernization of the public administration throughout Europe, especially in regional and local areas, and the creation of new and more focused public services to enterprises are milestones for economic and employment growth.

The problem is not only that the gap of the European Union with the United States, Japan and other world emerging economies in implementing the Information society has not been significantly reduced but also that the digital divide within Europe is dramatically present. The introduction of ICT is real and producing positive changes in working and living conditions of metropolitan areas while significant problems are being faced in small urban centres, rural and remote areas.

A two speed process exists and too many territories and areas are lying behind because high-speed broadband and fiber optic are not yet there to allow advanced digital services and because local economies and skills for using proper ICT are not sufficiently strong to implement attractive and competitive innovation programmes. The access to digital networks and services must be considered a new universal right for citizens, regardless of where they live and of their social conditions, and it is an obligation of the government powers, at all levels, to make it happen.

It is time to react to these conditions and the public sector must do its part putting together in a better way the resources that are available to guarantee universal service, that no one is excluded of the benefits that the Information Society produces, as well as to create an eGovernment system that supports governance and the participation of citizens in decision-making right from the local areas, where new ways of dialogue and of implementing action between local and regional governments, citizens, small and medium enterprises and community organisations can pave the way to the knowledge society we need.

The campaign organised by the European Commission:



The Italian Partners:



There is an urgent need to share knowledge, put in common human, material and technological resources, train civil servants and people in managing and using ICT, simplify administrative and legal processes, develop new products and services through public-private partnerships. In short, have an innovation motor based on collaborative networks and community of practices. Digital technology and telematic networks for this, like Internet and software developments, are there. What is needed is to organise ICT investments, solutions and resources in an ecosystem where the real needs and priorities of innovations are addressed.

In EISCO 2008 we have seen and discuss 36 good practices from all Europe linked to the priorities and deployment of the Digital Local Agenda regarding innovation models and advanced electronic services delivery, eCapacity Building for civil servants and citizens in danger of digital exclusion, the use of web 2.0 instruments and services to create new forms of dialogue and participation of citizens and local communities in decision-making and governance of the territory, the development of local networks for knowledge creation and integration of eServices and systems.

A first significant conclusion is the need to implement digital ecosystems in the territories for an integrated bottom-up approach for building digital capacity and endogenous local development. By adopting them and its underlying principles, public administrations can provide more tailored and personalized ICT services to citizens and businesses, which are cost-effective and adapted to the local culture and administrative processes. It allows administrations to pool, reuse, adapt and integrate different services created in other administrations in an easy and fast way, Together with pre-commercial procurement mechanisms, it allows local governments to involve local SME's both as users and developers of services, thereby activating local capacity building and knowledge sharing processes amongst the stakeholders within both the local area and across other national and international environments.

The instrument to move forward in this direction is the Digital Local Agenda to plan the development of the Information Society and ensure and adequate collaboration and coordination between all levels of the public administration State and the private sector. In this context, eGovernment must become a system that overcomes the actual situation in many local areas where best practices remain only as isolated cases of excellence. Reusing existing ICT solutions that are successful and avoiding re-inventing the wheel over and over, is a must. Open source software a valid instrument for this, other than proprietary software.

The Digital Local Agenda launched in EISCO 2005 is allowing a significant step forward to manage the complexity of the process to introduce ICT in local administrations and areas, in close coordination with the regional local administrations and as part of the national and European strategies condensed in the i2010 initiative.

In this Naples' conference we want to reaffirm the Digital Local Agenda Manifesto approved in EISCO 2007 (Hammenlinna) with its five priorities and 28 goals for 2010. We have made progress through our discussions in defining a model of the Agenda that can be implemented in all areas and discuss the objectives that each local administration should include. We have agreed on a basic document for discussion on the European model and roadmap of the Digital Local Agenda that is attached to this declaration, where the Agenda is built around the following instruments and priorities:

- The Digital Local Agenda Plan that each local government (or group of local government) discusses and approve through its regular decision-making organs, as part of its mainstream activities. The Plan should be based, when possible, on a 3 years programme that clearly distinguishes between those activities that are developed and financed with internal resources and those that require external partnerships and/or support;
- The Local Information Society Pact that each local government promotes in its territory and that is specifically addressed to local eServices local providers. The main aims of the Pact are: on one hand, to build a unique point of access in the web to local eServices (with a one-stop-shop strategy); on the other hand, to empower local ICT and content-providers by creating a collaborative network among them, especially regarding the roll-out of broadband and basic services infrastructure for the development of digital services to citizens and SMEs.
- The Forum with citizens and local stakeholders, using web 2.0 applications, to inform, promote and discuss with them the priorities set-up in the Digital Local Agenda and its progress, as well as to have a permanent instrument for citizen's feed-back on local eServices performance (eParticipation).

These objectives are to be gradually implemented in time, according to the local/regional conditions and the available resources. The idea is to have by 2010 not less than 20 EU Regions where the Digital Local Agenda has been launched with a systemic approach as well as hundreds of pioneering experiences taking place throughout the European Regions and Countries.

To make a faster progress in the actual process of rolling out of the Agenda, there is an urgent need to discuss in each Region and with the European Commission the initiatives and the support that is necessary to highlight and support the Digital Local Agenda policy.

The EISCO Conference participants, the National associations of Local and Regional Governments throughout Europe and the European networks that are moving forward the Digital Local Agenda (CEMR, ELANET, eris@, EUROCITIES KSF, IT4ALL and e-FORUM) consider that the different Funds and Framework Programmes of the European Union are indispensable for its realisation. In particular the structural funds programme (European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund, Interreg) and the Policy Support Programme of the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme are most appropriate instruments but there is the need of an alignment that takes into consideration the priorities of the DLA. For example, eCapacity Building of civil servants and empowerment of small administrations to incorporate and manage properly ICT is most urgent and a key activity to support them in the elaboration of their own Digital Local Agenda's.

It is then essential a stronger acknowledgment of the European Commission on the importance of the Digital Local Agenda and the need to ensure that is implemented in a coherent way with similar objectives and a common methodology in all European territories, especially where eInclusion and inclusive eGovernment policies are most needed. The ePractice portal supported by DG Information Society of the European Commission and the recent Broadband Portal supported by DG Regional Policies are two important instruments that we will use to promote the Digital Local Agenda and create a relevant community network.

It is also most important to consider co-funding opportunities in 2009 – 2010 for two mainstream initiatives:

- a) a network of European experts on DLA that to put together the expertise on eGovernment and Information Society developments at local and regional level and build a common methodology that gives to the DLA process greater coherence and results;
- b) a master European initiative based on pilot actions that takes place in Regions with different levels of ICT developments, to create a significant number of cases of excellence where the Digital Local Agenda is implemented with a systemic approach.

It is our intention to involve the Committee of Regions more directly in promoting the Digital Local agenda in the European Union government system to ensure that policies at European level address the priorities being brought forward through the Digital Local Agenda process.

At regional level, we call local governments and their associations to discuss now the DLA and its priorities with the regional administrations. Through the Regional Operational Programmes, it is possible to give consistent technical assistance to the local governments for the adequate preparation of their Digital Local Agenda's and through the calls for proposals on measures supporting regional and local innovation, co-finance good DLA- oriented projects.

Being Bilbao the place where the II World Summit on the Information Society of Cities and Local Governments took place and where the Digital Local Agenda was approved as a worldwide instrument to fight the digital divide, implement eInclusion and new ways of democratic participation in decision-making processes at local level, the EISCO participates acknowledge the proposal of the Association of Local governments of the Basque Country to meet at the beginning of 2010 in a new EISCO conference where an assessment of the progress done in implementing the Digital Local Agenda to fully implement the Lisbon strategy will take place.