

# Uvodnik/ Foreword 2/2007

The co-editors of "eRegion Development", a special issue of the 2007 Journal Organizacija, express their thanks to the contributors and the reviewers. Thanks are also due to the editor of Organizacija, Professor Jože Zupančič, for his continuous support over ten years of the special March issues of Organizacija on eCommerce (1996-2005, in Slovene), and the two special issues on the eRegion (2006 and 2007, in English). We appreciate the involvement of the Journal Organizacija in creating awareness of the relevance of "e" in the emerging Central European eRegion and in stimulating related research and publishing.

The contributions published in this issue are opening up numerous questions and proposing several answers. In addition, we are adding some questions in expectation of stimulating innovative thinking on the further development of the eRegion as a concept, development direction and an action plan. We are providing some answers to those questions, but invite everyone to consider them. These questions and some of the possible answers are as follows:

What will the major issues be in an accelerated development of the eRegion in Central Europe in next 2-3 years?

- Since May 2004, several new states in the Central European area became members of the EU, with Bulgaria and Romania joining in January 2007. Those countries represent a major geographic region that deserves consideration for possible joint research and development efforts, which may not be easy to initiate, accelerate and harmonize.
- A close collaboration between the government, private organizations and academia will be required,

assuming that the new ways of working together will have to be developed.

- Considering the EU standard of living, there are still under-developed parts of the Central European Countries (CEC). There are opportunities in exploiting the open access to EU Structural resources.
- Perhaps there are needs for a visible and transparent concept of a Central European Countries' body at a governmental level, contributing to the establishment of a position within the framework of the EU. Similar to the Nordic Council of Ministers based in Copenhagen, for example.
- More intensive information sharing and collaboration in the area of the exploration of Structural funds and the improved coordination of cross-country collaboration based e.g. on INTEREG and EQUER or EUREGA instruments.

What are "win-win" concepts for closer connectivity between the regions in the EU that are built upon strategies of common development and collaboration?

- Areas like: RTD, regional development, environment protection, security etc.
- Active and coordinated activities and participation in lobbying the relevant EU institutions.
- Coordinated support for the successful participation in all RTD programs offered by the European Commission.
- Common development programs based on bilateral or multilateral national agreements supporting bilateral and multilateral RTD projects.

What can the Central European eRegion learn from the successful ICT-based region initiatives in Western Europe and elsewhere?

- Learning from the success stories related to the structural funds projects proposals and learning from mistakes made during periods of the exploitation of structural funds.
- Combining "e" related initiatives. For example, eGovernment, eCollaboration, eLearning and similar research accelerated initiatives started in the mid 1990s and early 2000s.
- Several conceptions of metropolitan

(region-wide or city-wide) networks were opened. It is important to think about what can be done with such initiatives nowadays when there are new concepts in interoperability and collaboration, such as federal architecture, SOA or MDA architectures for interaction solving on a business and ICT level as well.

- A common strategy for the "customization", localization and implementation of international standards. Such as when the Northern European Subset of the Universal Business Language (version 2.0) was established in the area of eProcurement.

Which eCollaboration applications may contribute the most to the development of the eRegion?

- For example, applications in the areas of business, logistics, health, learning, geomatics, inclusion, etc. More specifically, eCommerce and eInvoicing as well access and mobility in Health services, ePatient Records, eHealth Cards, eInsurance etc.

Which types of inter-organizational system will require the most attention in the Central European eRegion?

- Development of SMEs collaboration and networking based on the principles of the "digital business ecosystem".
- Development of Regional eMarketplaces based on eCommerce implementation, including eInvoicing and eLogistics as components of cross-border eProcurement.
- The development and implementation of a basic system dealing with regional security and safety.
- Defining the business models that seem to be the most relevant to eRegion development.

What will be the role of mobile communications in an eRegion? Is a mobile technology a way to setup the most suitable communication infrastructure for nearly all the people in a short time-period? How can the mobile technologies contribute to accelerated eRegion development? What are the most important mobile applications for an eRegion?

- Interoperability among eGovernment and ePublic systems, which will create a good opportunity for the eRegion conception to increase

*the impact of these systems on community life.*

- Within a very short time, mobile technology will be a basic infrastructure for Ambient Assisted Living services in the Central European Regions as well.
- Relevant information services from the Regional Security and Safety System can be made more intensive by the implementation of mobile access to the services provided by these systems.

*What could be the major contributions of the universities in the eRegion?*

- Lessons learned from the contributions of ALADIN – the ALpe ADria INitiative Universities' Network.
- Acceleration of research and innovation in eGovernment and eBusiness areas with specific reference to eCommerce and regional security issues.
- The successful participation of universities and their partners in the FP7 projects of the EU (which is needed for better mutual collaboration and coordination among the ALADIN partners mainly during the period of project proposal preparation).
- Special attention should be paid to the small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).
- Accelerated business-government-university networking and interoperability.

*What can be the organizational structure of a cooperation model for universities and independent research labs cooperating with governments and businesses?*

- Common RTD and innovation projects.
- Interoperability between a variety of institutes and between the entities of a single institute contributing to satisfying the common activities and projects.
- The development of Living Labs, members of the European Network of Living Labs.
- Contributions to the creation of win-win situation opportunities and environments for universities, external business and government partners.

*Which emerging technologies may be the most relevant to the development of*

*the eRegion?*

- e-Infrastructures – GEANT, Galileo, the new generation of the Internet, Grid technologies, mobile technologies, RFID.
- Business Process Management - BPM and BPM Suits presented e.g. by OMG.
- The Living Lab approach as a potentially very useful framework-base for the networking of eRegions.

*Does an eRegion need a Regional Portal, or a Portal of Portals?*

- There is a foreseeable need for some kind of collection of distributed networks, which can be used through access to a Portal based on "Intelligent knowledge management" principles.
- Portals may be needed that allow access to relevant information or knowledge and the sharing of good practices, in the framework of supporting collaborative environments relevant for ad-hock networking or simply for discussion.
- The new challenges are in the improved exploitation of existing capacities and potential "distributed regional network(s)". E.g., there is a possibility of applying knowledge from GRID technology research – e.g. for modeling network performance, supporting upper level portal with GRIDS.

*Which regions in Europe should the Central European eRegion start to eCollaborate with?*

- Principles experimenting and experiencing in ALADIN – the ALpe ADria INitiative Universities' Network – in an eRegion as a network-based digital ecosystem concept may be used in consideration of expansion opportunities.
- Investigating practical ways to expand ALADIN communities, which are already covering a certain part of the Central European region.
- The fact that there are representatives of less developed regions in ALADIN, as well as those from more developed ones, creates an opportunity for knowledge-based collaboration and knowledge transfer.
- Collaboration with other eRegions in the EU and globally contributing to sustainable development in

*different areas of interest (areas of interest need to be clearly defined in correlation with the EU development strategies as well as national and common EU development strategies).*

- Considering that the ALADIN community is mostly intended as a university community collaborating with partners; more partners would have to be attracted to cooperate with the universities.
- eCollaboration with the Nordic countries' region, e.g. in the areas of development in the application of eProcurement and eCommerce.
- SMEs and relevant public bodies have to engage more in cross-border eCollaboration.
- Universities do have a certain responsibility for an eRegion to exist. Which role should/could the ALADIN-based Central European eRegion have?
  - A collective partner in the EU projects of the FP7, Regional Territorial Cooperation (INTEREG), New Life-long Program (e.g. the new Erasmus program concept) etc., dealing with national legal and normative issues as well as European directives' proposals.
  - General planning support for the Regional Territorial Cooperation.
  - As a contributor to the development of an institutional model of cooperation with government organizations; the Central European Initiative, for example.

*Comments and suggestions are very welcome, as well as invitations to joint activities.*

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