



K O S T A S H A T Z I D A K I S

Our main priority is the development



Greece has experienced steady progress in the sector of tele-communications, enabling competition in the market and thus allowing for better quality services to be offered to the consumer. Nevertheless, it is a fact that we still need to accelerate our pace in many areas, one of which is the telecommunication market regulation. In most states in Europe, the leading part in this area is taken by the Independent Regulating Authorities. Following the same pattern in Greece, EETT is the National Regulatory Authority, which supervises and regulates the tele-communications market, and will all strive to support its work.

Moreover, the Ministry of Transport and Communications plans, coordinates and monitors projects and actions targeting the development of communications and new technologies across Greece. We already develop actions and projects that will be included in ESPA, the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF), and will be part of the strategy for the Electronic Communications industry in Greece. Our main priority is the development of our national telecommunications strategy, so that the rapid development of tele-

communications and high technology that we see all over the world becomes available to the Greek citizens too. This will allow our country to gain an equal place in the European Family.

In all things, there is always room for improvement - this is our aim, to become better day by day. The same stands for telecommunications as well. Our country has already made impressive steps, and this was also acknowledged by the European Commissioner for Information Society and Media, Mrs. Viviane Reding, during her recent visit. While, in the past, Greece held the last place in the broadband development, a negative fact as much for the competitiveness of the country as for the citizens themselves, it now achieved within a year to accelerate the growth of broadband penetration reaching 10,2%. A number of factors contribute to this achievement, among those the support from the enterprises, EETT and the government. The effort should be continued. What we owe to do from our side is to set up fair rules so that in collaboration with the Independent Regulating Department and other interested parties to enable healthy

competition among the enterprises of the sector. The telecommunications market changes daily at a global level. It is my personal belief that, in this particularly dynamic market which is transformed in our country as well, that there is place for all; not only for the Hellenic Telecommunications Organization (OTE), that admittedly has shown big vigor in the past few years, but also for alternative suppliers offering quality services. The Hellenic Telecommunications Organization should continue dynamically and become even more modern as a priority of the company's management.

Our goal is to support the tele-communications market so that we converge to the European Community average in the leverage of electronic communications. For this purpose we

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of our national broadband strategy

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should attract big investments and protect the consumers' interest at the same time. Our focus is always the citizens - consumers and in order to protect their rights, the market should function properly, in the appropriate competitive framework. In the telecommunications sector, EETT should have a big role. A role that becomes even more important if we mediate that our country, even if it made important progress, was delayed in applying the Community legislation on telecommunications. We should boost our actions and mainly, we should all comprehend that there is a need for coordinated and essential efforts from all. Not only the Regulator that should function really independent from all kinds of influences, but also the State and the Enterprises.

In my speech to the Parliament regarding the Departmental program I set 6 specific targets, which I want to achieve during my time in the Ministry. One of them is to give more traction in the sector of communications and to move faster in the spread of broadband networks, especially in the region. It is important to give emphasis in the region

where the development of broadband infrastructures is more difficult and naturally more expensive. It is already in progress a very ambitious program of the Operational Program "Information of Society" with our goal to create such infrastructures in 75 Greek cities.

With the completion of this program the entire country will obtain modern telecommunication infrastructures, enabling further broadband penetration. At the same time we coordinate projects that will give us alternative possibilities for the broadband development in Greek regions, where the cost of land-line connection is really big because of the area morphology. For instance, the program "DORY", has been planned precisely to offer broadband services in the faraway regions of Greece via satellite Internet, overcoming the technical and economic difficulties that we would have using land-line connections. Broadband, in Greece as well as in the rest of the world grows rapidly. It is true that up to date we had a lot of delays and quite enough problems. Even though we achieved to get to the right path, it appears that still we fall short concerning

the rest European states in broadband penetration. That is why we plan our next moves very carefully, in order to gain the lost ground. The role of citizens in this effort is very important.

It is natural - and we all want it - that the consumer will demand quality services and better products. This way the market is forced for improvement, and the government is also forced to undertake action there where the private initiative cannot correspond as for instance in the infrastructures in faraway regions of the country. We have also seen similar problems abroad, because thus it happens in each new market and in each new technology. And we realise that these problems sooner or later will smoothen out - there are solutions as long as we all try to become better and mainly more effective. The government, from its part, should and must help substantially, so that that the citizen enjoys faster all possibilities that can be offered by the digital era. **S**

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