Abstract

Day 3, International Day – Morning Session

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What do the Candidate Countries expect from the European Union?

Before the candidate countries are ready to fully explore IT challenges in health care, they will have to overcome certain country-specific (or region-specific) difficulties. All activities connected with the operational plan *e*Europe+ in the frame of "An Information Society For All" have three basic objectives:

- improvement on the Internet access,
- investment into education and acquirement of knowledge needed in the digital age
- the stimulation of Internet applications in all working activities, especially in health care (*e*Health).

In several newly associated states (NAS), there are developed special programs reflecting objectives of the operational plan *e*Europe+ in health care. Connecting activities in *e*Health are in the Czech Republic covered by the program Health on-line (2000-2003). These activities focus on the most important Czech priorities, e.g. formation of the healthcare information forum as a discussion portal on health care in the Czech Republic; creation of National Health Registers for different medical disciplines that will serve for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes. The web technology and the Internet have been used with coding of a secured data protocol and with a system of administration on the level: role, password and possibly smart card. At present time there are 21 such interactive registers for 2500 users. As we can see the basic assumption for NAS is the *e*Accessibility. A low proportion of PC-equipped households in NAS countries, e.g. 13 % in the Czech Republic, mean a low possibility to introduce advanced concepts in health telematics to NAS. When moving towards the Information Society in health care a computer and Internet become a part of an ordinary life even for an ordinary patient. It is evident that more and more healthcare services will be carried on by means of Internet. The prognosis of the information society in health care was given in more details in [1].

Much to do is also left in education. Sparse dissemination of the information technology and computer literacy in the population may cause future handicaps for many people to get health related information. The governmental program „Internet to school" started in the Czech Republic in 2002. It would train about 100 000 teachers before the end of the year 2005. Using the European Computer Driving License the general public can test their computer qualification. An important task is to convince important state institutions and large companies to recognize ECDL as a true certificate of IT users skills.

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Another set of challenges falls into the field of health research and development. Consider the problem of possible brain drain that might lead to migration of scientists form the academia to the private sector or IT specialists out of the NAS countries. A problem of research and development funding as well as improving the quality of research has been largely assisted by the participation of many NAS researchers in EU funded projects. It is very important for NAS countries to have the real possibilities to be involved in broader collaborative networks and considerable larger projects of the 6th framework programme. Moreover, it is very important to harmonize the NAS research priorities with EU priorities. For example in the Czech Republic the national plan of oriented research was approved. It states many important Czech research priorities for the information society in health care. Future national and EU research priorities and national implementation plans were published as the contributions of national delegates in [2]. The EC initiative to help the NAS countries to overcome the initial conditions for European co-operation has already started, e.g. the project PRO-ACCESS (http://www.pro-access.org/). Many topics concerning NAS problems will be discussed during the workshop "RTD Potential in Central and Eastern Europe for Building Information Society in Healthcare", Prague, April 15th 2004 (http://www.euromise2004.org/).

References
[1] Zvárová J., Přibík. V.: Information Society in Czech Healthcare "Starting Point" to Prognosis for the Year 2013. International Journal of Medical Informatics 66, 2002, pp. 59-68
[2] IT for Health in Europe Vol.1, Vol.2, ISTC Working Party for Health and Persons with Special Needs, European Commission, Brussels July 4th, 2001