

SEEFIRE WORKSHOP IN BUCHAREST RAISED AWARENESS ABOUT BENEFITS OF DARK FIBRE



SEEFIRE

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The **SEEFIRE** (South-East Europe Fibre Infrastructure for Research and Education) project has held a policy workshop in **Bucharest, Romania** on Tuesday **17 January 2006**. The workshop, the second in a series of SEEFIRE events, focused on the strategic and economic benefits of National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) owning and operating their own dark-fibre networks in southeast Europe. The workshop brought together end-users, university directors, telecommunication operators as well as decision makers and political representatives.

Dark fibre is optical fibre dedicated to use by a single organisation – for example, a research network organisation – where the organisation is responsible for attaching the transmission equipment to "light" the fibre. Professional companies that specialise in dark-fibre systems take care of the installation of the fibre and may also maintain it on behalf of the research network organisation. NRENs are keen to access dark fibre to improve their networks, rather than lease complete services from telecommunications operators or commercial Internet Service Providers (ISPs).

The workshop attracted representatives from all the NRENs in southeast Europe (including Croatia, Moldova and Turkey whose NRENs are not partners in SEEFIRE), representatives of academic institutions, telecommunications operators that have strong business interests in the region, research networking organisations in Romania (RoEduNet, ICI and RNC), as well as representatives from the Romanian Ministry of Education and Research and the Romanian Ministry of Communications and Information Technology.

The workshop was opened by Professor Anton Anton, State Secretary in the Ministry for Education and Research and President of the National Authority for Scientific Research in Romania. Mario Campolargo from the Directorate General Information Society and Media at the European Commission joined via videoconference and spoke about the continuing support from the European Union for the region.

At the workshop, delegates heard about the role of NRENs, how the role of NRENs differs from the role of ISPs and how important it is that they are fully supported by their national stakeholders. They also learned that the status of NRENs in the southeast European region needs significant improvements, especially when compared to their peers in other, more advanced countries. Improvements are needed not only in terms of bandwidth, but also in terms of organisation, funding and government support.

The pan-European GÉANT2 network was presented as a new network that is largely based on dark fibre. Emphasis was put on the role that SEEFIRE will need to play in extending the GÉANT2 dark-fibre cloud in the southeast European region. FCCN, the Portuguese NREN, demonstrated how they had used EU Structural Funds to be

successful in this area. Finally, some best-practice examples of the acquisition of dark fibre in the region were presented.

The programme of the workshop reflected the SEEFIRE project objectives: to promote the importance of an advanced network to support research and development in the southeast European region. The project also aims to raise awareness of dark-fibre networks as cost effective ways to allow the NRENs in the region to provide high bandwidth, thereby enabling improved services to the research and education communities.

The workshop, which was attended by more than forty people, was hosted by RoEduNet and held at the Hotel Capsa, located in the heart of the Bucharest city centre. The workshop was kindly sponsored by Level 3 Communications.

The SEEFIRE project, carried out by a consortium of 11 partners, will ultimately provide NRENs in the southeast European region with a set of useful reports and guidelines about the deployment of optical transmission technologies as well as regulatory, legal, economic and strategic issues. The project is co-funded by the European Commission as part of the Sixth Framework Programme.

For more information about the SEEFIRE project, please visit: <http://www.seefire.org/> .

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