



SEEFIRE WORKSHOP OPENS DOORS TO ACQUISITION OF DARK FIBRES IN SOUTH EAST EUROPE

SEEFIRE

The first SEEFIRE (South East Europe Fibre Infrastructure for Research and Education) workshop took place in Sofia, Bulgaria on 14 and 15 July 2005, opening the doors for the National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) in the region to acquire dark fibre.

Dark fibre is the name given to the fibre optic cables which have yet to be used and are predominantly owned by commercial companies. NRENs are keen to access the dark fibre to improve their networks, rather than lease complete services from telecom operators or commercial internet service providers (ISPs).

Attracting NRENs from South East Europe (SEE), the European Commission and industry, a panel discussion provided a forum to explain that NRENs are interested in acquiring dark fibre as the only cost effective means of developing their networks; that it would also allow NRENs in the SEE region to bring their networks to the same level as other European research and education networks; and demonstrated that NRENs are not in competition with the telecom operators and ISPs. A number of presentations allowed delegates to learn about the experiences of others in acquiring dark fibre, both within the SEE region, other European countries and in the United States.

The SEEFIRE project, a consortium of 11 partners, will ultimately provide NRENs in the SEE 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. Co-funded by the European Commission, the project began in March 2005 and will run for a year.

Licia Florio, Project Development Officer, TERENA Secretariat, said: "The workshop was a great success as it not only allowed the telecom operators to understand the research and academic environment better but also allowed them to see that NRENs are not their competitors - a vital step if deployment of dark fibre is to happen in the region."

The workshop, attended by over 50 people, was organised by the Information Society Technologies Foundation Bulgaria (ISTF) and TERENA, and sponsored by Cisco Systems and the ICT Development Agency of Bulgaria.

The next SEEFIRE Workshop is planned for January 2006 and will focus on the strategic and economic aspects of dark fibre networks in the SEE region. The workshop will particularly appeal to all NREN stakeholders, politicians, users, managers of research and education institutions and fibre owners.

For more information about the SEEFIRE project and indeed the workshop, visit: <http://www.seefire.org> or contact Licia Florio, TERENA Secretariat, Email: licia@terena.nl .

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