LORIS

Local and Regional Information Society
Prague and Hradec Kralove, April 1–3, 2007

Conference Guidebook
2007

Kraj Vysocina

Education and Culture DG

Contents

Introduction

The LORIS (Local and Regional Information Society) international conference, which took place on 2 and 3 April 2007 concurrently with the ISSS (Internet in Public Administration and Self-government) conference at the Aldis Congress Centre in Hradec Kralove, has significantly contributed to further development of twinning cooperation between European towns. The conference was attended by representatives of more than twenty towns who exchanged experience, established new contacts and discussed the development of eGovernment at the local and regional level, as well as making use of EU funds for further enhancement of cooperation between towns and development of eTourism. The Czech Republic was represented, for example, by the capital city, Prague, and the cities and towns of Jihlava, Ceske Budejovice, Hradec Kralove, Karvina, Litovel, Novy Jicin, Znojmo and Otrokovice. Also present among European partnership cities and towns were Slovakia's Bratislava, Banska Bystrica, Dubnica nad Vahom, Kremnica, Martin, Moldava nad Bodvou, Nitra, Nova Dubnica, Puchov and Trencin, Hungary's Budapest, Encs, Karcag and Nyiregyhaza, Poland's Warsaw, Walbrzych and Wroclaw, Lithuania's Vilnius, and the Netherlands' Purmerend. The conference's main organiser was the Vysocina Region, while the European Commission co-financed it within the TT programme on the basis of the appeal of the Directorate General for Education and Culture of the EC "Support for Active European Citizenship".

According to Milos Vystrcil, M. Sc., administrator of the Vysocina Region, "the international LORIS conference is annually a unique opportunity for exchange of international experience. The close links with the national ISSS conference and, in the past four years, also with the working meeting of Visegrad countries, V4DIS, allows within a few days to concentrate in one place a host of personalities, experts, visions and examples from practice. Taking advantage from it are all those who have participated in building up information society not only in the Czech Republic but also in a number of other European countries."

This year, for the umpteenth time the international forum in Hradec Kralove was attended by Paul Timmers, head of Unit eInclusion, DG INFSO of the European Commission, who expressed his pleasure that the international conference was taking place. Among other things, he declared that "just like information technologies affect the quality of life or success of business, they must lead in public administration to a much higher effectiveness of procedures, simplification of administration and better communication between the state and citizens. In addition, development of information society is among the absolute priorities within the European Union."

One of the most prominent guests of the conference was Omar Al-Rawi, councillor of the City of Vienna, who pointed to the fact that "at the present time, close cooperation between towns and regions in individual EU countries has in today's united Europe a great importance both in terms of overcoming various barriers, the market economy, as well as implementation of common interests and projects". Very interesting for the conference participants was the presentation of his experience with the use of ICT technologies by the city of Vienna for work and communication with various groups of the population, including disabled citizens, senior citizens and immigrants.

In addition to discussions and negotiations between representatives of towns, the LORIS 2007 conference also put emphasis on best practices and successful projects. Presented in the project laboratory at the Eliska Hall were examples of a functional town-twinning cooperation – between Bratislava, Prague and Vienna (*www.bratislava.sk*, *www.praha-mesto.cz*), between Moldava nad Bodvou (Slovakia) and the Hungarian towns of Encs and Karcag (*www.moldava.sk*), as well as another project of Prague, Bratislava and Vienna, eContent plus (*www.econtentplus.net*). In the project laboratory on the first floor, projects of Otrokovice and the Slovak town of Dubnica (*www.dubnica.sk*) or cooperation between representatives of Prague, Bratislava and Wroclaw, Junior Internet (*www.juniorinternet.cz*), were presented.

Within the conference, there were a host of meetings between representatives of twinned towns who discussed the current cooperation and preparation of joint projects. One of these successful meetings was between representatives of Jihlava and Purmerend (the Netherlands).

The majority of participants in the LORIS 2007 international conference arrived in the Czech Republic on Saturday 31 March. On Sunday morning they went on a sightseeing tour of Prague and in the early afternoon they met with representatives of the Municipality of Prague, headed by councillor Milan Pesak. After moving to Hradec Kralove in the afternoon, they participated in the first workshop, followed by a social evening at the local theatre. The programme of the next two days comprised a number of seminars, presentations and workshops. Within the Monday social evening, the international EuroCrest competition for the best websites of towns, municipalities and regions in Europe was announced.

The two thousand participants in the concurrently running national ISSS conference also had the possibility to acquaint themselves with the results of the meetings of the international LORIS 2007 conference, the overview of the current links between the European towns engaged in the town-twinning programme, as well as the conclusions of LORIS 2007. This information is being further distributed through the participating European initiatives and networks; for example, Telecities-Eurocities, ELANET-CEMR and Global Cities Dialogue.

Milos Vystrcil
President of Vysocina Region

Focus and objectives

- Common European information space offering available and secure broadband connections, abundant and diverse digital services
- Widely available information society which provides high-quality public services and enhances the quality of life
- To stimulate the participation of twinned cities in European programmes and projects supported by the European Commission
- Exchange of experience among twinned municipalities. To involve key politicians and decision-makers in the process of developing information society at local levels
- To strengthen awareness of European cultural and language diversity by supporting eTourism at the municipal level, to underline the unsubstitutable role of towns while taking into account that according to the research statistics up to 70% of tourists get information from the internet
- To familiarise the participants with the work of European networks in the area of development of information society and show the possibilities of their participation in their work or projects (ELANET – CEMR, Global Cities Dialogue).

Presented projects

i2010

The conference was aimed to increase awareness on the leading and major European Lisbon initiative i2010. This initiative promotes an open and competitive digital economy and emphasizes ICT as a driver of inclusion and quality of life. The initiative contains a range of EU policy instruments to encourage the development of the digital economy such as regulatory instruments, research and partnerships with stakeholders.

The conference was divided into several sections where the main activities were mainly targeted to strengthen the cooperation between municipalities, regions and countries. The very first part was targeted to inform participants about i2010 on local level. Mr. Heikki Lunas, Vice-President of ELANET (CEMR), Director Information Society of the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities presented the ELANET (European Network on Information Society of Council of European Municipalities and Regions) network based on cooperation of national associations of the local and regional authorities; and ICT companies owned by the local and regional authorities. The main goal of this network is to cooperate on Information Society policy deployment, to promote the use of ICTs in local conditions and to develop projects.

Mr. Lunnas informed participants about the Digital Local Agenda – a strategic instrument that helps every government to carry-out feasible and sustainable plans regarding eGovernment, other electronic public services and support of local economies. Other task of the DLC is to create new services on the Internet through digital local networks built with other service providers and with public-private stakeholders. The Agenda is also concentrated to establish democratic forms of communication and dialogue with citizens, enterprises and other community organizations.

The Initiative i2010 Digital Local Agenda was agreed during the EISCO 2005 conference of ELANET (CEMR) in Cracow (further information on *www.eisco2005.org*). The agenda will be revised in 2007 according to i2010 Digital Local Agenda Declaration adopted in April 2007 during the Conference EISCO 2007 (*www.eisco2007.org*). This declaration supported by all the European networks and conferences, like LORIS conference, supporting the event, to establish a methodology and roadmap for the implementation of the agenda.

The purpose of the declaration is:

- to create a European network of experts with a core group to implement the agenda in the i2010 framework and time-line;
- to discuss with the European Commission representatives on how to provide visibility to the i2010 Digital Local Agenda in the three framework pro-

grammes, having eGovernment, eInclusion, eParticipation and e-support to lo-cal economies as main drivers of the process;
- to establish strong cooperation between ELANET, eris@, EuroCities, IT4All, IANIS, eGov Society research network and Demo-Net for this purpose.

A lot of efforts will be stressed into following activities:
- eParticipation in public local decision-making of citizens and relevant stakeholders;
- eInclusion through eCapacity building regarding both civil ser-vants/administrations and citizens to manage properly and make the best pos-sible use of ICT;
- Broadband access to everyone in Europe and support to wireless broadband solutions in towns and rural/less populated areas;
- Secured digital local networks among administrations and private sector for eGovernment and local development, ensuring systems interoperability, stan-dardized services and support to SMEs;
- Advanced municipal services in a multi-channel environment

Brief Eastern EU Members – Economics Overview

The European Union welcomed two new members, Bulgaria and Romania on January 1st 2007. This prompted the ICEG European Center to re-design and re-label its macroeconomic forecasts. The former title for these, 'The New Member States' has become more imprecise than before; it was meant to be temporary in any case. While the new definition of the region, 'Eastern EU Members' is far from perfect; we believe it is useful and geographically correct.
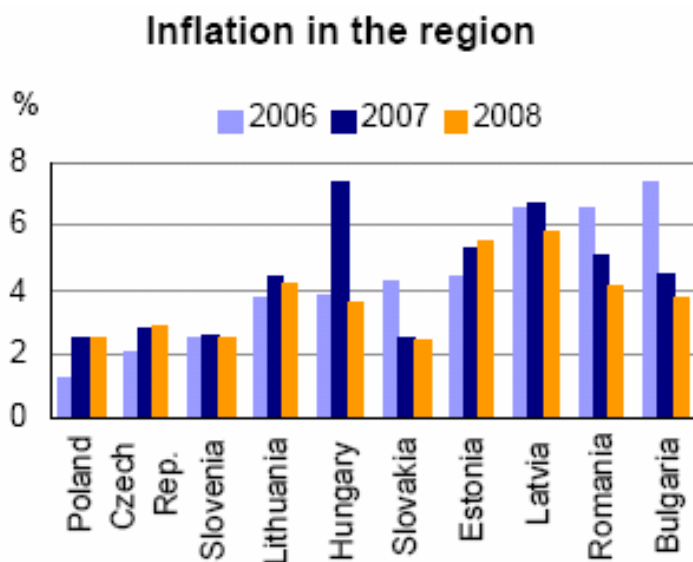
Growth
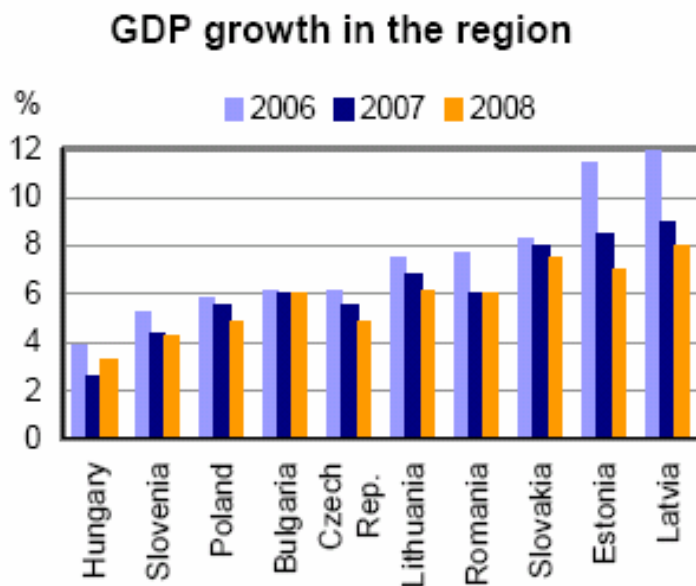
Last year brought exceptional growth throughout the region. The average growth rate of the ten countries was 7.4%. Latvia and Estonia grew fastest thanks to red-hot domestic demand. The rest of the region performed between 5–8%. Hungary

is the laggard of the region as fiscal austerity measures began to take effect already in 2006 and will keep growth low in 2007–2008 as well. Strong demand in the world economy and in the European Union bolstered exports everywhere. Domestic demand is gaining momentum thanks to strong wage growth, easy credit, the inflow of EU funds and good investment opportunities. This year is expected to bring a mild deceleration in line with a slight slowdown of the euro-area and decelerating domestic demand. Capacity constraints are also appearing in the overheated Baltic economies. Although there are signs of an orderly slowdown, a hard landing still cannot be ruled out, especially in the case of Latvia.

Monetary developments

The average inflation rate of the region was 4.3% last year but individual figures varied from 1.3% in Poland to 7.4% in Bulgaria. The Czech Republic, Poland and Slovenia have achieved price stability. Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia are on the path of disinflation. Prices are accelerating in the Baltic countries and Hungary. Large positive output gaps, rising indirect taxes and energy prices are the key inflationary factors in the Baltics. The situation in Latvia has finally prompted the government to adopt an anti-inflationary package. In the case of Hungary fiscal stabilisation measures include tax hikes and administrative price increases, resulting in a temporary surge in inflation. Slovenia entered the euro area on January 1st 2007. Many others are either losing sight of the common currency (Hungary and the Baltics) due to macroeconomic imbalances or do not hurry to introduce it (Czech Republic, Romania). Of the newest two EU members, Bulgaria aims for an early euro while Romania wants to achieve more real convergence first. However, recent speculation about the sustainability of currency pegs in Estonia and Latvia should serve as a reminder that outside the euro-area these countries are exposed to the fickleness of financial markets.


Note: harmonised (HICP) rates

Fiscal policy

Seven out of ten countries met the 3% deficit criterion of the Stability and Growth Pact in 2006. The Czech Republic and Slovakia missed the margin by less than 0.5 percentage points while Hungary had a massive 9.2% deficit. Countries

with currency boards or hard pegs (the Baltic states and Bulgaria) can rely only on fiscal prudence to keep their economies under control: Estonian and Latvian budgets 'lean against the wind' to contain rising imbalances. EU accession will put some burden on Bulgarian and Romanian budgets. Public investments are necessary for sustainable longterm growth everywhere. Societal demand is putting the pressure on politicians who are more than happy to spend on wages and welfare. Poland may face trouble from the European Commission if its deficit increases according to our expectations. As a result, public balances are expected to deteriorate slightly in part of the region. The average deficit will rise from 1.5% to 1.9% in 2007 before falling to 1.6% in 2008. However, macroeconomic risks and the failure to meet the 3% criterion are disciplinary forces. Hungary has an ambitious stabilisation package in place that should cut the deficit by almost 5 percentage points within two years.

Budget balances in the region (% of GDP)
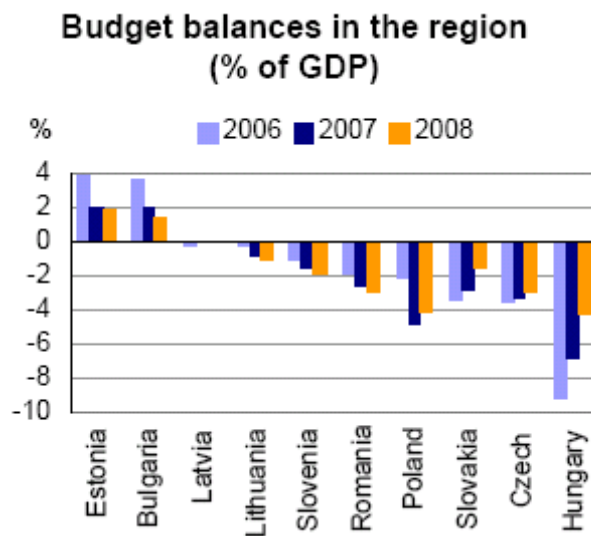
Note: according to ESA methodology

External balance

External imbalances are high and persistent in a number of countries. The regional average of current account deficits was 9.7% in 2006 and will fall by only 0.2 percentage points in 2007 and 2008.

Current account balances in the region (% of GDP)
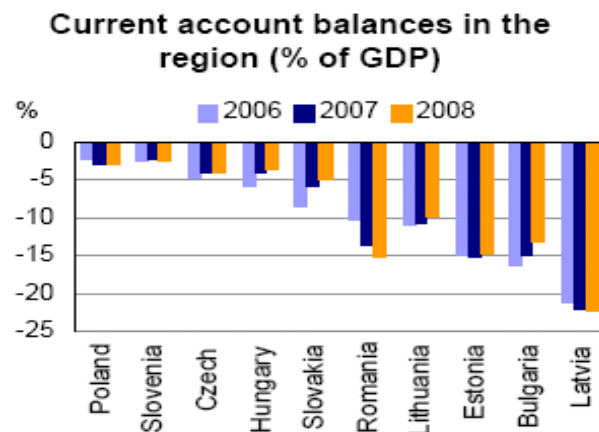
Note: according to ESA methodology

The 21.1% deficit of Latvia is dangerously high as recent turbulences prove. Soaring domestic demand fuels imports while export performance varies. FDI inflows improve exports in Bulgaria, Poland, Romania and Slovakia but rising domestic production costs can harm competitiveness in the Baltic countries. The special topic in this publication deals with the nature and causes of external imbalances and assesses the macroeconomic risks they pose. Foreign direct investments cover the bulk of external financing requirements in a number of countries but debt financing is dominant in the Baltics and Hungary. The associated risks are mitigated by the fact that most external borrowing takes place between foreign-owned banks and their parent companies.

Labour market

Thanks to strong economic growth, the region is characterised by job creation and falling unemployment. The average of national unemployment rates was 8.1% in 2006 and is expected to fall by 0.4 percentage points a year in 2007–2008. A number of countries face labour shortages as a consequence of large-scale migration of workers to Western Europe. This boosts labour costs even further, and may constrain growth in the longer term.

Note: harmonised LFS rates

Country Development Strategy of the Information Society – the comparison on the post and pre-accession stage

EU enlargement that took place in 2004 was the significant change for the citizens of all Europe. A lot of facts point that we are still in the 'new member countries' position but from 1st January 2007 we have two more partners within European family such as Bulgaria and Romania. The "older" New Member States are now changing their role respectively: from the poor, worst developed members we start to become donors and we have to total amount of financial assistance in the name of solidarity principle.

The EU has also the opened negotiations with Turkey and Croatia in 2005 as well as recognized the Western Balkans as potential candidate countries to the

EU gives our countries a new political context and new challenges for exploring new possibilities and also potential threats. Useful instruments for increasing not only countries but also municipal own competition position still are eGovernment, eDemocracy, eInclusion etc. solutions but financial assistance plays significant role. That role is going to be a crucial factor in the respective Country Development Strategy (CDS) implementation.

The problem of CDS implementation

It is rather clear that the implementation problem solving is limited mostly by financial support level. Let us assumed that implementation in case of Central European countries, mainly Poland, will be financed by both internal and external sources.

External means are Community public financial resources such as: European Regional Development Fund, European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance, Cohesion Fund as well as means dedicated to Lisbon politics implementation and activities connected with security and European citizenship. Total sum EU budgetary amounts of 86 billions euros Poland could use.

More than 67.3 billions euros foreseen under structural funds for the 2007–2013 will covered the objectives included in National Cohesion Strategy *(operational programs).*

For the agriculture restructuring we calculate that the an overall amount of 13.2 billion euros will be committed to Poland from European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and for co-financing there will be about 3.0 billions euros.

Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance will allocate about 0.7 billions euros for restructuralisation and for co-financing about 0.1 billion euros.

How to make optimal EU financial resources use?

It should be:
- better co-ordination between the particular actors of economical games which implement CDS objectives;
- effective guaranties system and European means quaranties.

The main question that has to be put into consideration is how to solve the above mentioned problem. Firstly the linkages between proper CDS objectives diagnosis and financial sources use. Second the financial sources a use skill in the framework of national public administration is also key issue. There is also the question of how the new members could equal compete with old members.

Transfer East

One of the main efforts to improve the Information Society within the European Union is concentrated to research and development. One of the project presented during the conference was "Transfer-East" – project covered from the 6th Framework Programme for Research and Development. The project aims at government-to-business implementation within the public administration with special regard to local administration. Its main activities are **favouring the transfer of learning,** facilitating the exchange of e-government good practices and their transfer when appropriate and contributing to enhance the quality of e-government initiatives across Europe.

The secondary aim of Transfer-East is to accelerate the transition phase to information economy and improve the efficiency of the Public Administration – Business relationship. The result expected is the transfer to selected Public Administrations in five targeted New Member States (Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia), partners of the project. The whole project Transfer-East is a Specific Support Action, entirely financed by the DG INFSO, within the Sixth Framework Programme.

The specific steps are as follows:
- G2B services situation analysis in the target areas (identification of needs):
  - defining the **state-of-the-art of Government to Business services** in the NMS identifying the main areas of interest for GPs transfer;
  - developing a preliminary **selection of governmental representatives** in each NMS to be involved in the G2B Good Practices transfer action.
- G2B services situation analysis within EU25 and within OECD countries as a response of the analysis of needs
- G2B services selection by the public administration in target areas
- Twinning partnership (EU25 countries – target areas)
- Professional training preparation
- Professional training realization

From the variety of G2B services as the most appropriate were selected:
- Taxes (e. g. online Income Tax Revenue, Value Added Revenue, other tax revenues; and Social Insurance Declaration and other online services related to social services);
- Statistical services (e. g. online services connected to commissioning and purveying of statistical data; company registration);
- Further services (e. g. online Custom Declaration, Public Procurements, Tenders documentation or other services offered to private sector online)

Further information about this project is possible to find on webpage *www.transfereast.net.*

Modern electronic marketing tools

The G2B services are very important to create and to develop. On the other hand for the municipalities one of the most important issues is to attract people to use it. The towns and cities are forced to use modern ICTs also as a marketing tool. The webpage becomes the most useful tool because of easy accessibility, cost-efficiency and attractiveness. The digital market and online marketing are new instruments and by using these will local public administration easily face the increasing competition. The self-governments shall be the most motivating example to support town development by using the Internet. The optimized and well-structured webpage with relevant information about the town or area should rapidly increase local tourism and could help the overall development simultaneously.

What is the most important in creating the official town (self-government) webpage:
- To add a tourism-oriented webpage on the main official webpage of the town;
- To keep the tourism webpage administrated by the local Tourist Information Centre;
- To translate the webpage to other commonly spoken languages;

For the Government-to-Citizen or Government-to-Business services the webpage should be oriented accordingly. Most of these services should be offered online without necessity to contact the local administration in person. Special attention should be given to disabled and elderly people.

The town webpage creation phases:

- Market situation analysis
- Information and publicity strategy (participants, processes to information administration)
- Implementation – central database creation, information system creation
- Distribution – Internet portal creation, PIAP multimedia kiosks creation
- Join to existing national and international networks (Visit European Cities, Visit Europe, European Quartet…) and be aware of new thematic or regional networks creation

The City of Nitra wants nowadays to get image of a modern, dynamic, town, town full of events, culture and tourism; it also tries to present its webpage this way. Electronic market and online marketing are new terms that must to be also adopted by Slovak self-governments if they want to compete in a wide offer of ever increasing competition. In this age the Internet represents a powerful tool of communication. It is as worldwide noticeable trend that people more and more try to get information via the Internet.

As a practical example of a perfect webpage we could name the webpage of the city of Nitra, which consists of three subpages in different colours according to the target group of the visitors, but all these pages are part of one Internet page:

- The page of Municipal Authority with important information and prints for citizens of the town (in dark blue colour)
- The official page of the city of Nitra (in light blue colour)
- The page of town information centre NISYS (in green colour)

The first page provides for the needs of the citizens of the town, the second creates the image of the town and represents it outward (for example towards the investors, people interested in living here, tourism or any other activities in town and the third is aimed exclusively at the tourists who can find here both services which are provided by Town information centre NISYS and updated information about cultural and sporting events, cultural and sports facilities, accommodation, catering and additional services and it also serves as a marketing tool to get to know number of visitors to the page, visit rate of the page and feedback on satisfaction of the tourists by means of public inquiries.

The official Nitra municipal webpage was due to efficient effort awarded by prestigious "Zlaty Erb" price in the year 2004. The prize is annually awarded to the best local Slovakian Information Society project aimed at improving quality and accessibility of e-services to citizens. The official webpage of the town is *www.msunitra.sk*. This webpage was also awarded by EuroCrest aw@rd and was rightfully assigned to one of the best municipal webpages in Europe.

The new portal of the Czech Capital

Not only Slovakia aims at modern and well-designed webpages. Prague, the same way as other cities, has been developing its web pages as a tool for providing the public with information since the Internet arrived to the Czech Republic. Almost

every City District and organization of the capital city of Prague has an interesting web page now. Of course, the Prague City Hall feels the main responsibility for the creation of information on the City administration, where its web pages were in the past even awarded in the competitions of the Golden Crest (2002) and EuroCrest (2003). As technology develops the Prague City Hall has been developing further potential for electronic communication with citizens fully in accord with the Information strategy of the City of Prague 2010 "Towards ePrague". One of the major activities in recent years is the creation of the Portal of the Capital City of Prague, which started by the decision of the Prague City Council in November 2004.

More and more people use the Internet. Although the Czech Republic is falling behind in the penetration of Internet connectivity as well as in the offer of content and services to majority of Member States of the European Union, over one third of households have already access to the Internet at present. In Prague the situation is more favourable because of the rather more developed telecommunication infrastructure, higher number of Internet users, as well as higher computer literacy than in other regions of the Czech Republic.

Users are getting accustomed to remote on-line dealing with matters, which they have had to deal in person till recently. The number of persons who enjoy on-line shopping, control their bank accounts, or order services, has been growing each year by units to tens of percent. Therefore it is not surprising that ever more citizens desire to be able to deal with official matters in alike simple way.

A new domain *www.praha.eu*

The new Portal of the City of Prague is available at the address *www.praha.eu*. Perhaps the domain name "EU" symbolizes itself its ambitions to be competitive on the international scale that means compared to other European and world metropolis portals. The Portal creation objective is the providing of on-line information and services to target groups of users (citizens, entrepreneurs, and visitors), which at present the City Hall provides either through traditional channels or by means of the existing web pages, that means in the way inappropriate concerning the current requirements and principles of e-government.

The new Portal shall provide for services enabling electronic communication and dealing with authorities on every agenda where the current legislation allows. The Portal should provide the services necessary from one location, even in cases when various information systems and information sources must communicate in the background, and shall provide services, which bring significantly simpler dealing to the citizens and will pose a step towards fulfilling the known slogan that "data have to travel not the citizen".

The principal change compared to the old web pages is the high level of interactivity. The Portal users will find more than mere articles informing on events in the City and functioning of authorities, offices, and other institutions. The new applications, for instance, interconnect the Portal with other servers. Perhaps the most important is, however, the possibility of comfortable and fast communication in between the citizen and authorities by means of interactive forms, which on one hand can be filled in, on the other hand can also be sent and later monitored how fast they will be processed. The Portal, connected with the Call Centre of the Prague City Hall and the Praguer's universal authorising card (UKP), should be a virtual counter for the contact in between the officers and citizens.

Needless to say that in the first phase technology equipment had to be substantially supplemented with new servers and applications for the new solutions. The Portal is based on J2EE and Sun One technologies. Next attention was paid to creating of new applications and interactive services provided by the Prague City Hall. The first set of on-line services has been first presented on the original City Internet pages *www.praha-mesto.cz* since spring 2006. It was, for example, registration of payers for municipal waste collection, submission of the application for barrier-free apartment, application for a grant for culture and monument care, submission of the announcement on the venue and date of a public assembly, registration for testing of road transport operators.

Since September 2006 the Portal *www.praha.eu* has been containing other services as, for instance, lost and found items, description of life situations (pursuant to the Public Administration Information Systems – ISVS standard), search in the Municipal Library catalogue, validity verification of personal identity documents, search for the Municipal Public Transport connections, list of Technical Control Stations and emission measurement, displaying the level of the Vltava River, weather forecast, etc. Since October 2006 new services are to be added as electronic postcards, virtual 3D tour through the Town Hall, and others.

The Portal also offers new electronic forms using the technology XML Filler from the company of Software602 for their generation and administration. The user can not only fill in and print out the forms and bring them prepared this way to the authority yet even more friendly way is their direct sending by means of the Internet. The Portal services are not terminated with the electronic submission of a form. The citizen will receive a message on the form receipt by the authority, either by e-mail or by SMS message, and then can monitor, by means of a specific application on the Prague City Hall pages, in what phase the processing of their application or request currently is. When putting the Portal under operation at the end of September 2006, roughly 60 various forms were developed this way and new ones shall be added continuously at the interval of every fortnight.

On the Portal already now entrepreneurs will find aids for the registration of local charges payers for recreational stay and lodging, notice on the use of public areas, application for the use of advertising areas, remarks on the land-use plan, registration of vehicles, and reporting of changes, etc. The citizens will use tools for reporting of defects in the municipal apartments, application for exchange of apartments, application for having a foreigner accommodated, and other services related to housing as, for instance, connecting to the gas utility network, self-reading of gas consumption, changes in contact data, information on the method of payment, and others, and from the field of social care as, for example, questionnaires for the applicants for substituted family care.

Other important feature of the Portal is personalization. Any logged-in user will be able to make the pages outlook as he/she likes in the section My Prague. Therefore he/she probably fill their page with those applications, which he/she uses most frequently. Thus it will be, for instance, possible to watch in the Portal personalized section views from web cameras, information on the current weather in Prague, and updated exchange rates of world currencies, everything sorted in clear overview on one page.

It was right for the rebuilding of the whole system and efforts for making it clearer the City of Prague's pages underwent also the change of their outlook and structure. The old Internet presentation, which had been, as majority of Internet portals, gradually filled and swollen in volume uncontrollably, had been becoming unclear and hard to get oriented in. The original structure has become

obsolete and confusing, links to certain pieces of information were overlapping, other data were, on the contrary, hard to find. The new Portal comes with restructured hierarchy: the basic structure represents information for citizen, entrepreneur, and tourist. It is just this fundamental subdivision, which makes the main orientation easier: tourist has no need to weave in and out through useless forms, and the entrepreneur does not waste time in educational articles on the Prague's history. It will be right companies and small entrepreneurs making business on the territory of the City of Prague who certainly welcome the concentration of all information and applications necessary for their work in one section, which is, moreover, further clearly structured.

The further Portal development counts with interlinking of information services of respective information systems of the Prague City Hall, which have been separated so far, systems of the City authorities and organizations, as well with the solution of the links to the portal services of central government bodies, namely the Portal of the Public Administration *www.portal.gov.cz*.

Thus the new Portal *www.praha.eu*, owing to the practical use of new technologies, interactive services, interconnection with other systems, yet also due to the easy to follow structure and modern outlook, has become a gate to the electronic authority and the modern information center to all Prague citizens, and not solely for them.

Younger Internet users and Junior Internet project

How to attract more people to use the electronic services on local level? A good example is the Junior Internet project. It has been taking place since 2000, within the framework of the "March – Month of Internet" campaign in the Czech Republic. Jiri Peterka (at that time 12 years old editor-in-chief of the Internet magazine eZavinac for children) had the idea to organize competitions and conferences for children and young people interested in the Internet. In 2007, the 8th edition of Junior Internet took place. Since 2000, the young organizers have received more than 2600 registrations into the competitions. Tens of lectures, presentations and discussions took place at the conference. A lot of young people, who were beginning with their Internet activities at the Junior Internet conference, run their own successful Internet projects nowadays or even manage their own business companies. The Junior Internet project has been organized since the beginning with a minimal help of adults.

During the 8 years, a strong community of young webdesigners, programmers, Internet project managers or even young Internet businessmen was created. For many young people the Junior Internet project has been a spring board, which helped them to gain useful contacts and experience for development of their Internet projects, gave them extensive publicity and support. You can find examples of the successful projects, which were awarded at the Junior Internet conference, in the Awarded projects section.

Many journalists, computer specialists and VIPs from the world of information technologies participate every year in the Junior Internet conference. In the last four years, the Minister of Informatics of the Czech Republic always opened the conferences. In 2005, the European Commissioner for Education and Culture, Jan Figel, took patronage over the conference and sent his greetings to the participants. In 2007, the project took place under patronage of Viviane Reding, Member of the European Commission responsible for Information Society and Media, and of Ivan Gasparovic, the President of the Slovak Republic.

Young organizers also started to involve in the project more and more young people with disabilities, since especially for them the Internet can be a unique opportunity. The Internet competitions are open to all; part of the programme was dedicated to this topic and a special award awarded outstanding works of young people with disabilities. Young people with disabilities are also represented in this year's organizing committee and the jury.

In the framework of the Junior Internet project, a statistical survey focusing on young people and Internet will take place. All the participants of the Internet competitions from the Czech Republic (Prague), Poland (Warsaw, Wroclaw) and Slovakia (Bratislava) will answer few questions, which will then be evaluated and the results will be published. The organizers will have a unique opportunity to compare the relationship of young people to the Internet in the participating countries and also to compare them with the results from previous years.

Unique opportunity for young people with disabilities

Internet offers unbelievable and unique opportunities especially to young people with disabilities. That is why the organisers of the Junior Internet project decided to involve in the projects as much as possible also these young people. They can register to the Internet competitions and if they will submit an outstanding competition entry, the jury will award them with a special prize (as in the previous years). If needed, the organizers will also ensure translation to the sign language and other assistance.

In 2004 the conference was for the first time with international participants, some of them came also from Slovakia. In 2005, delegations from Slovakia, Lithuania and Luxembourg participated in the project. From 2006 the project is truly international – it takes place in the Visegrad area – in the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia.

The Junior Internet is a project for young people aged 18 and less, who are actively interested in Internet. It takes place in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia and its aim is to support talented and active young people and contribute to their personal and professional development. Youngsters can register with their web pages, Internet projects and texts about Internet into the Internet competitions. All of them will then be invited to a conference, where a programme full of lectures, presentations, discussions and competitions will be prepared for them. Winners will receive valuable prizes and above all the possibility of presenting their projects to the public. The project has been taking place in the Czech Republic for already 7 years, but since 2006 also young people from Hungary, Poland and Slovakia can join. Young people themselves are organizing the whole project.

"It is a conference organized by children themselves and projects which were presented and awarded here are really remarkable, some of them have completely professional parameters. Czech Republic can be satisfied that there is a generation that will be world-wide competitive in the IT business," said Former Minister of Informatics Vladimir Mlynar about the Junior Internet conference.

"The Internet is becoming more and more not only an important source of information and a mean of communication, but also an important tool for education. I appreciate your Junior Internet initiative as an opportunity for showing the talent and interesting ideas that are the basics of the educational development and the success in your further life." (Jan Figel, European Commissioner for Education and Culture about Junior Internet 2005).

More information about this project you can find on *www.juniorinternet.net*.

Blind Friendly Web Project

In attracting anyone to use the Internet we have also not to forget the accessibility for disabled people.

The Blind Friendly Web project, run by TyfloCentrum Brno and Czech Blind United, is the first project in Czech Republic that deals with accessibility ever since 2000. This project was till 2003 the only activity in the Czech Republic concerned with accessibility. Project is mainly focused on so- called real accessibility, because also people with visual impairment participate on its content (e.g. testing of accessibility of websites).

The Project provides a source of information (in Czech) for expert public and other stakeholders on web access conditions, particularly applicable to Czech visually impaired Internet users. In frame of this project testing, courses and consultancy are offered. Blind Friendly Web Project was awarded a special prize in competition IT Project of the year 2003, announced by Czech Association of Chief Information Officers.

Blind Friendly Web Project is also an expert partner of competitions of websites called Golden Crest (a part of Conference Internet in Public Administration and Self-government), Biblioweb and Byt videt. These competitions take place every year and are focused, among others, on accessibility.

In 2004 team of Blind Friendly Web Project participate in preparation of the first Czech web accessibility guidelines, published by the Ministry of Informatics. In 2006 Czech Statistical Office included accessibility as a part of analysis Content of Public Administration websites.

Since 2006 team of Blind Friendly Web Project participate (together with H1.cz and Faculty of Informatics, Masaryk University in Brno) in project called Accessibility of public administration websites – project of science and research. One of the goals of this project is to prepare new Czech web accessibility guidelines according to the Act No. 365/2000 on Public Administration Information Systems.

Parts of Project

- methodology guidelines for web designers;
- a portal leading to websites accessible to visually-impaired users;
- links to other resources dealing with this topic;
- a check-list form to test any website for accessibility to visually impaired people;
- training courses on accessibility;
- audits focused on website's accessilibity;
- e-mail conference *bfw@konference.braillnet.cz*;
- e-mail address *info@blindfriendly.cz* for consultations and questions on this topic;

Czech web accessibility guidelines

This is the English translation of the Czech web accessibility guidelines that have been created according to the Act No. 365/2000 on information systems of government bodies. These guidelines describe the minimum level of web accessibility that every public institution must fulfill.

The website content is accessible and legible
- Each non-text element carrying information has its text alternative.
- Information conveyed using scripts, objects, applets, cascade style scripts, images and plug-ins are available to the user also without any of these accessories.

- Information conveyed using colours is accessible even when viewed without colours.
- There is sufficient contrast between backgrounds and foregrounds. There are no designs on backgrounds that impede legibility.
- Attributes for font size do not use absolute units.
- Attributes determining the type of font contain a general font family.

Work with the website is managed by the user
- The web page content may change only when a user activates elements.
- Web pages do not manipulate the user environment without the user's direct instruction.
- New windows open only in valid cases and users are warned in advance.
- Nothing flashes on a web page quicker than once a second.
- Web pages do not prevent users from moving the frame content.
- Web page content or code does not anticipate or require a specific method of use or specific output or control devices.

Information is clear and understandable
- Websites present information using simple language and understandable formats.
- Homepages clearly describe the purpose and substance of a website. The name of the website or its operator is clear.
- Websites and each individual text content element present the key message at the beginning.
- More extensive content blocks are always divided into smaller, concisely titled units.
- Information published pursuant to the law is available as text content on web pages.
- A separate web page includes contact details of the technical administrator and a clear declaration of the defined accessibility level of the site and its sections. All other pages include links to this page.

Website navigation is simple and comprehensible
- Each web page has a meaningful title which reflects its content.
- Navigation and content information on web pages are clearly separated.
- Navigation is understandable and consistent throughout all the web pages.
- Each web page (except the homepage) contains a link to the higher level in the website hierarchy and a link to the homepage.
- All the web pages of more extensive websites contain links to a clear map of the website.
- The content or code of web pages must not anticipate that a user has already visited another page.
- Each element of a form has a descriptive label assigned to it.
- Each frame has a suitable name and description which expresses its meaning and function.

Links are clear and provide guidance for users
- The labelling of each link clearly describes its target without relying on the surrounding context.
- Links with the same label have the same targets.

- Links are distinguished from other text, not just by using different colours.
- Serve-side image maps are used only when it is not possible to define areas in image maps using available geometric shapes. In other cases client-side image maps are used. Server-side image maps are always accompanied by alternative text links.
- Users are clearly warned in advance when a link leads to other types of content than that of the web page. Such links are supplemented with notices of the type and size of the target file.

Code is technically competent and structured
- Web page code corresponds to a published final HTML or XHTML specification. It does not contain syntax errors that the web page administrator is able to eliminate.
- The character set used in the document is mentioned in the meta-tags.
- Elements which make up headings and lists are correctly denoted in the source code. Elements that do not make up headings or lists are conversely not denoted in the source code.
- Stylesheet attributes are given priority when describing the appearance of web pages.
- If a table is used for laying out the content of web pages it does not contain headers of rows or columns. All tables that display table data however contain row and/or column headers.
- All tables make sense when read from left to right by rows.

Few words about the project team

TyfloCentrum Brno, o. p. s.
TyfloCentrum Brno is a social enterprise, active in the regions of Brno and southern Moravia. It also delivers a number of its services in the Jihlava and Zlin regions. TyfloCentrum Brno was established by the Czech Blind United in 2000.

The main purpose of the company is to provide social services to visually impaired people, focusing mainly on social intervention services that promote independence of the visually impaired and facilitate their integration in society at large, and complementary social care services.

TyfloCentrum Brno is located in the Centre for Blind and Partially-Sighted people in Brno. The building is used solely to provide services for the visually impaired and is situated in an easily accessible part of the city, in Kralovo Pole. TyfloCentrum Brno is the biggest centre in Czech Republic, it has 26 employees and its services avails about 300 clients every year. TyfloCentrum Brno also employs people with disabilities. TyfloCentrum Brno has two centres, Day-care centre and Aids and IT Centre.

Aids and IT Centre provides
- free advice on choosing information processing adaptive equipment (PC), demonstration of its operation, certification of equipment suitability for funding applications, for the visually impaired and people with other impairments in Brno, Jihlava and Zlin regions;
- preparatory, elementary and advanced user courses in using the adaptive technology, including internet courses;
- scanning and text editing services, braille and enlarged print, searching the internet;

- technical assistance and consultations in the field of ICT with special access for people with specific needs;
- services in field of accessilibity;

The Day-Care Centre provides
- extra time and support to clients with reduced adaptability, namely those who lost sight during their adult life and who need increased attention to learn to be self-sufficient;
- quality leisure time activities, such as therapeutic clubs, lectures, discussions, or excursions, for clients who cannot find jobs;
- a number of training courses enhancing independence and self-sufficiency, re-integration in society and work; comprehensive information and counselling services connected with serious visual impairment;
- personal guide-service and reading service;
- assistance in shopping (clothing and food) for the visually impaired living alone
- support in the elimination of architectonic barriers, especially in the city of Brno;

In 2007 TyfloCentrum Brno established four offices in other towns to better cover region of southern Moravia.

Czech Blind United
Czech Blind United is a civic association, founded in 1996. Czech Blind United associated over 10 000 members from the whole Czech Republic. Czech Blind United provides many highly professional services in various blindness-related fields.

Special centres and departments of Czech Blind United
- Publishing Department – National Centre for the Elimination of Architectural and Transportation Barriers

All relevant information on a blind-accessible webpage could be found on *www.braillnet.cz/sons/infoen.htm* and *www.tyflocentrum-bm.cz/en*.

The ROWANet – a network to access the Internet

The crucial condition for Information Society development and deployment is the Internet connectivity as such. Different regions solved this problem differently. For example in the Vysocina Region (based in Jihlava town) the broadband connection was financed from the ERDF.

Development of substantial ICT infrastructure all over the area helps to balance differences within the region, it creates a platform for development of new services in public administration as well as in enterprise sector, it helps to create new jobs and healthy competition environment. Extensive availability of information and offer of services contribute to increase in knowledge of inhabitants as well as in general standard of living in the given area.

The previous lines could be used as a basic motto of Vysocina Region in search of the way towards development of information and communication infrastructure in its area. In relation to frequent market failure in the rural areas of the region, we have set the following targets:

- High-quality coverage of the region with backbone telecommunication infrastructure based on optical or wireless networks
- Methodical as well as financial support of creation and development of metropolitan and local networks
- Activities improving availability of high-speed internet for the public as well as organizations
- Support of development of academic network Cesnet2 and state infrastructure KIVS
- Support of mobility of users of telecommunication networks by means of publicly accessible Internet points.
- Financing of projects from the EU funds and European collaboration on development of infrastructure

ROWANet

A key project fulfilling the above mentioned vision is a network ROWANet – a regional backbone optical telecommunication network primarily intended for needs of public administration and unprofitable sector. The project aims at creating strategic backbone optical routes between all bigger towns in the region while using public, private and European financial sources. The network is based on dateless and in financial and capacity point of view very effective CWDM (wave multiplex) technologies and forms basic infrastructure for creation of new services of public administration for the citizens of the region and in a positive way it also influences development of telecommunication market in the areas of the region which are at present in market point of view unused. The first stage of the ROWANet network was finished in March 2006 in total cost of 32.2 mil. CZK. 50% of the realization costs were covered by the Structural Funds of the EU (JROP 2.2.) and from the state budget of the Czech Republic.

Information about basic services of the network

High-speed internet
High-speed connection of the organizations to the Internet (4 Mb/s up to 1 Gb/s) is carried out via academic backbone network CESNET2 (See *www.cesnet.cz*) by gigabyte connection to NIX in combination with peering of commercial ISP. Intensive cooperation with academic network CESNET is one of the priorities of the project. Thanks to radial topology of dedicated gigabyte connections to each of the nodes there is secured zero aggregation of user's capacities.

Public Internet
Public Internet is provided via WiFi hotspots situated at the public places (squares, schools, authorities…) in the form of limited, so-called narrowband Internet. Another way of providing publicly available connection to the internet is carried out via so called indoor PIAPs – computers installed at the public places and providing services of public internet to the citizens.

Services of high-speed storages
Vysocina Region provides for organizations connected to the ROWANet network and to the MAN network Jihlava SAN/NAS services of disc storages, so called DDS project (distributed disc system).
　　　These services are provided on the ground of gigabyte private circuits in combination with reciprocal provision of capacities of disc arrays on the ground

of iSCSI protocol. By means of this infrastructure it is possible to store tens of terabytes of data to the regionally redundant storages for short-term as well as long-term periods.

Services for iZs
Regional infrastructure provides data services for bodies of Integrated rescue system. It concerns mainly VPNs, data centre of GPS position data, back-up services of dispatching centres, DDS and GIS.

VoIP, IPTV
In 2006 the ROWANet network started to provide audio services for connected organization, in 2007 there took place the first successful testing of transmission of television broadcasting in the ROWANet. We would like to continue developing and expanding these services.

As an illustration we enclose a map of the ROWANet topology containing both current outline of the network and plan for its further development in the area of the region. As the whole project was successfully accepted, we consider connecting to this backbone network all the villages with extended activity in the region. The authors intend again to use the possibility to access to financial sources of European funds in the period 2007–2013.
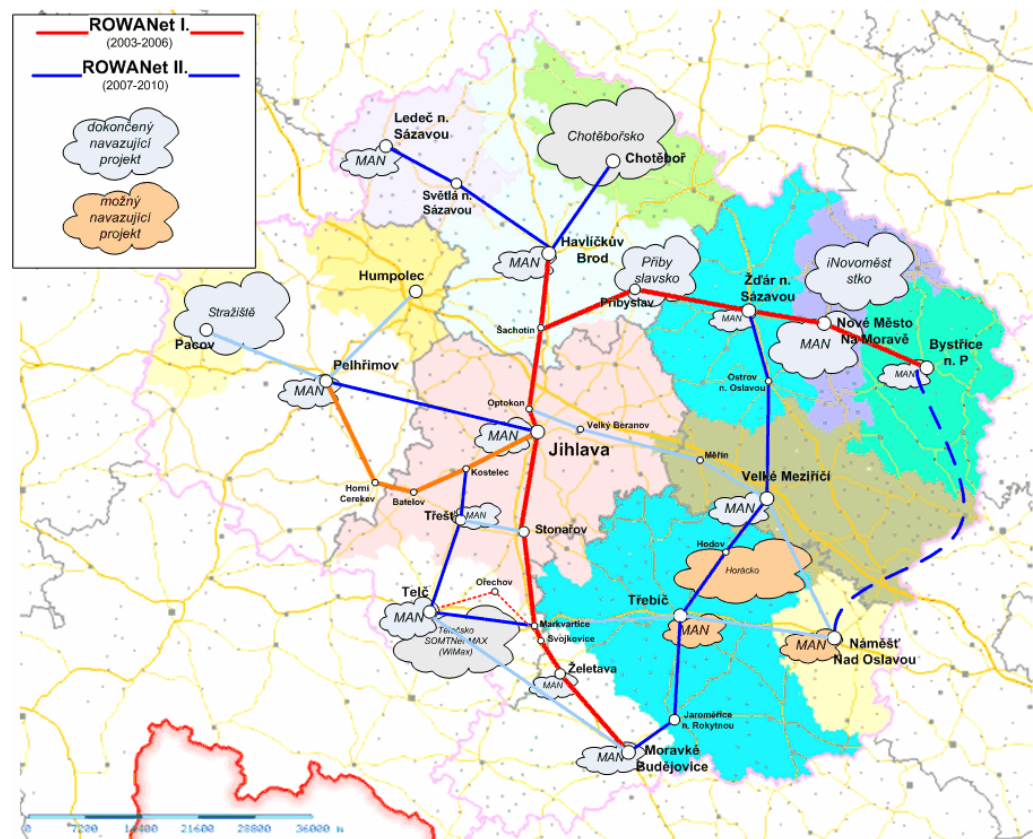
Further information is available on *www.rowanet.cz*.

Ambient Assisted Living 169

The ageing population is an increasingly important issue in many nations of the world. The societal effects of age are great. Young people tend to commit most

crimes; they are more likely to push for political and social change, to develop and adopt new technologies, and to need education. Older people have different requirements from society and government as opposed to young people, and frequently differing values as well. Elderly (65+) and very old (80+) people may have very special and very different needs. To fulfill their needs a lot of important factors have to be regarded in the development of AAL (Ambient Assisted Living) solutions: age, gender, education, culture, biography, religion, loneliness, relatives, lifestyle, work, hobbies, current and future life situation, current and future asset, current and future degree of diseases, disabilities and their occurence etc.

In future, elderly people will be more active and in better health if current trends continue. They will be better off hence they will consume more new goods and services and want to participate actively in social life. The number of elderly people will be more than doubled in 2050 and the proportion of people living alone will increase. However dependent or independent these elderly and very old people are – ageing people need more and more help and care challenging their families and the society.

The European Commission is supporting a new programme that is based on article 169 of the EU-treaty. The joint programme **Ambient Assisted Living (AAL)** aims to establish a new European funding programme for research and innovation projects whose outcomes will enhance the quality of the lives of elderly people by the use of new ICT products and the provision of remote services.

Ambient Assisted Living enables the provision of equipment and services for the independent living of elderly people, via the seamless integration of info-communication technologies within homes and extended homes, thus increasing their quality of life and autonomy and reducing the need for being institutionalized. These include assistance to carry out daily activities, health and activity monitoring, enhancing safety and security, getting access to social, medical and emergency systems, and facilitating social contacts, in addition to context-based infotainment and entertainment.

AAL169 will address not only these demands for various applications, services, but match them with the supply-side as illustrated in the picture and will also look into new business models. The activities of the Ambient Assisted Living Joint Programme consist of repeatedly (twice a year) initiating and administrating calls for proposals for pre-specified topics and supporting activities. The conduction of each call will be based on approved operational procedures.
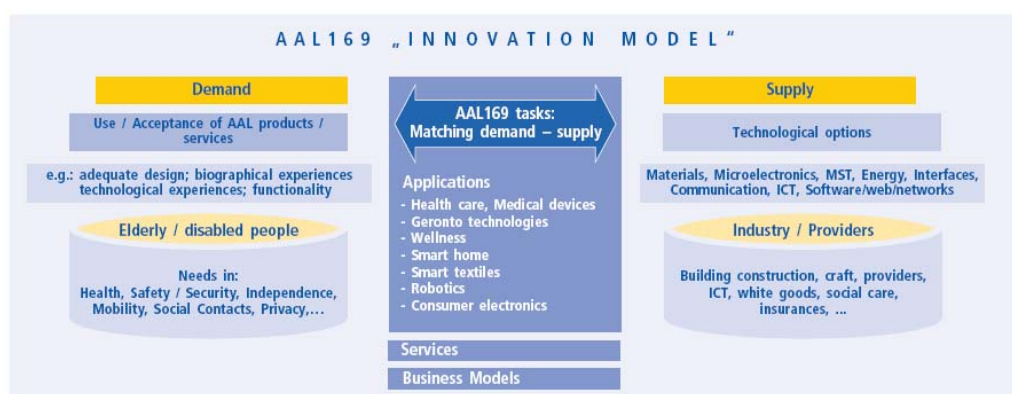
Through funding of applied research and innovation projects, with emphasis on integration of the required technologies and exploring new ways for the inclusion of user needs into relevant products and services, AAL169 aims to reinforce a

consolidated European market for AAL products, environments and services by addressing multinational consortia that consist of organizations from the AAL169 partner states. The technologies to be applied cover integrated assistive smart objects and health status monitoring systems including wearables as well as context-aware services, virtual presence, security and safety technologies. Here trust and safety, privacy, confidentiality, user acceptance, dependability, interoperability and usability aspects are key issues to be addressed in an integral way.

The Programme should bring lots of economic benefits into all countries participating. Many studies were taken to show potential risk of ageing. The graph below is a typical example.

AAL needs also a political support in Member States. Therefore the European Commission expects from the participating countries to undertake following steps at all levels:
- Commitment to the AAL Joint Programme
    - Scientific Integration
    - Management Integration
    - Financial Commitment
- Commitment at Ministerial/Agency level
    - Participation in the whole period (2008–2013)
    - Financial commitment to annual workprogramme

To fulfil all regal requirements the Commissioner Viviane Reding will send a letter to all Ministers with request for commitment. The European Commission will determine initial list of countries in co-decision. The proposed Community programme budget is anticipated at 25 million EUR per year.
Each of the participating states will earmark a yearly budget of national funds to support their successful national project partners. Together with the sub-

stantial contribution of the European Commission, a multi-annual financing plan will be defined. The overall budget is envisaged to reach approx. 350 Mio. € of public funds over the 7 years' duration. With the expected financial engagement of the European industry, a total volume reaches of 700 Mio. € might come true. The administration of the national project partners lies within the nominated national programme managing agencies. This includes the funding itself and the fulfillment of administrative requirements applied in the respective state.

The new European technology to funding programme is intended to issue calls over a period of 7 years (2007 to 2013), starting in parallel to FP7. Factually, the duration of this new funding programme would be 2 to 3 years longer (up to 2016), to administer projects called for in the final year of its first duration (2013).

Detailed description of this new programme is available on *www.aal169.org*.

A Geophysical Multilingual Internet-Driven Information Service

Various geophysical databases exist in European countries, both in public and private organisations. They are dispersed and have various standards and languages applied. Thus their usefulness and availability are limited, although geophysical information may be very effectively applied, processed and interpreted for a wide variety of purposes: exploration for mineral resources and groundwater, studying environmental features for spatial planning, construction works or detection of potential geohazards, research studies etc.

A project called Geomind was launched in the GIS part under eContentplus programme in September 2006. This is a typical example of eContentplus project that is aimed at not to create new data but to sort, use and exploit existing data the most efficient way.

The competitiveness of geodata handlers and organisations specialized in geodata processing will be enhanced if these databases are integrated and accessed via the Internet, offering cross-border, European-wide, unified electronic services, making geophysical data much more available.
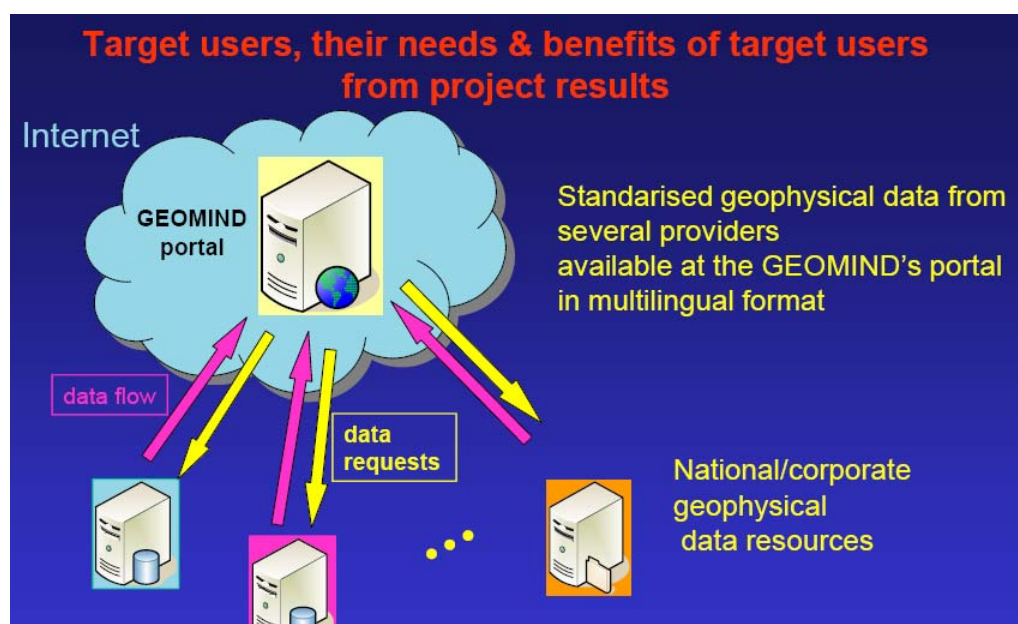
Therefore an Internet-driven multilingual information system, integrating geophysical data coming from national data holdings, is being proposed to be designed, developed and set up, developing also metadata and data representation standards, thus supporting further integration and dissemination of European or global geoinformation holdings. The system will be addressed to local and central authorities, prospecting companies, research and education institutions and citizens. It will enable the project partners to adapt to the pressures for continuous innovation and technological challenge, due to enlargement and completion of European market and intensification of competition in the field of services based on geological, geophysical and environmental data.

The system will demonstrate research capabilities of the partners and will increase public awareness of the usefulness of geophysical research methods for various needs of the society.

More information: *www.geomind.eu.*

Introduction of twinning cities

Banska Bystrica (SK)

- WWW: *eng.banskabystrica.sk*
- LORIS conference twinning city: Hradec Kralove (CZ)
- Population: 81,704 (2005)
- Area: 103.37 sq. km

The city of Banska Bystrica is located in central Slovakia. Banska Bystrica is the most important historical, cultural and economic centre of the central Slovakia. It is a seat of administration of the Banska Bystrica Region, one of the 8 regions of the Slovak Republic. The first written reference about the city is from the year 1255. Banska Bystrica is a municipal cultural reservation with a complex of objects that create a town's castle.

The city of Banska Bystrica is the most important historical, cultural and economic centre of the central Slovakia (Slovak Republic). It is a seat of administration of the Banska Bystrica Region, one of the 8 regions of the Slovak Republic. Banska Bystrica is situated at the river Hron in the Zvolenska Lowland, close to the Kremnicke Vrchy (Kremnicke Mountains), Velka Fatra (Big Fatra) and the Nizke Tatry (Low Tatras).

The first written reference about the city is from the year 1255, when it was inhabited by German colonists that settled down in this region. After 1380 Banska Bystrica became a leader in a union of mining towns. At the beginning, gold and silver were mined here, but from the 14th century it was especially copper, quicksilver and lead. In the second half of the 19th century industry transformed into industrial factories that produced textile, blueprint, manufactured wood, cereals, beer and spirit.

During the World War II on August 29, 1944, partisans liberated Banska Bystrica from the German occupation and the city became the centre of the Slovak National Uprising. The Slovak Army and guerrilla troops had the seat here and a guerrilla broadcaster transmitted from the city. The German Army occupied the city since October 27, 1944. They transported partisans into concentration camps in Germany. The local inhabitants and soldiers escaped into the Low Tatras Mountains where they continued fighting against occupants.

In the citiy's surroundings, there are some other historical monuments, worth to se: a wooden church in Hronsek village, a mansion in Dolna Micina, a castle in Slovenska Lupca and unique sacral monuments in cerin and Poniky villages. A mountain village Spania dolina, the jewel of folk architecture, reminds mining past of "copper Bystrica".

Bratislava (SK)

- WWW: *www.bratislava.sk/en*
- LORIS conference twinning cities: Budapest (HU), Prague (CZ), Vienna (AT), Warsaw (PL)
- Population: 425,459 (2005)
- Area: 367.584 sq. km (metropolis: 2053 sq. km)

Bratislava is one of the youngest capitals in Europe and few people know that during the time it was called Pressburg or Pozsony it was one of the most important cities in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It was a mixing pot of various nations and nationalities who lived together in peace and harmony. There is a saying that a true 'Pressburgian' speaks four languages: Slovak, German, Hungarian and Mishmash. Even as recently as the 1980's you might hear how older Pressburgians in the street would say two words in German, two in Hungarian and two in Slovak all in the space of one sentence. That is what we mean by "mishmash".

Bratislava's location on the banks of the River Danube and at the crossroads of ancient trading routes right at the heart of Europe predestined it to become a meeting point of various cultures. It was the home of the Celts, the Romans, and the Slavs. The reign of Maria Theresa is regarded as a golden era in the city's history. She was crowned Queen of Hungary in St. Martin's cathedral in Pressburg, just like the 10 other kings and 8 royal partners over the course of 300 years when Pressburg was in fact the capital of the Kingdom of Hungary.

The rich mix of cultures and nations not only left its mark in the language spoken here, but also in the customs, cuisine and lifestyle. Just like the Viennese, the people of Bratislava also enjoy promenading through the streets of the city centre, taking time out for a coffee in any of the many cafes. This part of the city is referred to as the Korzo and combines elegance with charm. Visitors say that the city has a relaxed Mediterranean type atmosphere. Bratislava is a seaside city without the sea.

Nowadays Bratislava is experiencing a boom once more. Buildings are popping up, deals being made, people studying, and everything is on the move. Experts regard it as one of the most dynamically developing and most prospective regions in Europe. It welcomes tourists, business people, and investors, who are attracted to this blooming city and its lively atmosphere.

There are many cities in Europe that can boast their own special unique charm, and Bratislava is definitely one of them.

Budapest (HU)

- WWW: *english.budapest.hu*
- LORIS conference twinning cities: Bratislava (SK), Prague (CZ), Vilnius (LT), Vienna (AT), Warsaw (PL)
- Population: 1,697,343 (2005)
- Area: 525.16 sq. km

The **capital of Hungary** is situated along the Danube, in the heart of the Carpathian basin. Hilly Buda, which comprises one-third of the city's area of 525 km², is located along the right bank of the Danube surrounded by low mountains. Janos Hill, with its 529 metres is the highest summit of Buda. Across the river sprawls flat Pest. The geology of Budapest has played a determining role in the city's life over the course of history. Hot springs breaking through Limestone Mountains supplying water of 35–76 degrees centigrade gave rise to a flourishing culture of spas in the Roman Age and made Budapest one of the most popular spa cities of Europe.

The determining role played by Budapest can be felt not only throughout Hungary but also in the neighbouring countries.

The city boasts sites, monuments and spas of worldwide renown. Its numerous cultural events attract a wide international audience. In recent years the UNESCO put several parts of the city on the list of **World Heritage**.

Budapestportal

The Rolling Stones 'A Bigger Bang European Tour' arrives to Budapest
Get ready for the most famous rock and roll show in the world! With the so called 'A Bigger Bang' European tour, Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, Charlie Watts and Ronnie Wood will rock the Puskás Ferenc Stadium in Budapest at the 20th of July.

[+] **Tickets for the Rolling Stones concert are on sale from the 30th of March**

... And the Incas Arrived
Treasures from Peru before the Spanish Conquerors: includes ceramics, textiles, as well as extraordinarily jewelries made of gold and silver. Nearly two hundred exhibited art works.

[+] **Museum of Fine Arts**

KASABIAN
They arrives Budapest in June 28. Kasabian mixed a bit of the Stones, Happy Mondays, and Primal Scream with DJ Shadow-influenced electronics.

[+] **June 28. / 19.30h / Petőfi Csarnok**

Mayor Gábor Demszky

[+] **Budapest Restaurant Guide**

[+]**News**
[+]**Local Government**
[+]**City**
[+]**Services**
[+]**Culture**
[+]**Archives**

[+] **In case of Emergency**

Ambulance, Police, Fire-brigade, Pharmacies

[+] **Webcamera**

[+] **And our houses were reborn**

Sziget Festival 2007 - In August, the program expands to be 8 day long

Since 1993, Sziget Festival of Budapest became one of Europe's biggest multicultural events. This year - **between August 8th and 15th** - the usually seven day long festival awaits its visitors for the 15th time. Celebrating the jubilee, the festival's program expands to be 8 day long. On Day Zero, August 7th one of the most remarkable names of the Hungarian history of rock, Locomotiv GT will perform on Sziget Mainstage. Although it is just the beginning of spring, more than fifty international bands confirmed their presence and accepted the invitation of the organizers of Sziget festival. Let's see the already known highlights of the five international main stages...

The Budapest Pocket Guide's list of the Restaurants, the Bars, and the Cafes in Budapest. A useful list helping to decide where to go eat and drink.

[+] **Budapest Hotels**

Holiday? Weekend? Business travel? Tourism? Wellness days? Alone or with family? Stay for a year or only for days?

Latest News

2007.05.31. **District VIII is planning to create a "scooter paradise"**
2007.05.31. **Martyr PM's granddaughter invites party leaders for joint prayer**
2007.05.31. **Gov't to spend billions of forints on drug prevention**
2007.05.30. **Budapest extreme sportsmen await vertical wind tunnel**
2007.05.30. **Petrol, diesel up again**
2007.05.29. **Budapest Transport Company posts HUF 11 bn loss in 2006**
2007.05.27. **A history of police errors**
2007.05.25. **Aquincum Summer Festival 2007**
2007.05.25. **Fresh Films in Theatres**
2007.05.25. **New Police Complaints Hotline: 06-80-204830**

A large number of the Budapest tourist sites are concentrated along the banks of the Danube. In the southern downtown area that was once surrounded by walls are located the oldest historical monuments of Pest as well as the capital's financial and cultural centre. North downtown hosts the government or administrative quarters with the Parliament Building, the Offices of MPs as well as a lot of the ministries. The majority of the buildings are turn-of-the-last-century. The most outstanding of the avenues starting from the Danube is Andrassy Avenue bordered by mansions known as palaces carefully designed and erected in the 1870's, similar to the famous avenues of Paris or the Ring in Vienna.

Two centres emerged on the Buda side. One is the medieval Castle District, home of the rulers of Hungary of old, and then assumed government functions until the end of the Second World War. The Buda Castle currently houses cultural institutions including museums, libraries and theatres.

Budapest consists of twenty-three districts. The Hungarian capital city has a peculiar dual self-government system. This means that in addition to the Budapest Municipality, the local government of Budapest, each of the twenty-three districts have their own government, the so-called district governments, with elected mayors and a body of representatives. The General Assembly of Budapest and the district bodies of representatives are equal in terms of their basic rights, with no hierarchic relationship between them. A division of labour has emerged among the autonomous and equal local governments which are in line with duties and responsibilities. Local government tasks are generally implemented by the district governments while tasks stemming from its nationwide scope and related to multiple districts or the city as a whole are undertaken by the Budapest Municipality.

In 2002 the Mayor's Office was awarded the ISO 9001:2000 Quality Assurance Certificate. This means that in all of its activities the Office follows quality assurance standards accepted throughout Europe.

In 2001 the population of Budapest was 17% of the country's population. Women contribute more than half, 54% of the population.

The city leaders consider it their fundamental task to make Budapest a liveable and pleasant city. A place where local people and visitors can find a variety of leisure activities and entertainment. In recent years the lively cafe life that had characterised Budapest in the early 20th century has also been rekindled. Walking around the city, visitors are lured by a multitude of cafes and restaurants with terraces, particularly in the increasing number of pedestrian zones. A favoured entertainment area is Liszt Ferenc Square and its vicinity, and recently renewed Raday Street.

Ceske Budejovice (CZ)

- WWW: *www.c-budejovice.cz/en*
- LORIS conference twinning city: Nitra (SK)
- Population: 94,622 (2005)
- Area: 55.56 sq. km

The South Bohemian capital with a population of one hundred thousand was founded by the Bohemian King Premysl Otakar II in 1265 on the confluence of the Rivers Malse and Vltava (Moldau) as a royal city so the king could strengthen his position of power in South Bohemia. The strong fortifications made the city a strategically important place during the Hussite Wars, the later estates uprising and the subsequent Thirty Years' War.

The nineteenth century, which was characteristic for its revolutionary technical progress resulted in a fresh impetus for the development of trade and industry. The horse-drawn tramway, erected between 1825 and 1832 as the first on the European Continent, linked Ceske Budejovice to the upper Austrian city of Linz, and together with the Vltava Waterway accelerated the transportation of goods. New enterprises were established such as a pencil factory, breweries, utensil factory and so on. The 20th century brought further intensive development and Ceske Budejovice became the true economic and cultural capital of South Bohemia.

After 1990 it became a statutory city with its own city mayor. Traditional commercial and cultural relations were restored with Austria, Germany and other

European countries. The economic sphere in particular experienced extensive changes. The important enterprises in the area are the Budejovicky Budvar, n. p., and Budejovicky mestansky pivovar, a. s., breweries, Robert Bosch spol. s r. o., Madeta Ceske Budejovice, a. s., Motor Jikov, a. s., Koh-i-Noor Hardtmuth, a. s.

The South Bohemian University with its five faculties has been active since 1991 when it was opened in Ceske Budejovice.

The company Vystaviste Ceske Budejovice, a. s. (Ceske Budejovice Exhibition Grounds) has one of the biggest exhibition grounds in the South Bohemian region. The most famous exhibitions are Zeme zivitelka (Land the Provider), Hobby jaro a podzim (Spring and Autumn Hobbies).

Dubnica nad Vahom (SK)

- WWW: *dubnica.sk/english*
- LORIS conference twinning city: Otrokovice (CZ)
- Population: 25,886 (2005)
- Area: 36.94 sq. km

The town Dubnica nad Vahom is situated in the basin of the Vah river, in a charming country of Central Povazie, which is surrounded by White Carpathians and Strazov hills. The records of the oldest settlements of Dubnica date back to the early Stone Age. The eldest written record is a document of 1193. In the town, there are many historical sights; most important among them are early-baroque manor hourse of 1637, St. Jacob's baroque church of 1754 and the Column of shame of 1728.

The town Dubnica nad Vahom has developed broad international friendship relations, e. g. with Vac town of Hungary, Zawadskie of Poland and

Otrokovice of the Czech Republic. The co-operation among the towns does not only consist of visits of self-government representatives, but also of meetings of various interest groups, institutions and companies. Most fruitful are contacts among schools and cultural and sport cooperation. There is also an affiliated branch of the Faculty of materials and technology in Trnava here.

The cultural life of the inhabitants of Dubnica nad Vahom, which has had rich traditions, is mainly organised by the town council Department of culture. The coorganisers are Jan Baltazar Magin historical society, free-time centre and town library, which is active all over the district. There are important cultural performances organised in the town, which are not only of regional, but also of whole Slovakian character. Among the most important cultural performances, there is Dubnica folk festival with international attendance, which is going to be held for the 12th time in 2005. Slovak competition for Mikulas Senko prize, traditional Dubnica market as well as arts and crafts markets are parts of the festival. Dubnica music summer, which takes place during summer months in the town park, is also becoming a tradition.

Information source for the inhabitants and visitors of the town about the events happening here are local media. Dubnicke noviny (published monthly by the town council), independent weekly newspapers Tyzden na Povazi, Duha – regional radio station and various student magazines published in local elementary and secondary schools are part of them.

Dubnica nad Vahom has rich sports tradition an the development of sport is also very important these days. In the town, there are 21 active sports clubs. These form conditions not only for recreation sports, but representatives of the Slovak republic had grown up there or they take part in Slovak premier leagues or international leagues as well – football, boxing, ice-hockey, indoor football, handball, cycling, judo, skiing, athletics and others belong to the most successful sports in the town.

Encs (HU)

- WWW: *www.encs.hu*
- LORIS conference twinning city: Moldava (SK)
- Population: 7052 (2001)
- Area: 31.13 sq. km

Encs is a small town in Borsod-Abauj-Zemplen County, Northern Hungary, 30 kilometers from county capital Miskolc. The area has been inhabited for at least 6000 years. After the Hungarians occupied the area, it became part of ujvar comitatus (later Abauj County). The first recorded mention of the village was in 1219. The railway line reached the village in 1860. In 1880 Encs had about 1000 residents. After the treaty of Trianon Encs was the most important village of the parts of Abauj-Torna County that remained in Hungary. The next few decades brought prosperity. In 1962 it became the centre of the unified districts of Encs, Abaujszanto and Szikszo, and gained town status in 1984.

Helsinki (FI)

- WWW: *www.hel.fi/english*
- LORIS conference twinning cities: Budapest (HU), Prague (CZ), Vienna (AT), Warsaw (PL)
- Population: 565,186 (2006)
- Area: 187.1 sq. km (metropolis: 3822 sq. km)

At the command of Gustavus Wasa, the King of Sweden, Helsinki was built at the mouth of the River Vantaa in 1550. The King ordered the burghers from Rauma, Ulvila, Porvoo and Tammisaari to move to Helsinki. The new town was supposed to compete for Russian trade with the town of Tallinn on the opposite shore of the Gulf of Finland.

Finland became independent in 1917 and ever since Helsinki has been the capital of the Republic of Finland. During the Second World War, Helsinki had to endure several large-scale bombings by the Soviet Union. The city survived these thanks to its efficient air defence. After the war, large areas, even whole neighbouring municipalities, were annexed to Helsinki. Helsinki has grown into a continuously developing Nordic city with half a million inhabitants.

The cities in the metropolitan area – Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa and Kaunia-inen – form an area with over one million inhabitants.

The Office of the President of the Republic of Finland, the Parliament, the Government and various ministries are all located in Helsinki, the capital of Finland. In addition to public administration, the metropolitan area is also the indisputable centre of trade, culture and science.

The head offices of the most prominent Finnish enterprises, the most famous museums and eight of the twenty universities in Finland are located in the metropolitan area.

The most well-known sights are also to be found in the region. In fact, the majority of domestic and foreign tourism is concentrated in the metropolitan area. Approximately one-quarter of Finns live in the metropolitan area as well as the majority of non-nationals living in Finland. Jobs are also concentrated in the region. The cities in the metropolitan area co-operate closely on, for example, services, traffic solutions and housing policy.

Hradec Kralove (CZ)

- WWW: *www.hradeckralove.org/en.html*
- LORIS conference twinning cities: Banska Bystrica (SK), Walbrzych (PL), Wroclaw (PL)
- Population: 94,694 (2005)
- Area: 105.61 sq. km

The settlement of the Hradec Kralove locality dates back to the later Paleolithic period. As early as in the 9th century, the hill over the confluence of the rivers Labe (Elbe) and Orlice was an important crossing of trade routes. The first written reference of Hradec Kralove as a town comes from 1225. In 1306, Hradec Kralove became a dowry town of Czech Queens, during the period of the Hussite wars it was a significant center of the Hussite movement, and in the 18th century it was a Theresian fortress, commemorated by the Battle of Hradec Kralove in 1866. At the beginning of the 20th century, an economic and architectural boom started in the town.

The building activity before WW I was influenced by a prominent personality, Professor Jan Kotera, founder of modern Czech architecture. The urban project of the city center, including a radial circumferential transport system ac-

cording to the development plan designed by Professor Jan Gocar in 1926–1928, a unique complex of functionalist buildings (nowadays a conservation zone of the city), is a unique phenomenon. The result of the creative activities of many significant 1930's Czech architects was the modern city of Hradec Kralove, which deservedly gained the name "Salon of the Republic".
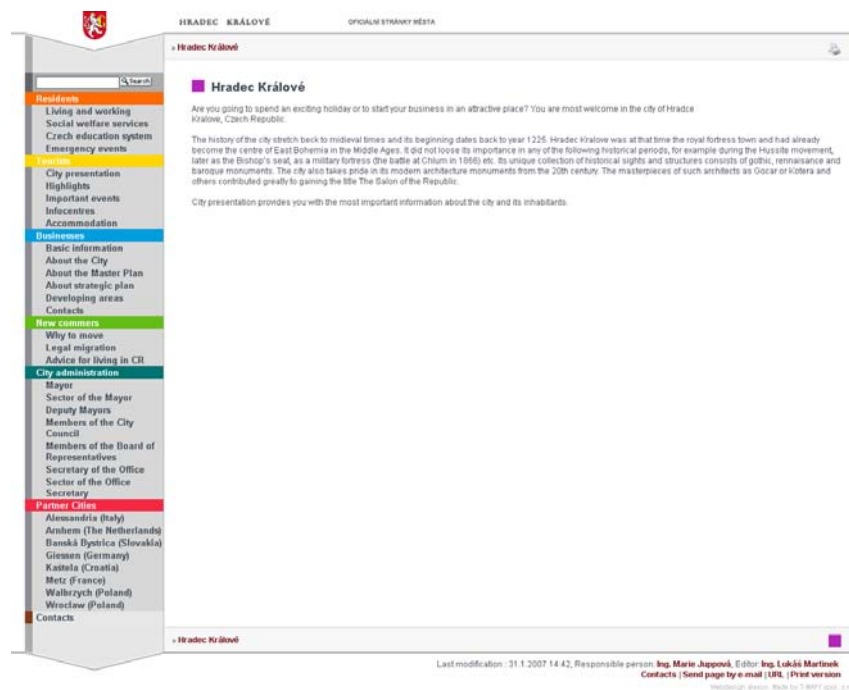
The city of Hradec Kralove is a natural metropolis of Northeast Bohemia. It is among the largest and most important municipal settlements in the Czech Republic. The productive group of the population represents 69.9% of the city population, which is comparable with the regional average and the Czech Republic as a whole. The pre-productive group of the population represents 13.2% and the post-productive one 16.9%. The city population demonstrates more intensive economic activity (49% working population) in comparison with the region and the Czech Republic as a whole. The working population is most significantly represented by the age category of 35–54.

In 2005, total population increase/decrease rate converted to 1,000 inhabitants was –2.8, i. e. –263 persons. The population loss is especially due to migration. In 2005, the migration loss represented 169 inhabitants. The natural population change in the city is relatively favorable – a natural increase/decrease converted to 1,000 inhabitants of middle class amounted to –1.0 (–94 persons) in 2005. Favorable also, in comparison with the region and the Czech Republic as a whole, is the number of newborns to 1,000 departed (899 inhabitants), i. e. vitality index. Age index (number of seniors to number of children under 14) shows the worst value in the entire region (123 persons). Less favorable are also divorce, abortion, and marriage rates. The city demonstrates – in the long term – long (over average) life expectancy of inhabitants (over 79). The population's average age is 41. The structure of the population's nationalities does not show any significant minority nationalities in the city with a remarkable dominance of the Czech nationality (95%). The Slovak nationality is acknowledged by 1.4% of the population. The educational structure of the population is favorable. The share of people with secondary or college education is increasing. Twenty percent of the population of Hradec Kralove have college or higher special education.

Hradec Kralove has a long tradition in the engineering industry, especially in the production of food processing technologies, in the food processing industry, and in the production of musical instruments, especially pianos. In the second half of the 20th century, other branches followed, such as the rubber-making industry, the production of photographic materials, and electronics. Recently, the share of sophisticated branches of medical and information technologies has been increasing. One of the advantages of industry in Hradec Kralove is its remarkable diversification. The city was an important medieval center of trade, and this function has remained till today. In addition to the usual shopping network in Hradec Kralove, almost all supermarket and hypermarket chains with business activities in the Czech Republic are represented here.

Jicin (CZ)

- WWW: *www.jicin.cz*
- LORIS conference twinning city: Martin (SK)
- Population: 16,426 (2006)
- Area: 24.93 sq. km
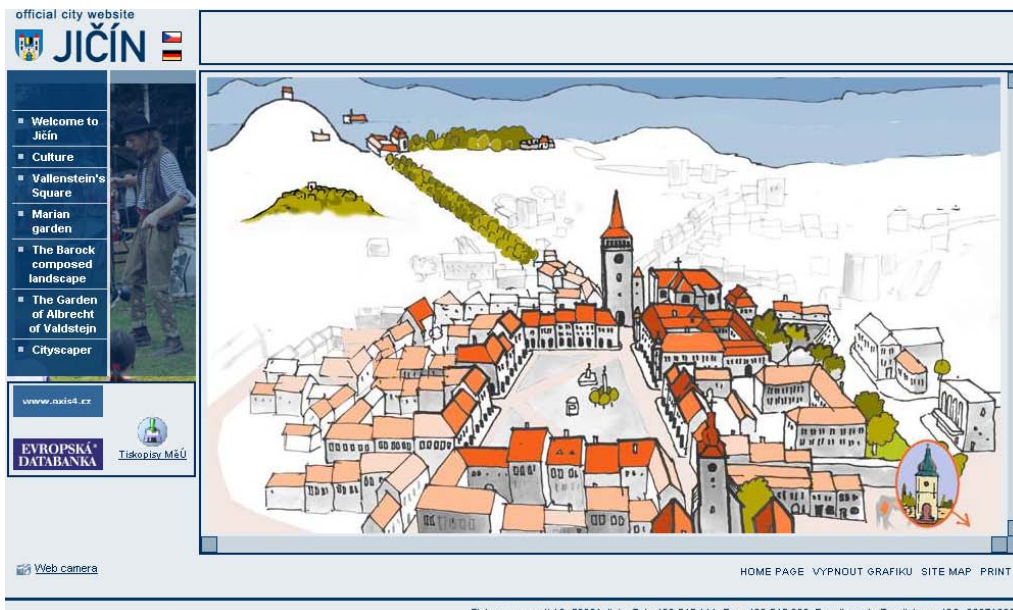
Jicin is a town in the Hradec Kralove Region of the Czech Republic. It lies approximately 85 km northeast of Prague in the scenic region of the Bohemian Paradise. Jicin has been declared a Municipal Reserve because of its well-preserved historical center, built around a rectangular square with a regular Gothic street layout, remnants of fortifications and arcade Renaissance and Baroque houses.

The surrounding countryside was settled by Slavic tribes at the beginning of the 6th century. The town of Jicin was probably founded at the end of the 12th century, in the place of today's village of Stare Misto (i. e. Old Place), under the castle of Velis. It was moved two km northward to its present location shortly afterward, which was better protected by the Cidlina River. The first written reference of Jicin comes from a document by the wife of King Wenceslaus II of Bohemia, Queen Guta (Jitka), dated August 1, 1293. It is believed that the town was named after her (meaning Guta's town, Jitcino mesto in Czech).

The biggest expansion of the town started in 1621 during the Thirty Years' War, when the town became a property of the generalissimo Albrecht von Wallenstein, who made it the center of his Duchy of Friedland and minted his own coins there. Several architects worked for him, notably G. Marini, A. Spezza, G. Pieroni, and, since 1630, N. Sebregondi.

Jihlava (CZ)

- WWW: *www.jihlava.cz/e_index.asp*
- LORIS conference twinning city: Purmerend (NL)
- Population: 50,676 (2006)
- Area: 78.85 sq. km

In the middle of a wide hilly region, rich on forests and lakes, known as Bohemian-Moravian Highlands, lies an ancient town called Jihlava, the oldest of among Bohemian mining towns.

Towards the end of the 12th century, according to historic sources, a Slavic settlement dominated by St. John-the-Baptist church was founded on the hills over the Jihlava River. The village was to become a starting point for the colonizers of the region. Their colonizing endeavors picked up extraordinary speed at the break of the 13th century, as silver lodes were found underground. The ensuing silver fever brought miners, tradesmen, and merchants from all over Europe. The small village could no longer accommodate so many settlers or their needs, so a new town was founded on the opposite river shore.

The generous layout of the new town testifies of the community's great wealth, evidently accountable to mining activities. Three major clerical projects were built almost concurrently: the St. Jacob the Greater Parish Church and the monas-

tery estates of the Minorites and Dominicans. The ground plan of the new town, designed as a network of right-angle perpendicular streets with a large town square in the middle, was the result of mandatory directives for town planning which came into force in 1270, during the reign of King Premysl Otakar II. The town's prosperity was ensured by a set of royal privileges which enabled Jihlava to become one of the most powerful towns in the Bohemian Kingdom. Massive walls protected the town and stone houses with pillared arcades enclosed the town square. The town had a license to die-stamp coins. Some of the historic artifacts preserved to date (illuminated legal manuscripts and late-Gothic sculptures) count to the most significant historic finds in the Czech Republic. For a long time, Jihlava enjoyed a prominent position in the sphere of judicial law: for the first time in Central Europe, the town codified its own mining laws, in addition to municipal laws. Jihlava's mining code served as an example for several of other mining towns. For many centuries thereafter, the seat of the Supreme Mining Board was in Jihlava.

The importance of silver mining declined towards the end of the 14th century: for one, the richest lodes of pure silver had been exploited, and, for the other, an earthquake and subsequent flooding devastated the mines. However, by then, well-developed commerce and trades ensured the town's economic prosperity – especially textile production that was to become the town's major industry for three centuries. In 1523, a major fire put an end to the medieval appearance of Jihlava – the town was rebuilt in the Renaissance style. Jihlava's new architectural style was characteristic for houses with indoor courtyards and large ground-floor passages (maas-houses) opening into Renaissance-style courtyards with upper-floor galleries supported by Tuscan pillars, tracery-vault arcades, and frequently decorated with frescos.

The town suffered a major devastation under Swedish occupation during the Thirty Years' War. The peripheries were burned down, most burgher houses demolished, and the number of inhabitants shrank to a mere one-eighth of the original population. It took Jihlava over 100 years to repair the damages and reach a new phase of material and cultural wealth. The town was rebuilt in the Baroque style. The most important structure built in the Baroque style is the St. Ignatius Jesuit church that was built during the last quarter of the 17th cent., simultaneously with the Gymnasium and student dormitories.

The subsequent era was distinct for the development of textile industry. The Empress Maria Teresia invited drapers from the Netherlands, whose experience and skills helped improve the textile production in Jihlava. The textile manufactures provided a living to thousands of workers in the town and its surroundings. During the second half of the 18th century, Jihlava had the largest textile production in the Monarchy. By then, Jihlava had begun to take on a new face, again: outgrowing the constriction of its own walls, it started to expand beyond them; street lights were installed around the town square; and the Municipal Hall was rebuilt. At the beginning of the 19th century, the town's narrow gateways were torn down and the facades of houses rebuilt in the Classicism style.

The town is a municipal reserve of its own right – Jihlava's unique juxtaposition of Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque architecture is bound to be a genuine treat to every fan of monumental art and ancient history.

Jihlava was declared a municipal conservation area in 1951 (amended in 1982). The historic center of Jihlava features 213 structures protected by law, of which 70 structures have prime historical significance.

Karcag (HU)

- WWW: *www.karcag.hu*
- LORIS conference twinning city: Moldava (SK)
- Population: 22,579 (2001)

Karcag is a large town in Jasz-Nagykun-Szolnok County, in the Northern Great Plain region of central Hungary.

Karvina (CZ)

- WWW: *www.karvina.org*
- LORIS conference twinning city: Martin (SK)
- Population: 63,467 (2005)
- Area: 57.49 sq. km

Karvina is city in the north promontory of Beskydy which lays in the valley of the Olse River and it is situated 18 km to the east from Ostrava. A part of the north border of Karvina creates simultaneously the state border with Poland. Even if does not seem so, thos industrial city is also a city with a rich cultural and social history. The city has gone trough a complicated and multiformal development during more than seven centuries.

The significance of the city was predetermined by its strategic location on the commercial route leading from Hungary to the Baltic areas in the past. This has made the city to be the comercial, economics and cultural center of the entire local area. The discovery of coal in the second half of the 18th century was the factor which has significantly influenced the following development of the city. In spite of the fact that our city belongs to the areas with a dense concentration of industry at the present time, there has been strengthen the commercial and touristic of the city during last years. Karvina has become an university city after the establishment of the Commercial – enterpreneur Faculty of the Silesian University.

Kremnica (SK)

- WWW: *www.kremnica.sk*
- LORIS conference twinning cities: Kutna Hora (CZ), Novy Jicin (CZ)
- Population: 5,543 (2006)
- Area: 43.13 sq. km

Kremnica is a town in central Slovakia. The well-preserved medieval town built above important gold mines is the site of the oldest still-working mint in the world. According to the 2001 census, 95.8% of inhabitants were Slovaks and 1.2%

Germans. Even among the Slovaks, there are many descendants of the Carpathian Germans, who played a very important role in the medieval history of the town. The religious makeup is 64.9% Roman Catholics, 22.6% people with no religious affiliation, and 5.8% Lutherans.

Kremnica was among the major mining towns of the world during the Middle Ages and Modern Times period due to the abundant gold ore deposits in Kremnica Mountains. However, the first evidence of subsurface mining activities comes from the 9th century.

The first written reference to the town dates back to 1328, when it was granted royal town privileges by King Charles I of Hungary. The town's mint is known to have existed already at that time. Since 1335 it coined golden florins and later famous "Kremnica ducats", which were used as international means of payment for their constantly high purity of gold. It was the most important mint, and later the only one, in the Kingdom of Hungary, in Czechoslovakia and in Slovakia; the prosperity brought to the town led to it being nicknamed "Golden Kremnica".

At the end of the 14th century, Kremnica became the capital of the mining towns in Central Slovakia. The annual production of gold and silver guaranteed the development of the town. In the 15th century Kreminca was the second most important city in the Kingdom of Hungary.

As one of the most important centers of Protestant Reformation in the country, the town belonged to the Protestant "League of Seven Mining Towns" together with Banska Bela, Banska Bystrica, Banska Stiavnica, Lubietova, Nova Bana, and Pukanec. In the 16th century, the town was a major center of production of (mostly religious) medals, especially by Joachim Deschler. But in the same time, the miners had to move deeper and the mining conditions deteriorated because of the underground water. The cost of mining increased and the mining was becoming less profitable. The last gold was extracted in Kremnica in 1970, when all the mines were closed.

Kutna Hora (CZ)

- WWW: *www.kutnahora.cz/index.php?lns=en*
- LORIS conference twinning city: Kremnica (SK)
- Population: 21,142 (2006)
- Area: 33.05 sq. km

Kutna Hora is a city in the Czech Republic in Central Bohemian Region of Bohemia. The town of Kutna Hora owes its origin to the silver mines which gained importance during the economic boom of the 13th century. The earliest traces of silver have been found dating back to the 10th century. Silver dinars have been discovered belonging to the period between 985–995 in the settlement of Malin, which is now a part of Kutna Hora. The turing point in the history of the city was when in 1300 when Wenceslaus II of Bohemia issued the new royal mining code Ius regale montanorum. This was a legal document of that specified all administrative as well as technical terms and conditions necessary for the operation of mines. The city developed with great rapidity, and at the outbreak of the Hussite Wars in 1419 was next to Prague the most important in Bohemia, having become the favourite residence of several of the Bohemian kings. It was here that, on January 18, 1419, Wenceslaus IV signed the famous Decree of Kutna Hora, by which the Czech nation was given three votes in the elections to the faculty of Prague University as against one for the three other "nations".

In 1420 the emperor Sigismund made the city the base for his unsuccessful attack on the Taborites; Kutna Hora was taken by Jan Zizka, and after a temporary reconciliation of the warring parties was burned by the imperial troops in 1422, to prevent its falling again into the hands of the Taborites. Zizka none the less took the place, and under Bohemian auspices it awoke to a new period of prosperity. In 1541 the richest mine was hopelessly flooded; in the insurrection of

Bohemia against Ferdinand I the city lost all its privileges; repeated visitations of the plague and the horrors of the Thirty Years' War completed its ruin. Half-hearted attempts after the peace to repair the ruined mines failed; the town became impoverished, and in 1770 was devastated by fire. The mines were abandoned at the end of the 18th century.

At least an elementary level of protection was granted by the inscription in the list of Czech cultural preserves. **The struggle for adequate level of protection and preservation of historical and cultural values was accomplished in 1995, when Kutna Hora was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.**

Martin (SK)

- WWW: *www.martin.sk/update/anglicky_new*
- LORIS conference twinning cities: Jicin (CZ), Karvina (CZ)
- Population: 59,257 (2005)
- Area: 67.74 sq. km

Martin is a town in northern Slovakia, situated on the Turiec River, under the Mala Fatra Mountains, near the city of Zilina. The population numbers approximately 60,000, which make it the eighth largest town in Slovakia. It is the center of the Turiec region and the District of Martin.

According to the 2001 census, 94.9% of inhabitants were Slovaks, 1.6% Czechs, 0.5% Roma, and 0.2% Hungarians. The religious makeup was 44.1% Roman Catholics, 31.2% people with no religious affiliation, and 17.2% Lutherans.

The first recorded reference to Martin in written sources is dated to 1264 under the name of Zenthmarton. The settlement was granted the status of a royal town in 1340.

In the turbulent 15th century, the town suffered from many disasters, for example from the Hussites in 1433, when the town was burned down. Just 10 years later, it was destroyed again by an earthquake and the town started to be slowly degraded from royal town to the privileged town and under direct influence of the Revai family. Since the 18th century, the town became centre of the Turiec County.

The town became the foremost Slovak cultural center in the 19th century. Several cultural institutions (including Slovak Matica and Slovak National Museum) were founded there. Most political activities leading to the Slovak national emancipation in the 19th and early 20th centuries were organized in or from Martin. The town was also industrialized at this time. The first printing works were established in 1869, the furniture factory Tatra nabytok in 1890, and so on.

The town lost its importance after Bratislava became the capital of Slovakia in 1918. Today, it is the seat of the Slovak National Library and Slovak Matica. National Council of SR legitimized the City of Martin as the center of national culture of the Slovaks on August 24, 1994.

The oldest building is a Romanesque church dedicated to Saint Martin of Tours (13th century). The Slovak National Museum placed its ethnographic collection to Martin. An open air museum in the suburbs Jahodnicke haje exhibits the traditional rural architecture and folk traditions of the region of Turiec. The Slovak National Cemetery is the official Slovak hall of fame, inspired by the Pantheon in Paris.

The town is surrounded by the Lesser Fatra and Greater Fatra mountain ranges, which in winter offer excellent conditions for skiing and in summer for hiking. A school of medicine (part of Comenius University) is also situated in Martin.

Moldava (SK)

- WWW: *www.moldava.sk/?&lng=en*
- LORIS conference twinning cities: Encs (HU), Karcag (HU)
- Population: 9,525 (2002)
- Area: 19.76 sq. km

The town Moldava nad Bodvou (Moldava upon Bodva) lies to the south-east of Kosice on the E571 motorway leading to Roznava. This is where the Kosice vale ends and the Slovak carst begins. Around the town there are – Drienovec and Turna with the ruins of a medieval castle – to the west; Jasov with its famous premonstrant monastery, the second biggest town of the region Medzev, the stos spa and the 1246 m high Kojsovska hola (hill) – to the north. The area lies from 203 to 284 metres above the sea level and the 21st meridian runs through it.

The town has been the natural center of the region for a long time because of its purpose and geographical situation. The village of Budulov, which was first mentioned as long ago as in 1313, is the part of the town. Moldava has a train and bus stations, a health center, a post office and a hotel. There are a few restaurants and pubs of good quality, where you can get goor beer; hairdressers and cosmetic

salons also offer their services, as well as various shops, an internet cafe and a fitness centre. Moldava with its infrastructure and services is the ideal place to start your geographical and natural trips from the town lies at an altitude of 216 metres and covers an area of 19.765 km².
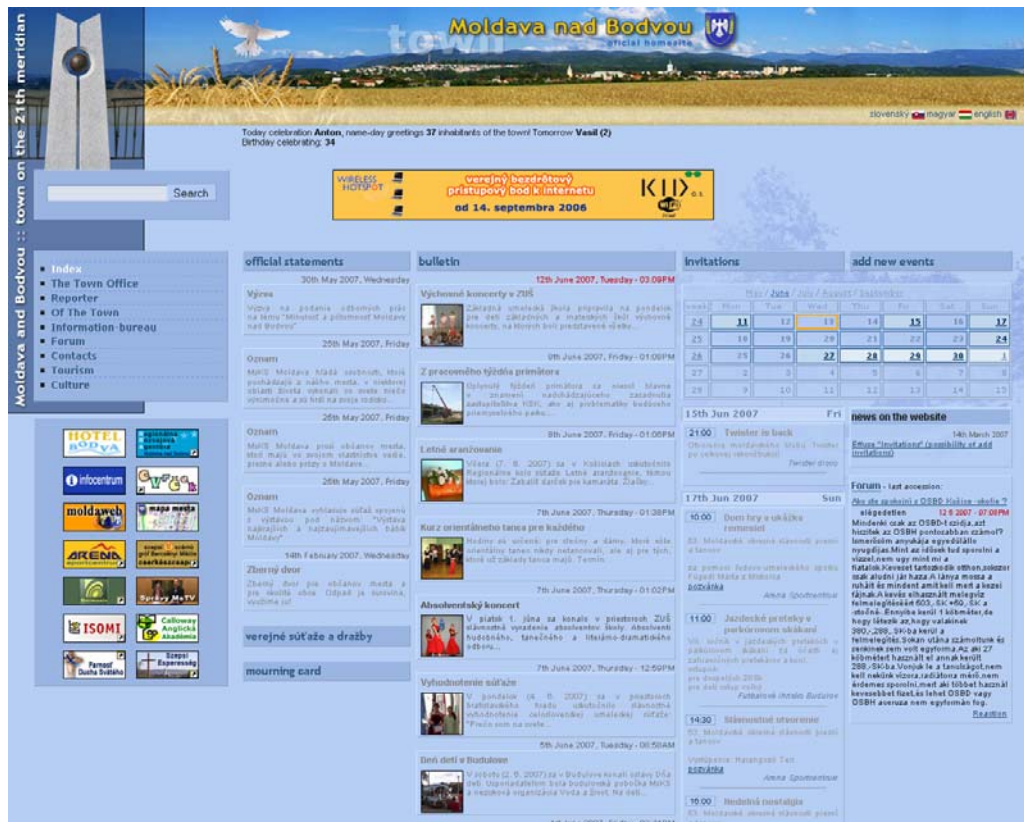
Nitra (SK)

- WWW: *www.nitra.sk/en*
- LORIS conference twinning city: Ceske Budejovice (CZ)
- Population: 85,172 (2005)
- Area: 107.97 sq. km

Nitra lies in the north – eastern part of the Podunajska lowland, at the foot of the Tribec mountain range. Zobor hill (588 m) towers over the town and together with Hradna Skala (the Castle rock), Vŕsok, Kalvaria (Calvary, 215 m), Borina (218.5 m), Cerman and Martinsky vrch, enjoys a unique panorama overlooking the town. The natural scenery is complemented by the river Nitra, which runs in a wide bow around the castle hill. The town of Nitra is the administrative center of the Nitra region which consists of the districts of Nitra, Komarno, Levice, Nove Zamky, Sala, Topolcany and Zlate Moravce.

There are not so many towns endowed with such beautiful surroundings and such an ideal location as Nitra. They say that Nitra, like Rome, was founded on seven hills. Its name is connected with the beginnings of the history of Slovakia, with the names of Pribina, Svatopluk, Sts. Cyril and Methodius and even with the mention of the first Christian church on the territory of Slovakia and with the introduction of the old Slavonic alphabet.

The beginnings of its settlement go back as far as the earliest times, as has been documented by numerous archeological findings on the town's territory. This area was a densely populated region some 30,000 years ago. The first peasant settlements were on the territory of the town some 6000 years ago.

Nitra was at the height of its fame during the reign of King Svatopluk. In one of the most valuable written documents for Slovak history, in the letter from Pope John VIII to Svatopluk, dating back to 880, "Indistriae tuae", Svatopluk is addressed as king and the Pope informs him of the appointment of Viching as bishop of Nitra, by then, probably had a municipal character, and it consisted of five fortified settlements and twenty communities where skiled craftsmen plied their trade.

Until the beginnig of the 14th century Nitra remained the resedential town of the principality that bordered the newly formed Hungarian monarchy. Also, during the Middle Ages it was the site of important historical events, and it was often plundered by various armies. The Benedictines took up the organization of ecclesiastical life, their monastery of St. Hyppolite on the slope of Zobor hill was the oldest in Slovakia.

From the second half of the 18th century, Nitra escaped from military hardships, this made possible the renovation of the town and modifocations on the castle and especially on the Cathedral. Peaceful times made the construction of several buildings in the Upper Town possible. As a result of the town's development, the population grew beyond 10,000, in the 19th century. In 1873 Nitra became the town with its municipality presided over by a mayor and by numerous public councilmen. The further development of the town was strongly influenced by two World Wars.

However, Nitra and its surroundings are not only a place full of historical monuments and wonderful nature sceneries, but similarly as in the whole Slovakia, the past weds to the present. Besides the attribute ancient we might say about Nitra also a town of students, agriculture and trade fairs. The Slovak agricultural university follows the old agricultural tradition, the future teacher obtain education on the Pedagogical Faculty of the University of Constantine the Philosopher.

In the sixties, the metropolis of Nitra became a place of a permanent agricultural exposition, later a place of the all-state harvest-home celebrations and since the year 1974 the all-state agricultural exposition Agrokomplex takes place here every year. In the last years , the company Agrokomplex organizing different expositions specializes on organization of trade fairs (yearly 16 international fairs and exhibitions), expositions, seminars, scientific symposia and conferences. The exposition ground of Agrokomplex with the total area of 125 ha is the largest in Slovakia.

Nitra is a modern town and is currently the seat of district and regional state institutions. Nitra is also an important economic centre with a prosperous chemical industry and traditionally well developed agriculture and food-processing industries. Several libraries, Grammar Schools and Secondary Schools and prestigious scientific institutions, for example the Research Institution for Animal Production or the Archaeological Institution of the Slovak Science Academy are also situated here. Nitra has many institutions that cater for the arts such as the Ponitrianske muzeum (Museum), the Slovak Agricultural Museum, the Missionary Museum, Nitrianska galeria (Gallery), the Old Theatre and the Theatre of Andrej Bagar.

The town Nitra has a rich cultural traditions reaching to the times of Great Moravian Empire. The beginnings of the national culture of the Slovaks based on the letters and literature are closely bound with this town and its surroundings. Nitra has preserved up to the present its unique cultural face. This face has been enriched by many cultural activities which are ambicious to become a tradition, e. g. the celebration of St. Cyril and Method, the Music festival Musica Sacra, the regular show Divadelna Nitra (Theatrical Nitra) or Akademicka Nitra (Academic Nitra) – a festival of university students ensembles. Nitra regained its status of church and spiritual centre of Slovakia in 1991 with the appointment of slovakian Cardinal.

Nova Dubnica (SK)

- WWW: *www.novadubnica.sk/english_version.html*
- LORIS conference twinning city: Slavicin (CZ)
- Population: 12,358 (2004)
- Area: 11.30 sq. km

Nova Dubnica lies in a picturesque area of Central Povazie in the Ilava basin stretching from northeast to southeast. It is a modern and young town, built only in the 50's of the 20th century. Its history is short and closely linked with its surroundings in the Ilava basin. The origin of Nova Dubnica is connected with the enhancement of the engineering factories in the town of Dubnica nad Vahom. As the production in the factories grew, so did the number of the workers. Accomodation capacities were not sufficient for the requirements of the workers and their families.

The building-up of Nova Dubnica was commenced following the project proposal made by the architect Jiri Kroha in 1951. Two years later, in winter 1953, the first object – the youth hostel, was built. The housing estate was managed by

Dubnica's administration up to 1957. The first nursery, kindergarten and primary school were opened in 1956. In the same year there started also cultural activities by opening cinema "Mier", which served not only for the film projections but also for dancing. Later, there were opened also premises for the restaurant and dining room, there. The number of the flats as well as inhabitants grew up.

The housing estate became an independent village on 1st June1957 under the name of "Nova Dubnica". There was built a network of shops and new sport and cultural clubs came to existence. The first print of the local newspaper called "Hlas Novej Dubnice" was issued also in 1957. Nova Dubnica acquired the town's status on 8th June1960.
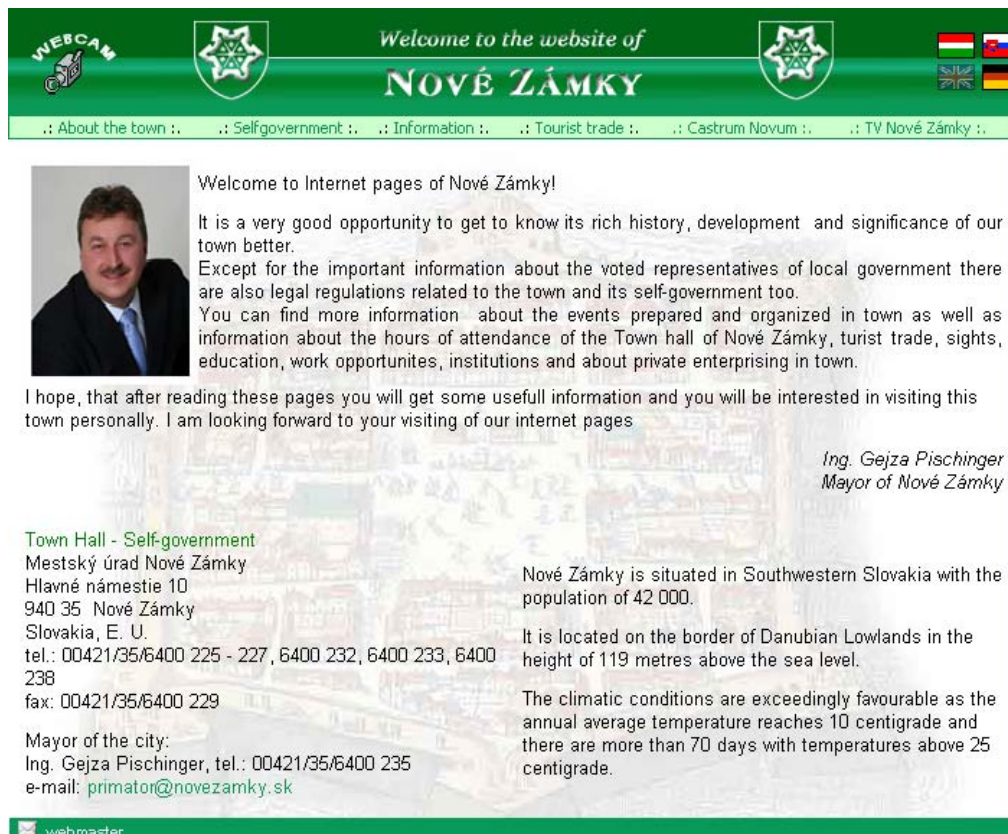
The natural centre of the town is Mierove square where the shops and services are concentrated. Mierove square offers not only different services but also relax on benches which are situated all around the square. The large square space gives an opportunity to organize social or cultural events and public performances. For cultural events is appropriate also cinema Panorex. It is used for the film projections and it is famous for being the first panoramatic cinema in Slovakia.

There are some cultural groups in Nova Dubnica which represent the town in Slovakia as well as abroad. Nova Dubnica can be proud of famous and skilled Orchestra with majorettes, a mixed chorus, a folklor ensemble and craftsmen in the field of laces.

In Nova Dubnica there are following educational institutions: 1 secondary school, 3 primary schools, 1 specific primary school, 4 kindergartens, arts school and leisure centre and there is also health care available for all of the inhabitants.

Nove Zamky (SK)

- WWW: *www.novezamky.sk/index_e.shtml*
- LORIS conference twinning city: Znojmo (CZ)
- Population: 42,300 (2001)
- Area: 65.69 sq. Km

The history of the settlement of the region's territory dates back to the New Stone Age. The archeological findings come approximately from 4th millenium B. C. and are connected with the Linear Ceramics People as is proved by the findings from Bina, sturovo and Velky Kyr (Milanovce).

The town Nove Zamky itself was mentioned for the first time in 1545 as a defence stronghold against the Turkish raids. The originally rectangular layout with four aurical bastions. Several years later a new castle was built on the opposite side of the Nitra River – the present name of the town is derived from the castle. The castle know also as Castrum Novum was built in the regular hexagonal star-like layout. It had six multifloor extended bastions from which only the names have been preserved – Zerotin's, Fridrich's, Ceaser's, Czech, Ernest's and Forgach's.

The layout of the castle is made use of also now. It is symbolicly depicted in the town's coat-of-arms and the historical centre of the town with the pedestrian zone has the layout of the hexagon. In the dramatic struggle between the Habsburgs and Turks the castle got into the hands of the Turks in 1663 who cruelly ruled there until 1685 when the territory of the town was conquered back by the army of Carl of Lotharingia. This significant event was celebrated by ringing the bells. 250 years later under the south part of the castle a memorial from stone remnants of the original stronghold was unveiled to remind forever this important historical event.

On 29th October 1691 Esztergom Archbishop Juraj Szechenyi issued the document granting to Nove Zamky the town's privilege and other important privileges. In the history of the town this event is rightly recorded in the capital letters because the period of the castle was ended and the rich and proud history of the town began. Only a few monuments of this history have been preserved, though, as most of them were destroyed during 2nd World War between 1944 and 1945 due to three bomb-attacks. But in spite of it in the district museum the remnants of the Roman inscription plates and other documents about the first settlements in the town can be found.

Cultural and historical monuments

Worth mentioning is the fact that Anton Bernolak, the important linguist and the first codifier of the standard Slovak language, lived here since 1797 until his death. He is buried in the St. Trinity chapel. The grave stone in the chapel on the grave of A. Bernolak belongs among the town monuments.

On the occassion of 50th anniversary of the end of 2nd World War the monument for the victims of the victims of violence was unveiled on 7th May 1995 on the Michal bastion. Its author is Tibor Szilagyi of Nove Zamky. The monument is the symbol of pieta for the victims of senseless and the faith in humanity and tolerance.

Novy Jicin (CZ)

- WWW: *www.novy-jicin.cz/nj/english/eindex.html*
- LORIS conference twinning city: Kremnica (SK)
- Population: 26,494 (2006)
- Area: 49.71 sq. km

Novy Jicin is a town in the Moravian-Silesian Region of the Czech Republic. The city is situated on the spurs of the Carpathian Mountains.

The oldest written document mentioning the city is from the year 1313, when it was presented with the title of the City, but original settlements are much older. During the history, Novy Jicin expanded through the cloth and beer industry and in 1850 became the administrative centre of the region, which, in conclusion, led to faster expansion. In the pre-WW2 times, Novy Jicin became a bastion of the German nationalists and Czech and Moravian residents were opressed and later expelled from the city, but returned after the war, which has been merciful to the city as major battles in Moravia and Silesia were fought further to the east. This also helped to preserve the historical center.

Nyiregyhaza (HU)

- WWW: *www.nyiregyhaza.hu*
- LORIS conference twinning city: Prague (CZ)
- Population: 113,899 (2001)
- Area: 274.46 sq. km

Nyiregyhaza is a city in North-east Hungary and the county capital of Szabolcs-Szatmar-Bereg. With its population it counts as a large city and is one of the leading cities of Northern Hungary. Nyiregyhaza was first mentioned in 1209, although it was called only Nyir (means "birch"). A source from 1326 mentions that the town has a church, hence the 2nd part of the name, "egyhaz" (meaning "church", literally 'one house').

The inhabitants of the town took an active part in the revolution and war of independence in 1848–49, and after the suppression of the revolution several citizens were imprisoned, among them the mayor, Marton Hatzel.

In the second half of the 19th century Nyiregyhaza got more and more urbanized and in 1876 the town became the county capital of Szabolcs County (which is today part of the larger county Szabolcs-Szatmar-Bereg). In 1858 the railway line reached Nyiregyhaza, several new buildings were built, including a telegraph office, the main post office and the theater. In 1911 the construction of tramways was finished.

After the many trials and tribulations of World War I, Nyiregyhaza was under Romanian occupation for ten months. Between the two world wars the city celebrated the 100th anniversary of becoming free from her feudal landowners.

During World War II more than 6000 of the city's Jewish inhabitants were deported, and another 2000 citizens were sent to *Russian* labour camps. Several buildings were destroyed, too, including the Status Quo Synagogue, whose front wall has been preserved and is now within the gates of Nyiregyhaza's Jewish Cemetery (whithin the Cemetry lies The Grand Rabbi Joseph Leifer of Nyiregyhaza A son of the world-renowned Rabbi, Rabbi Mordachai of Nadvorna, he settled in Nyiregyhaza after WW I where he attracted a large following his Grave site is visited annually by thousands of Hasidim).

From the 1960's the city grew and developed fast. Today, Nyiregyhaza is one of the most prosperous cities of Hungary, being both an educational center and a popular tourist destination.

The thermal lake of Sostogyogyfürdõ has been a tourist attraction for centuries. The lake is very warm, around 26 °C, and is surrounded by a park of 2000 m². There is also a large zoo with animals from all continents of the world. Sosto is easily accessible from Nyiregyhaza by the local bus 8 or the narrow gauge railway departing from the main railway station.

Nyiregyhaza also has several museums and exhibitions, showing the city's rich cultural heritage.

Otrokovice (CZ)

- WWW: *www.otrokovice.cz*
- LORIS conference twinning city: Dubnica nad Vahom (SK)
- Population: 18,708 (2005)
- Area: 19.61 sq. km

We can find Otrokovice on the interface of three regions: Vlachian, Hana region and the Moravian Slovakia region – the temperament of people is mixed with discernment that is typical for the people from Hana region, Vlachian diligence and temperament that is highly typical for the people from the Moravian Slovakia region. Otrokovice consists of two former self-contained villages called Otrokovice and Kvitkovice. The archaeological discoveries in the area of the centre of the town can show us that this area is settled from the Stone Age. The first written mention about Otrokovice is said in the list of bishop of Olomouc Henry Zdik (the new historical research dates it around the year 1141). Until the half of the 14th century Otrokovice were the clerical property, later on Otrokovice came into the worldly hands and they were marked with many disagreements between the feudal families. In the period of bloom, the homesteads, estates and the fish-pond cultivation started to appear there.
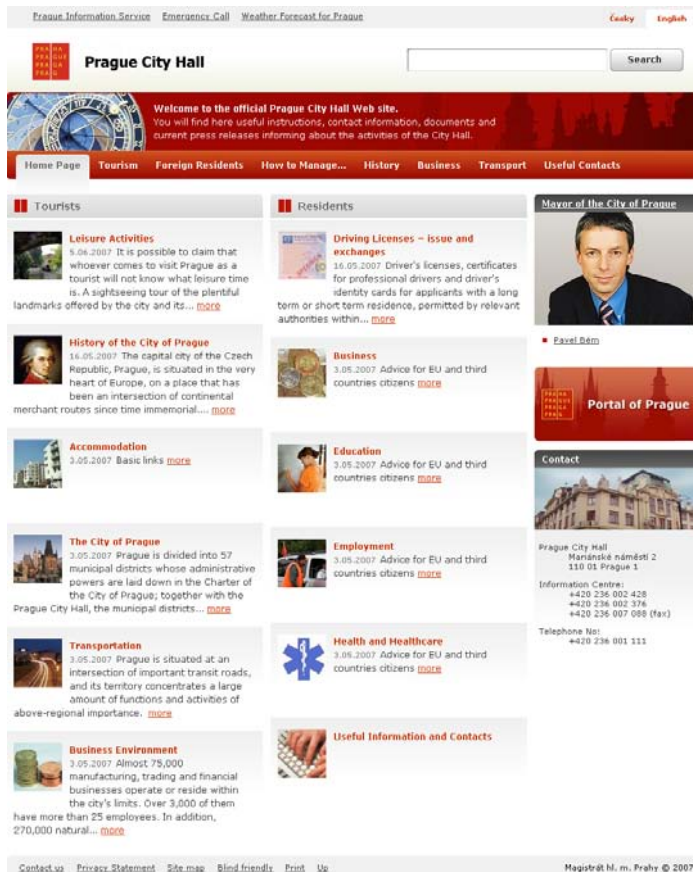
Prague (CZ)

- WWW: *www.praha-mesto.cz/ default.aspx?l=2*
- LORIS conference twinning cities: Bratislava (SK), Budapest (HU), Helsinki (FI), Nyiregyhaza (HU), Vilnius (LT), Vienna (AT), Warsaw (PL)
- Population: 1,188,126 (2006)
- Area: 496 sq. km

Prague has been the capital of the Czech state for eleven centuries. It originated as a settlement around the Prague Castle which was established around the year 880. During the 13th century the communities at the foot of the castle were awarded the liberties of a city and the twin cities of Old Town and Lesser Town were created.

By establishing the New Town in 1348, the Emperor Charles IV of Luxembourg made Prague into one of the metropolises of Europe of the Middle Ages. He decorated it with many public buildings and works of art and also established here the first university in Central Europe, which is in the region north of the Alps and east of France. At the beginning of the 15th century, the university environment gave rise to the teachings of Jan Hus, which in turn served as the origin of the Husite revolution (1419–1434).

During the years 1583–1612, the great art enthusiast Emperor Rudolph II of Habsburg selected the Prague castle as his permanent residence and thereby Prague became renowned as the centre of artists and scholars. The period when it flourished was brought to an abrupt end by the uprising of the estates during the years 1618–1620 which was the start of the Thirty Year War. At the end of the conflict, Prague was relegated to a provincial city, forcefully brought back to the Catholic religion and the population decimated by the war sufferings and emigration. It was, however, restored in the unique Prague baroque style. It again flourished during the period of the industrialization.

In 1784 the Emperor Joseph II merged the Prague towns, which until than were independent (Old Town, New Town, Lesser Town and Hradcany) into a single Capital City of Prague. During the course of the 19th century it became the centre of the Czech national revival and on October 28th, 1918 it became the capital of the independent Czechoslovak Republic.

Except for the period of the Nazi occupation (1939–1945) Prague, which had been substantially enlarged with the addition of several neighbouring towns and villages (1922, 1968, 1974) was the metropolis of Czechoslovakia until 1992. It was the site of the so-called Prague Spring, violently terminated on August 21st, 1968 with the occupation of the city by the Warsaw Pact armies. In November 1989 it was the birthplace of the "velvet revolution", which ended the totalitarian regime and returned the country to a democratic political system. As of January 1st, 1993 Prague has been the Capital of the Czech Republic.

Prague is situated in the very heart of Europe, on a place that has been an intersection of continental merchant routes since time immemorial. It was the seat of Czech princes and kings from the tenth century A. D. In the mid-14th century, Prague was the centre of the Holy Roman Empire and Europe's third largest city in terms of population. As part of the Hapsburg monarchy, Prague remained the capital of Czech lands, which became the strongest part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in terms of economy during the 19th century. Prague was developing as an important centre where Czech, German and Jewish cultures met and mingled. It experienced a growth of its territory and a great building boom. Currently, Prague is a large city of more than one million people, spreading over almost 500 square kilometres. Following the social and economic changes in 1989, Prague enhanced its historically strong ties with other cities in Central Europe, and has gradually been gaining a continuously improving position within the continental structure

of big cities. Prague therefore deserves its recognition as being a high quality city.

Centuries of construction gave rise to an exceptional integrated architectural complex, unique in the world as regards its size and concentration of cultural heritage. Different architectural styles mingle and intertwine here, and their symbiosis creates the city's unique atmosphere. The most valuable part of the city's centre was declared the Prague Heritage Reserve in 1981, which was included in UNESCO's world cultural heritage list in 1992.

Prague is the seat of the top-level legislative, administrative and political bodies of the country – the parliament, government, and president; and the most important social, cultural and educational institutions reside here. The city is the entrance gate to the Czech Republic.

Puchov (SK)

- WWW: *www.puchov.sk/en/?page=mesto&spage=puchov-nowadays*
- LORIS conference twinning city: Zlin (CZ)
- Population: 19,200 (2005)
- Area: 41.38 sq. km

The town of Puchov is situated in the valley of the middle reaches of the river Vah and in the north of the Ilavska kotlina basin. Puchov is surrounded by mountain ranges called Biele karpaty, Javorniky and Strazovske vrchy.

The first record of Puchov dates from **1243** when the king **Belo IV** issued a few deeds of donation. One of them mentions a man called **Puch**, an owner of a village with the same name. Its founding can be dated from about 1100 when Hungarians repeatedly destroyed the Puchov people´s fortress and their settlement by the Puchov Rock and the people moved to the lowland below the

Puchov Rock. Archaelogists still consider the Puchov Rock the most settled pre-history and early history place. The "Puchov culture" is a respected notion in ar-chaelogy and represents settlement of the mountaineous parts of Slovakia in the era of five centuries in the turn of B. C. and A. D.

Building of the raiway in the second half of 19th century brought improving of the local conditions, after crisis in the town development in 18th century. The first manufactures were founded in the beginning of 20th century – **Syderolit and Syenit** producing roof tiles, the first clothing factory in Slovakia and tyre produc-tion. Economical strength of the region has been expressed by existence of the Puchov Region Entrepreneurs Association.

Puchov belonged to the Trencin region called Trencin zupa in the times of Austria – Hungary monarchy. After Czechoslovakia was founded Puchov became a district town, belonging to the zilina region. This took up to 1960 when the Puchov district was cancelled and the locality became a part of the Povazska Bystrica district. Puchov has been a district town since 1996.

Puchov is a university town as the Faculty of Industries Technologies of the Trencin University resides here. Nowadays more than four hundred young people have been studying rubber, glass and textiles technologies in Puchov.

Purmerend (NL)

- WWW: *www.purmerend.nl*
- LORIS conference twinning city: Jihlava (CZ)
- Population: 77,934 (2007)
- Area: 24.56 sq. km

Purmerend is a municipality and a city in the Netherlands, in the province of North Holland. The mid-sized city is famous for having a traditional cow market.

From the 1960's onwards, Purmerend has seen major expansions. These expansions added new suburbs, providing homes for people working in Amster-dam. This expansion continues to the present date. Public transportation is mainly focused on Amsterdam, with several bus services and a train service via Zaandam.

Slavicin (CZ)

- WWW: *www.mesto-slavicin.cz*
- LORIS conference twinning city: Nova Dubnica (SK)
- Population: 8644 (2005)
- Area: 55.84 sq. km

Slavicin is a town in the Zlin Region, Czech Republic, first mentioned in 1141. During 17th and 18th century repeatedly attacked by Ottoman armies and razed in 1663 and 1704. After Second World War developing rapidly and gaining status of the City in 1964. 8644 inhabitants live on 55.7 sq. kilometres.

Trencin (SK)

- WWW: *www.trencin.sk/en/12513*
- LORIS conference twinning city: Zlin (CZ)
- Population: 57,000 (2006)
- Area: 67.74 sq. km

The City of Trencin, Slovakia is in the center of the Povazie region. It is the administrative center of the Trencin Regional Government Unit, which consists of 9 Districts: Banovce nad Bebravou, Ilava, Myjava, Nove Mesto nad Vahom, Partizanske, Povazska Bystrica, Prievidza, Puchov andTrencin.

Thanks to its advantageous location, Trencin is an important commercial, economic, cultural and sport center. It is also known as the "City of fashion". Numerous institutions and companies have their headquarters and branches located in Trencin. Expositions and fairs also have a long lasting tradition in Trencin. Current population estimates for Trencin is 60,000. Trencin is located in the western part of Slovakia on the Trencianska basin. The Vah River runs north/south through the middle of the City, on the east the City is bordered by the massif of the Povazsky Inovec and Strazovske vrchy, and to the west by the ledges of the Biele Karpaty.
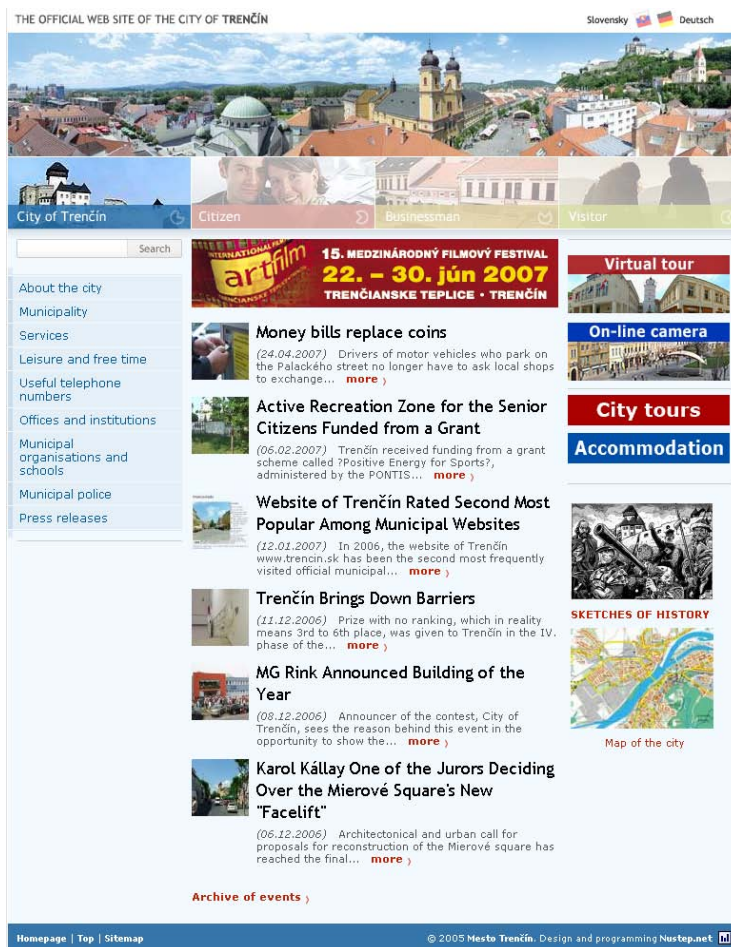
Together with Nitra and Bratislava, Trencin belongs to the oldest Slovak cities, chronicled as early as in the 11th century. Its strategic location near three Carpathian mountain passes on the crossroads of commercial routes, has always determined the character of the city as a significant landmark. As early as in the ancient times, the famous Jasper Road used by the Etruscan, Greek, and later Roman merchants to transport precious jasper from the Baltic region, was crossing Trencin.

However, earliest archaeological findings show the presence of early humans in Trencin and its surrounding regions as early as 200,000 years ago. After the Bronze and Iron Age cultures, the Celts and Germans inhabited the region. In the 2nd century AD, during the time of the Marcomanni Wars, soldiers of the II. auxiliary legion who were spending winter at Laugaricio, left a writing on the rock below the castle, known today as the Roman Inscription. The inscription places the city of Trencin amongst other European cities with antique history. In his work Geographica, Claudius Ptolemaeus – a Roman geographer, cartographer, and polyhistor living between 90 and 168 AD, mentions a commercial station called Leukaristos on the other side of Danube, identical with Laugaricio, or today's city of Trencin.

The oldest written account of Trencin appears as a non-dated note contained in the Hungarian gestures. The city of Trencin as such is mentioned in so-called Zoborske Letters of 1111 and 1113, as a tax-collecting and merchant settlement under Trencin castle.

It was there, where in 1461 the king Matthew Korvin, together with his mother Elisabeth, was expecting the arrival of his fiancee, Bohemian princess Katarina (Kunhuta), daughter of George of Podebrady. In 1512, the castle hosted the

engagement ceremony of Stephen Zapolsky's daughter with the Polish king Sigmund.

Diplomatic traditions of Trencin have not been forgotten. In May 24 and 25, 2002, the castle hosted a summit of the prime and foreign affairs ministers of the Visegrad Group and the Benelux, while in 2004 it became the meeting place of the participants to the NATO Parliamentary Session.

For many years, Trencin has also been a significant academic center. A record mentioning John the Rector, in 1437, documents the presence of the Municipal School. It was in 1572, when the City Magistrate ordered a new school building to be constructed, that was to accommodate significant number of students coming from farther surrounding regions. Establishment of the Piarist Gymnasium is connected with the year 1647, when the Jesuits founded their own school that soon afterward, in 1649, was to be changed into the famous Gymnasium. At the beginning of the 19th century, there was also the Town School, together with other denominational schools – Catholic (for girls), Lutheran, and Jewish.

In 1883, the city was added to the Vah Railroad System with connection to the Kosice-Bohumin Railroad Track. This further stimulated the onset of local industries. Further, Trencin was connected with Vienna, Budapest, and other cities of the monarchy. The city was becoming a significant commercial and industrial center. Industries such as textile, food, and machine production were on the rise. Number of modern, up-to-date improvements and gadgets that increased the quality of life were penetrating into Trencin at the beginning of the 20th century. Telephone was introduced in 1905, while the first public electrical public lights system was launched in 1907. In 1909, modern sewage system construction started, with public waterworks constructed in 1910–1911.

Trencin Women's Society and Israelite Women's Society organized cultural and entertainment activities to promote charitable activities for children. Voluntary Firemen established in 1873 played no less important function in cultural environment of the city. Four years later, in 1877, was established Natural Science Society of the district of Trencin, chaired by Dr. K. Brancik. The Society became the most significant cultural group of the city and the whole district. In 1912, it joined the newly established Museum Society of Trencin District and helped initiate the establishment of the present-day museum.

New boost to Trencin's economic and industrial base took place after the rise of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918. At present, there is a number of secondary schools in Trencin. Gymnasium of Ludovit stur, Piarist Gymnasium, Gymnasium of J. Branecky, Business Academy of Dr. M. Hodza, Secondary Nursing School, Secondary Industrial School of Textile Production, Emil Bellus Secondary Industrial Construction School. Universities of Trencin include Alexander Dubcek University, and Higher School of Management.

Vilnius (LT)

- WWW: *www.vilnius.lt/new/en/gidas.php*
- LORIS conference twinning cities: Budapest (HU), Prague (CZ), Warsaw (PL)
- Population: 541,824 (2006)
- Area: 401 sq. km

The capital of the Republic of Lithuania is Vilnius. Naturally, it is the largest city in the country: according to the data of 2001 the population of Vilnius is 542,287. Of them 57.8% are Lithuanians, 18.7% Poles, 14% Russians, 4% Byelorussians, 0.5% Jews and the remaining 5% comprising some other nationalities.

Current area of Vilnius is 392 square kilometres. Buildings cover 20.2% of the city and the remaining area is prevailed with the greenery (43.9%) and waters (2.1%). The County of Vilnius covers the regions of Vilnius, Elektrėnai, Salcininkai, Srvintos, Svencionys, Trakai, and Ukmergė totalling to 965,000 ha.

The Old Town, historical centre of Vilnius, is one of the largest in Eastern Europe (360 ha). The most valuable historic and cultural heritage is concentrated here. The buildings in the old town – there are about 1.5 thousand of them – were built in a number of different centuries, therefore, it is a mixture of all European architectural styles. Although Vilnius is often called a baroque city, here you will find some buildings of gothic, renaissance and other styles. The main sights of the city are the Gediminas Castle and the Cathedral Square, symbols of the capital. Their combination is also a gateway to the historic centre of the capital. Because of its uniqueness, the Old Town of Vilnius was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Vilnius is also the largest administrative centre in Lithuania with all major political, economic, social and cultural centres.

City is situated in South-eastern Lithuania (54° 41' north latitude and 25° 17' east longitude) at the confluence of the River Vilnelė and the River Neris. The distance from Vilnius to the Baltic Sea and Klaipėda, main Lithuania seaport, is about 312 km. The distance is rather large but other cities such as Kaunas, Siauliai, and Panevėzys can be reached quickly and easily. They are 102, 214 and 135 km off the capital respectively.

The capital was first mentioned in the written sources of the 12th century. And in 1323 Vilnius was named the city. Throughout a couple of centuries it became a constantly growing and developing city because in 1579 the university was established here. It was the first university of this type in the Grand Duchy of

Lithuania but it soon developed into an important scientific and cultural centre of Europe. Of course, political, economic and social life was also in full swing here. This is proved by the statutes issued in the 16th century. By the way, the last of them was in force until the 19th century.

Rapidly developing Vilnius was open for foreigners coming both from the east and the west. Because of that, strong communities of Poles, Russians, Jews, Germans, Karaimes, etc. began to form here. Each of them made their contribution to the formation of the city: at that time crafts, trade and science were prospering in Vilnius. The city was developing rapidly and at the beginning of the 19th century it was the third largest town in the region of Eastern Europe. Only Moscow and St. Petersburg were larger.

Walbrzych (PL)

- WWW: *www.um.walbrzych.pl/en/strony/index.htm*
- LORIS conference twinning city: Hradec Kralove (CZ)
- Population: 126,465 (2006)
- Area: 84.79 sq. km

Walbrzych is situated in the south-western part of Poland, in central part of the Sudety Mountains, in Dolnośląskie Voivodship, in the vicinity of the national borders with the Czech Republic and Germany. The town is located at an altitude of 450 to 550 meters above sea level in a picturesque valley, surrounded by the forest-covered ranges of the Walbrzyskie Mountains.

Administratively, Walbrzych has the status an urban borough; its boundaries encompass an area of 85 square kilometres, and is inhabited by about 130 thousand people.

Walbrzych enjoys an extraordinarily favourable location for transport, as city situated near the motorway crossing between the A4 (40 km) and the A3 (planned, 29 km). The town is intersected by the national road No. 35 from Wroclaw to the border crossing with the Czech Republic in Golińsk.

The oldest historical records of the city date back to the 12th Century. Between the 12th and 14th Centuries, during the rule of the Piast princes from the Świdnica-Jawor lineage, the Książ Castle and the Nowy Dwor fortress were built. Walbrzych was chartered in the 15th century. Coal mining in the area was first mentioned in 1536. Walbrzych was transformed into an industrial centre at the turn of the 19th century, when coal mining and weaving flourished. In the early 20th century a glass works and a large china tableware manufacturing plant, which are still in operation today, were built. After World War Two, which fortunately spared the city, as a result of combining the nearby administrative districts with the town and the construction of new housing estates, Walbrzych expanded geographically. At the beginning of the 1990's, because of new social and economic conditions, a decision was made to close down the town's coal mines. In 1995, a Museum of Industry and Technology was set up on the facilities of the oldest coal mine in the area, KWK THOREZ.

Warsaw (PL)

- WWW: *www.e-warsaw.pl/index.php*
- LORIS conference twinning cities: Budapest (HU), Prague (CZ), Vienna (AT), Vilnius (LT)
- Population: 1,700,536 (2006)
- Area: 519.90 sq. km (metropolis: 6100 sq. km)

Warsaw is the capital of Poland and its largest city. It is located on the Vistula River roughly 370 kilometers (229.9 mi) from both the Baltic Sea coast and the Carpathian Mountains. Its population as of 2006 was estimated at 1,700,536, with a metropolitan area of approximately 2,900,000 to 3,000,000 people. The city area is 516.9 square kilometers, with an agglomeration of 6,100.43 square kilometers (Warsaw Metro Area – Obszar Metropolitalny Warszawy). Warsaw straddles the Vistula River, approximately 370 kilometers from both the Carpathian Mountains and Baltic Sea. It is located in the heartland of the Masovian Plain, and its average altitude is 100 meters above sea level, although there are some hills (mostly artificial) located within the confines of the city. Warsaw is the 7th biggest city in the European Union.

The first fortified settlements on the site of today's Warsaw were Brodno (9th–10th century) and Jazdow (12th–13th century). In 1529 Warsaw for the first time became the seat of the General Sejm, permanent since 1569.

Due to its central location between the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth's capitals of Vilnius and Krakow, Warsaw became the capital of the Commonwealth and at the same time of the Polish Crown in 1596, when King Sigismund III Vasa moved the capital from Krakow.

Warsaw became the capital of the newly independent Poland again in 1918. In the course of the Polish-Bolshevik War of 1920, the huge Battle of Warsaw was fought on the Eastern outskirts of the city in which the capital was successfully defended and the Red Army defeated. During the Second World War central Poland, including Warsaw, came under the rule of the General Government, a Nazi colonial administration. In the course of the Invasion of Poland, Warsaw was severely bombed, and in the course of the Siege of Warsaw approximately 10 to 15% of its buildings were destroyed.

Warsaw was liberated from the Germans on 17 January 1945 by the Red Army and the 1st army of Ludowe Wojsko Polskie during the Vistula-Oder Offensive. When the troops crossed the Vistula and entered through the left-bank, they found a Warsaw that had almost ceased to exist; 85% of the city had been destroyed, including the historic Old Town and the Royal Castle. The surviving Home Army fighters were rounded up by the NKVD, some were murdered or deported to Siberia.

The city was once considered a shining metropolis, but due to total destruction, it has lost its baroque tinge. Although many of the destroyed significant historical buildings were restored, little remains of the resplendence of Warsaw baroque.

After the war, Boleslaw Bierut's puppet regime set up by Stalin made Warsaw the capital of the communist People's Republic of Poland, and the city was resettled and rebuilt. Large prefabricated housing projects were erected in Warsaw to address the housing shortage. Few of the inhabitants of the pre-war Poland returned: Hundreds of thousands were dead, thousands more in exile from the new regime. Nonetheless, the city resumed its role as the capital of Poland and the country's centre of political and economic life. Many of the historic streets, buildings, and churches were restored to their original form. In 1980, Warsaw's historic Old Town was inscribed onto UNESCO's World Heritage list.

Warsaw has a booming economy almost free of unemployment. It offers an attractive business environment with a full range of modern business services and well-trained professionals familiar with Western standards.

It is the financial centre of this part of Europe and an important consumer market. It has become the focal point of foreign investments and a driving force

in the development of the entire country's economy. Over 244,000 companies are registered here – 98.5 percent of them private.

Warsaw holds first place nation-wide in terms of percentage of companies with foreign capital registred. By the end of 1999 there were 13,152 such companies, i. e. over 30 percent of the total in Poland. Among them, most (44 percent) are active in retail, 23 percent in banking and finance with other services for business development, and 12 percent in manufacturing.

One great of advantage of Warsaw is its labour market. Twenty percent of Warsaw's population boasts a university degree.The unemployment rate is the lowest in Poland (5.1 percent). Warsaw's job market attracts the most promising youngsters from all over Poland.

Warsaw is also one of the most important education centers of Poland. It is home to four major universities and over 62 smaller schools of higher education.

Wroclaw (PL)

- WWW: *www.wroclaw.pl/ms/english*
- LORIS conference twinning city: Hradec Kralove (CZ)
- Population: 633,700 (2006)
- Area: 292.82 sq. km

Wroclaw is an excellent example of a multicultural metropolis situated at the interface of ethnically diverse areas. For a greater part of the city's history, German was the dominant language in Wroclaw. However, for several generations the city was home to the Korn publishing house, which printed many books in Polish (250 titles between 1732 and 1790). Here the German playwright Karl Holtei staged a play about the Polish national hero Tadeusz Kościuszko (Tadeus Kosciusko) in 1826. The Czechs have also played an important role in the city's history (in 1335–1526 Wroclaw belonged to the Kingdom of Bohemia). As late as 1719, the great sculptor Johann Georg Urbański (Urbanski) of Bohemia was given the key to the city.

Multiculturalism again left a very deep impression on the city's character after the Second World War, when the city's German population was largely re-

placed by people arriving from various regions of Poland, including those reset-
tled from the eastern provinces of Poland taken over by the Soviet Union. In par-
ticular, many former citizens of Wilno (Vilnius) and Lwow settled here. With
them came the great library collection of the Ossoliński (Ossolinski) Institution
from Lwow, which found a new location in the magnificent Baroque edifice of
the former monastery of the Red Star Knights of the Cross. Two other works of
unique significance for Polish culture were transferred from Lwow: the statue of
the leading Polish comic dramatist, Count Aleksander Fredro, and the Panorama
of the Battle of Raclawice (Raclawice), a monumental painting representing the
victorious battle with the Russian forces fought by Tadeusz Kościuszko (Tadeus
Kosciusko) on 4 April 1794, one of only several paintings of this kind to have
survived in Europe until the present. It took over 35 years before it was possible
to show the Panorama to the public, but today it is one of the city's most popular
tourist attractions.

Zlin (CZ)

- WWW: *www.mestozlin.cz/en/page/5.welcome-to-zlin*
- LORIS conference twinning city: Puchov (SK), Trencin (SK)
- Population: 79,538 (2006)
- Area: 118.85 sq. km

Zlin, the administrative center of the Zlin region, lies along the river Drevnice in a
mild climatic area of southeastern Moravia. It is also a crossroad for the ethno-
graphic boundaries of the Wallachian, Hana and Moravian Slovak regions. This

region of 590,000 inhabitants became famous for more reasons than its advantageous location.

The city is famous as the birthplace of the founder of the colossal Bata Shoe Empire, Thomas Bata, where his company flourished in the first half of the 20th century. One facet of the city's character is its one-of-a-kind functionalist architecture. In 2001 a new university the Thomas Bata University was founded in Zlin. The city is the seat for several government centers, as well as for cultural and social institutions. Zlin holds many meaningful congresses, mainly in medical professions.

New constructions, restored façades and streets all give the visitor a refreshing first impression of the city. The Drevnice River Valley, across which Zlin spreads out, is lush and green. Just walking through the city is an unforgettable experience. Those who truly know Zlin also know why it has fascinated many of its visitors and why very few of its inhabitants move away.

A natural metropolis of southeast Moravia, a statutory city, university seat and center of the newly created Zlin Region – all this is today's Zlin. The city became world famous at the beginning of the 20th century thanks to Bata shoe factories, which later carried the name Svit. It's also famous for its unique functionalist architecture and the dynamic rate of growth over the past ten years.

The character of Zlin has been formed since the beginning of the 1990's – the city of entrepreneurs. After the Velvet Revolution a number of companies gained a crucial position within the framework of Czech industry, and their representatives began to successfully do business on foreign markets, which hadn't been previously accessible.

Zlin built its seat and surroundings towards machine production, rubber and plastics industry and several dozens of shoe manufacturers. Zlin's industrial production was naturally concentrated around the extensive industrial zone of the former Bata factories.

In 2001 a new industrial zone emerged on the east side of the city, which is being filled by both domestic and foreign investors involved in the development and production of household appliances, automobile industry components, plastics manufacture, metal machining and the food industry.

Zlin remains open to new investment offers and interest by new entrepreneurs that will find both business partners and a qualified work force, important for development and production.

Zlin's Tomas Bata University trains managers and specialists mainly in technological and economic fields. The specific training offered by high schools includes construction, machining, chemistry, electrical technology and economics. Zlin is the seat of traditional development and research institutes and workplaces of which many have become famous throughout the world.

Znojmo (CZ)

- WWW: *www.znojmo.eu/en*
- LORIS conference twinning city: Nove Zamky (SK)
- Population: 35,177 (2005)
- Area: 65.93 sq. km

Znojmo is a town in the South Moravian Region of the Czech Republic, near the border with Lower Austria. It has 35 177 inhabitants (2005) and area of 66 square kilometres.

The town is situated on a rock outcropping on the steep left bank of the Dyje River, and retains a number of examples of its medieval architecture. The

Gothic Church of St. Nicholas and the town hall's Gothic tower are the most recognizable landmarks. The Church of St. Nicholas was built in 1348 by the emperor Charles IV, and the town hall, with its 75 m (250 ft) tower, dates from around 1446. There is also an ancient castle atop a nearby hilltop.

The present town of Znojmo was founded in 1226 by King Ottokar I on the site of the ancient capital of the tributary margraves of Moravia, which had been destroyed in 1145. Znojmo is best known to history for the armistice concluded here in 1809 after the Battle of Wagram between Napoleon and the archduke Charles.

Survey among the cities

Banska Bystrica (SK) – *www.banskabystrica.sk*
- *Public services focus* – Mainly citizens, english version is focused on visitors and potentional visitors.
- *Brief description and level of implementation* – All the necessary information about the city council, city hall and city police; public transport, culture and sport in the city; map of the city; list of twinning cities and other information.
- *Level of interactivity* – Search option, online forms and questionnaires.
- *Experience and future prospects* – Portal for communication with city hall.

Ceske Budejovice (CZ) – *www.c-budejovice.cz*
- *Public services focus* – Residents, visitors and potentional visitors in the first plan, but pages are full of information for everybody interested in the city for any reasons.
- *Brief description and level of implementation* – Info regarding the work of the city council and miscellaneous commissions as well as information on environment, education, social services, housing and similar aspects of the modern city. There is also info available about culture, sports and accommodation.
- *Level of interactivity* – Generaly only search option, but selected users can post specific information directly on the web (e.g. section aimed on culture)
- *Experience and future prospects* – Social services portal.

Dubnica nad Vahom (SK) – *www.dubnica.sk*
- *Public services focus* – Citizens, entrepreneurs and visitors; each category has dedicated part of the web site, while English version of the website is aimed purely on visitors and tourists.
- *Brief description and level of implementation* – Basic information about the council and city hall including description of projects and partnerships. Detailed information is specialized in each category – citizen, entrepreneur, tourist.
- *Level of interactivity* – Freshly launched portal for citizens – electronical communication with city hall, search option.
- *Experience and future prospects* – Further improvement of portal for citizen.

Martin (SK) – *www.martin.sk*
- *Public services focus* – Citizens and tourists.
- *Brief description and level of implementation* – Information about the city and its life. Part of the website is dedicated to detailed coverage of the international projects and projects financed from European funds.
- *Level of interactivity* – Search option.
- *Experience and future prospects* – Further improvement of portal services.

Nitra (SK) – *www.nitra.sk*

- *Public services focus* – Citizens and tourists – each has special website.
- *Brief description and level of implementation* – Information about the city and its activities; portal for citizens brings all the necessary information on the life of the city, while portal for tourist offers information required by persons interested in visiting the city – it is closely connceted to the regional portal.
- *Level of interactivity* – Search option, registration for citizens – mailing of news, online forms.
- *Experience and future prospects* – Further improvement of portal services.

Nove Zamky (SK) – *www.novezamky.sk*

- *Public services focus* – Mainly residents and tourists.
- *Brief description and level of implementation* – Webpage offers history, statutory documents and brief description of the city, information about the city hall, including the documents about the council meetings, advertises planned cultural and sport events and brings reviews and photos from events already undertaken.
- *Public services objectives* – At the present services are not aimed selectively.
- *Level of interactivity* – Currently almost non-existent.
- *Experience and future prospects* – Launch of "electronic town hall" project and subsequent promotion of official communication and correspondce between town hall and citizens/entrepreneurs through Internet.

Prague (CZ) – *www.praha-mesto.cz*

- *Public services focus* – Citizens, english version is focused both on english speaking residents and visitors.
- *Brief description and level of implementation* – Extensive information about the city and work of the city council. Updated info about traffic situation, culture and sport events. Special section is dedicated to international and European projects. Interesting section of "How to…" information. Lot of links on pages of city police, medical emergency, public transport schedules and more.
English version provides information for visitors but is full of information for foreign residents too, including adresses and contact on foreign and border police, events and lifestyle in the city and information about foreign experts recruiting campaign which offers obtaining a permanent residency for the whole family in shortened time.
- *Level of interactivity* – Search option, RSS feeder, online forms and questionnaires, online reservation of visits of the city hall, online info about the current state of administrative agenda in individual matters.
- *Experience and future prospects* – Further improvement of services and widening the area of offered information.

Zlin (CZ) – *www.mestozlin.cz*

- *Public services focus* – Website is divided into three parts – citizen, tourist and entrepreneur. Some information can be found on more than one, but other info is filtered and placed on one of the parts only.
- *Brief description and level of implementation* – News from the work of city council,

advices and guidelines for target groups – "how to…", map services, discussion forums, reservation portal for online passport applications (and possibility to see current state of your application on-line), all the necessary information and guides for emergency situations. Electronical forms as well as electronical board is updated regularly and competitions of tenders are announced there. Information on social affairs, education, environmental situation, city parks and gardens, city funds and foundations and a lot more can be found there too.

- *Level of interactivity* – On-line passport application is fully interactive. You can input your data or reserve the day and time of the visit. You can also see the current state of your application online (every application is given number code only applicant knows thus ensuring full security of personal data).
- *Experience and future prospects* – System similar to online passport applications is prepared for driving licenses and other personal documents. Improvement is planned in the area of map services too. Whole website will be evaluated in the near future in the framework of new municipal information strategy project.