

## **PREFACE BY THE MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND INFORMATION SOCIETY TECHNOLOGIES**

Dear readers,

I am glad to have been invited to present a few introductory comments to a book on the information society developments in Poland. The book addresses issues, which can not be overvalued – no matter how much Poland may be currently lagging behind the world economic leaders, the future of the country is irrevocably linked to its abilities to absorb existing, and develop new information and communication technologies (ICT). In fact, the effective development of the information society in transition economies appears, in a sense, to be even more important than in the advanced economies. For it is the ICT that makes it potentially possible to leapfrog over a number of development gaps, which would be difficult to overcome otherwise. Neglecting the issue may lead to a significant aggravation of economic problems that the transition economies nowadays face.

It is my compelling feeling that in spite of very many social and economic constraints, we have managed in Poland to make significant progress towards the information society. In the past few years the government strategy to further speed up developments in this regard has been clearly formulated with specific policies either already implemented or soon to come into effect. The emphasis is put on stimulating competition, securing budgetary and encouraging extra-budgetary funding for the fast growth sectors in the economy, stimulating R&D cooperation between research institutions and the business sector, prioritizing the ICT in the political agenda, increasing public Internet access opportunities, developing digital content and services available through the net, supporting IT education, and promoting Internet security and confidence in its use. Convincing results of this policy are hoped to soon be apparent. At the same time we are painfully aware of acute challenges that still abound, to mention only the unsatisfactory performance of the innovative sector of the economy, the existing danger of a growing social digital divide, inadequate broadband access to the Internet in large parts of the country and its still relatively high cost and slow connection speed; yet progress has been made in offering the crucial e-government services to both individuals and businesses. Effective measures have to be promptly undertaken if Poland is to satisfy its citizens' social and economic aspirations and contribute justly to the well being of the European Union.

In view of this, a book offering an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the information society's situation in Poland using up-to-date factual quantitative data is clearly needed. That is why the book by Dr. Piątkowski is so very welcome. In it, the author provides a thorough discussion that is comprehensive and conclusive, leading to a set of well thought-out policy recommendations which should greatly help us in further shaping the ICT development strategy in Poland.

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