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The Development of Telecommunications in Southeastern Europe, an Opportunity for Greece

Telecommunications constitute a dynamic branch of global communication with the sole characteristic of *determining* to a large degree the direction of evolution of social continuity. In the context of new global economic structures as they are formed and directed by the continuous diffusion of information, the productive web is restructured and broadened, supporting the development of new entrepreneurial models.

The branch of telecommunications, driving force of the new economic organization, comprises one of the most dynamically developing branches of the economy as telecommunications have penetrated all forms of economic activity and contribute tremendously in the push for productivity and competitiveness. In the development of the branch of telecommunications one finds the support of the dictates of globalization, as well as the new services and the networking products, as the new services and applications are usually supported by new types of terminals and equipment, providing indirectly an even larger cycle of relative industry.

It is worth noting that the international industry of telecommunication products and services is growing at the rate of 17% annually. The global sales of the branch reach trillions of dollars, whereas in the context of the European Union 8% of the communal Gross National Product (GNP) is related to telecommunications.

A determining factor in the blossoming of the branch of telecommunications was the freeing of the markets and the banning of monopolies. Nevertheless, the further upward course of the branch may be ensured only through the shielding of the

institutional context and the existence of independent regulating principles. In a monopoly environment the adjusting intervention is limited to the handling of frequencies and support of terminals, whereas in the context of free competition the harmonizing of the activities of market factors under rules of competition is of prime significance for the survival of the companies, the development of the market and the banning of "monopoly attitudes", with the final result being the improvement of the available services towards the citizen and the reduction of the final cost.

Western Europe, already during the last twenty years, has orientated itself in supporting the development of the branch of telecommunications through the arrangement of a regulating context which favors the spreading of the beneficial activities of competition. Greece, in the context of the European Union, follows the path set out by the rest of Western Europe and having voted in December of 2000 the law for the freeing of telecommunications, it has developed a fully independent regulating principle, the "National Post and Telecommunications Committee", which has shown substantial work materializing original processes, as for example the auctions of spectrums or effectuating penalties at Hellenic Telecommunications Organization for monopoly practices.

One more element which deeply characterized the last decade both in the global sense but particularly in the vicinity of the geographic area of Greece is the continuance of a single system of economic management. The reconstruction of the political setting in Southeastern Europe is concomitant with the creation of a new, market

dynamic, with significant possibilities for development, which however must adopt institutional rules of competition.

The constant development of technology and the convergence of Telecommunications with Computer Science on one hand and the growth of the economies of the countries of Southeastern Europe on the other create a large market of which Greek companies have the opportunity to claim.

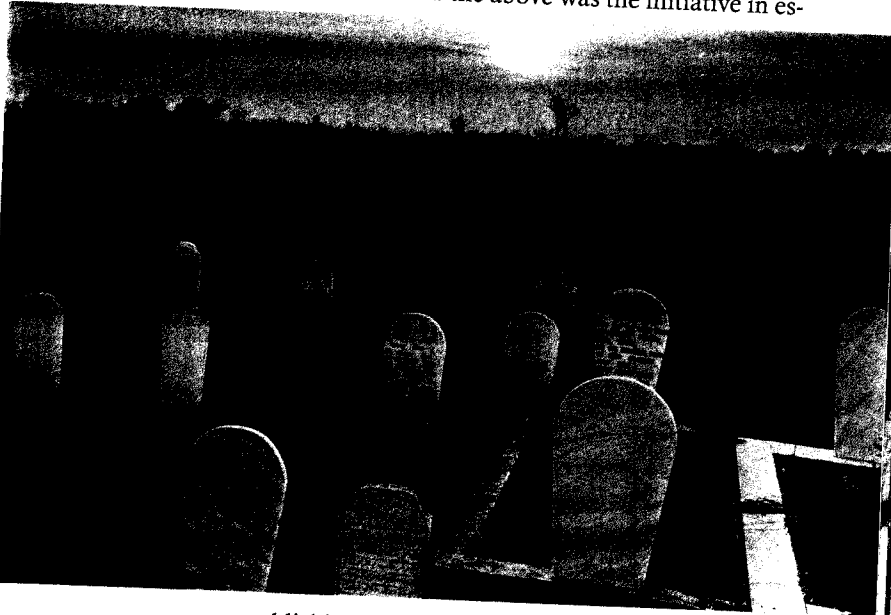
Greece is obligated to portray a significant role and involvement in the infrastructure works. These works will form the basis of a new regional cooperation and will link the E. U. and Greece with the totality of countries in the region. They will contribute in the founding of new structures of stability and interdependence.

Greece in foreseeing the entrepreneurial opportunities opening up in the new markets supports the need for the existence of a unified institutional context. Parallel to this, it maintains the geographic advantage of direct access to the new markets of Southeastern Europe and acts on the opportunities in approaching them. The developments in Europe, the Balkans, the Mediterranean and the Middle East are finally formed by factors which surpass the traditional frontiers and their periphery.

The interdependence of Europe, the Balkans, Eurasia and the Middle East is continually supported. Greece finds itself at the center of this phenomenon. For a number of years now, numerous Greek companies have begun activity in this area with significant success and the most

characteristic case is that of the "Hellenic Telecommunications Organization". From these initial efforts it was made clear that these countries require significant support so that a calm transition of the socioeconomic systems to that of the free markets and societies can be effectuated and to achieve the convergence between the economies and the homogeneity of rules and the contexts of function.

The developments in the sector of telecommunications at a national, European and international level and the ascertainment of the needs of enforcing common rules of competition led a significant portion of the Greek telecommunication market to cooperation, for a study, in common, of the telecommunication environment in the aforementioned new markets and the support and strengthening of a common regulating context. A result of the above was the initiative in es-



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tablishing the **Institute of Research/Studies of Telecommunications and Computer Science N.A. Europe (INA)**.

INA aspires to be the scientific core which will study, analyze and approach scientifically and in an organized manner the developments in the market of telecommunications in the countries of