

Name: **Jadranka Dakić**

Organisation: **City of Ljubljana**

Welcome from the Deputy Mayor of Ljubljana, Ms. Jadranka Dakić

Esteemed Mr. Reinhard Büscher, Head of Unit of Innovation Policy Development at the European Commission, Madam Michela Michilli, director of the INNO-DEAL project, Esteemed Madam Darja Radič, State Secretary of the Slovenian Ministry of the Economy, and Madam Tea Petrin, Full Professor of the Faculty of Economics at the University of Ljubljana, former Minister of Economy and former Slovene Ambassador to the Netherlands.

Distinguished participants of the conference, ladies and gentlemen,

Following the local elections in 2006, Ljubljana, the capital city of Slovenia, gained new impetus. Mayor Zoran Jankovič and his team planned numerous strategically important projects that have a common goal: to create a progressive, developed and safe European capital city that will be a source of pride for its residents, hospitable for tourists and open for business people and the transfer of knowledge.

I am therefore especially delighted that you, the partners of the EU project INNO-DEAL, and representing 12 EU countries, have chosen Ljubljana as the host city for the final conference to present the important conclusions at which you arrived in the three-year period of your close cooperation.

Ljubljana is the political, cultural, university and above all economic centre of Slovenia. The city ‘provides jobs’ for a quarter of the work-active population of Slovenia. A fifth of Slovenian companies are based in Ljubljana.

In recent years special attention has been focused on support for start-up companies, which have secured the basis for their development in the new Ljubljana Technology Park (TP Lj).

In 2007 and 2008 the existing commercial space (4,700 m²) was expanded with seven modern infrastructural buildings offering more than 34,000 m² of commercial space.

This is now the home of high-technology companies in the fields of information technology, industrial automation, new materials, biotechnology and environmental protection. Numerous programmes are available to companies: the tailor-made ones such as quick start, access to finance and internationalisation, as well as business advice and a voucher system, vocational education and training, networking and promotion.

The Technology Park includes companies in international projects and helps them obtain funding from centralised and decentralised programmes.

The following facts best illustrate how the Technology Park has proven to be a stimulative entrepreneurial environment:



at the end of last year a total of 187 companies were operating in the Technology Park – 55 start-ups among them - with a grand total of more than 1,100 employees; from the end of last year to June – i.e. in less than half a year – the number of companies increased by a full 40, to 227; of all these companies, 87 of them (over a quarter) are less than three years old.

Ljubljana Technology Park was also among the initiators for founding the Ljubljana University Incubator (LUI), where students can try themselves out on their first steps into the world of entrepreneurship.

The City of Ljubljana is also the founder of the Central Slovenia Regional Development Agency (RRA LUR), which ‘covers’ 12% (about an eighth) of the national territory and is home to more than a quarter of the entire population. One of the main tasks of the Development Agency is to develop the most stimulative possible support environment for developing entrepreneurship in the region, one that is open to all its forms and methods.

We are striving to achieve this through the development and transfer of knowledge, new technologies, development of innovative products and services, and also through the promotion of entrepreneurship.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In recent months we have frequently heard the idea that the crisis may also be a great opportunity. This is certainly true for young or start-up companies, which are only just setting out, but less for established companies that need to defend their market share.

At times of crisis, the advantage most certainly lies with innovative companies that invest in development and create added value, and are therefore competitive not just in their own regions, but also in the wider arena – and they are the most successful on the global market.

The programme for the final conference of the INNO-DEAL project promises to provide us with quite a few answers to some currently topical questions, such as: how to help innovative and creative companies in difficult economic conditions, how to provide financial support for start-up companies, how to attract capital and the attention of business angels.

I wish you every success in your work and fruitful discussions.

I hope that despite the packed timetable of the conference, we might find time for some relaxed conversation and socialising.

If not before, then at the evening reception in the City Museum of Ljubljana.

Thank you.