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Organisation: Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Slovenia

Opening Address

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Warmly welcome on behalf of the Ministry of the Republic of Slovenia.

Thank you very much for inviting me to participate at the Final Conference of the INNO-DEAL EU project.

I'm convinced that the focus of the conference on providing the solutions and best possible ways to ensure a successful support of the innovative and creative companies, taking into account all the present economic crisis, is the most convenient focus of discussion. There is no doubt that the exchange of good practices among the project partners during the conference will help the policy makers on all levels from the local to the national level, to find the best possible solutions for their actions in the near future.

Appearing in the supply chain mostly as subcontractors for large systems, small and medium-sized enterprises are even more affected by the current crisis.

However, our attitude should remain positive, or if I may quote Winston Churchill: "The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity, whereas an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty". As demonstrated throughout modern history, some of the best and most advanced companies in the world were established during times of crisis. These, indeed, are the times when things are often viewed from a different perspective, and when new, innovative and creative ideas thrive and provide solutions for social, environmental and other problems of humanity.

To succeed in creating a growing and dynamic company as an entrepreneur, three factors are of key importance:

1. a good idea with commercial value,
2. the right people, the entrepreneur and his or her team, and
3. appropriate financial support or sufficient financial resources.

The task of policy-makers is to design an environment which entrepreneurship. To this end, positive incentives are required in order to reduce the risk of failure and to encourage entrepreneurs to translate ideas into practice.

In a period of recession and the related credit crunch, it is of utmost importance that the state facilitates access to financial resources. Entrepreneurs usually set up their businesses by providing financial means from their own savings and the funds of their families and friends. However, the events during the last decades have demonstrated that successful, innovative and fast-growing

companies could not have come to life and survive as market leaders without appropriate financial support, especially in the form of venture capital.

Having this in mind the Ministry of the Economy is developing the instrument of a public venture capital company with which it wishes to boost the development and practice of equity financing, since a public venture capital company's investment in small and medium-sized enterprises will stimulate also the private sector to provide equity financing. In this regard, the tax aspect is of particular importance because it encourages investors to invest in venture capital companies, as the capital gain arising from such an investment is not taxed.

In the past, Slovenia also introduced other sources of financing, thus providing vast opportunities for micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises. In light of the current economic situation, we are striving to upgrade our efforts to date to develop a stimulating business environment. In line with the measures taken by the state to mitigate the effects of the financial crisis, we have been implementing, or planning the implementation of, additional incentives tailored to entrepreneurs.

Let me mention some of these measures. Guarantees for bank loans including subsidised interest rates, co-financing start-ups, co-financing common development-investment projects and co-financing the investment in a new technological equipment.

In creating an entrepreneurial environment, we must not forget “soft” forms of support services, including the promotion of entrepreneurship, voucher consulting, training and, One-Stop-Shop entry points which at the local level include offering information to prospective entrepreneurs, carrying out registrations, introducing entrepreneurial subject areas to schools and encouraging particular target groups such as young people and women.

All these measures are encompassed in the Programme of Measures to Promote Entrepreneurship and Competitiveness for 2007–2013, which is based on four main pillars: promoting entrepreneurship and an entrepreneur-friendly environment, business knowledge, development and innovation in companies, and promoting small and medium-sized enterprises with equity and debt instruments.

We intend to continue our efforts to create a stimulating, dynamic and growth-oriented environment, adapted to the current challenges we face. Right now we are in the process of preparing a new Program for promotion of entrepreneurship and competitiveness, which will even more than today focus on a new forms of financial support, as well as on improvement and further development of business environment. We are still looking for good ideas, for good practices and from this perspective, we find this conference as an opportunity to find a new solutions, which could be included in our program. My colleagues will follow the results of this conference and hopefully come back to the ministry with some fresh ideas.

Dear ladies and gentlemen!

I wish you a successful day and plenty of new innovative and creative ideas.

Thank you.

