

## Harnessing ICT to improve healthcare

Contributed by Euregha

The European Commission has unveiled a strategy to put Europe at the forefront when it comes to the development of smart internet-powered infrastructures. It calls on Europe's governments and its ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) sector to take advantage of the increasing demand for innovative applications of the internet to make existing infrastructures like healthcare systems, energy grids or traffic management 'smart'.

To do this it will launch a partnership between public authorities and major ICT players with a budget for 2011-2013 of €300 million available for projects to be selected in the near future, to complement the €200 million yearly ICT support to ongoing research for underlying internet technology.

"With an ageing EU population, the internet can make our health care systems more efficient and treat patients from afar," said Viviane Reding, EU Commissioner for Information Society and Media. "It is Europe and its businesses that should seize the opportunity and develop these technologies and applications which can tremendously increase the economic and social efficiency of day-to-day processes."

The European Commission has proposed on the 28th October 2009 an EU-wide internet innovation strategy linking governments and different industry sectors across Europe. The strategy aims to improve key infrastructures to our economy and society by making them better able to process massive amounts of data in their daily tasks. Internet data traffic is today growing already by 60% every year. As the internet connects to billions of sensors and online mobile devices to deliver ever more sophisticated information, these infrastructures need to be 'smart' enough to use such huge amounts of data in real time.

The strategy aims to make Europe a leader in the research and roll out of future internet technologies needed to 'smarten up' infrastructures in areas affecting daily life like healthcare, transport, and energy. This will not only reinforce the competitiveness of Europe's ICT industry but European consumers will also be the first to benefit from new applications and services.

The Commission urged governments and industry to work together so that European research focuses further on key internet technologies and their fast application to daily life. The Commission will kick-start this public-private partnership with a call for proposals in 2010. Altogether, €300 million are planned for this initiative over the 2011-2013 period – a figure to be matched by industry.

The Commission is already funding research making the internet itself smarter, with €400 million invested in more than 90 European projects under its ICT research programme, and another €200 million a year to be invested from 2011-2013 research budgets.