

Address to the SmartEN Launch Event

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President, Minister, Distinguished Guests, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen

I am sorry that I cannot be present in person to celebrate the formal start of the SmartEN project but it nevertheless gives me great pleasure to have the opportunity to share with you, albeit virtually, some thoughts and observations on the project and its wider context.

The convergence of a new set of capabilities in sensor, communications, positioning, modelling and computation technologies has created enormously exciting opportunities to radically improve the ways plan, design, manage and operate large scale infrastructure systems and the activities that take place within them.

Over the past few years the notion of smart infrastructure and smart environments has rapidly developed into a burgeoning area of activity in fields as diverse as energy, water, wastes, transport and healthcare. Many exciting new capabilities are emerging. For example, in my own field of transport, we have recently developed a passive mobile air quality sensing network which is enabling us to develop a radically improved understanding of the relationship between transport network management, traffic flow, vehicle emissions, pollution concentrations and health, and which is already influencing policy and practice in the UK.

However, with so much work going on in so many different fields, there is a danger and fragmentation and inefficiency. Many of the underlying technical challenges are common to different applications and domains and there is also enormous benefit to be had from sharing the experiences gained in the deployment and operation of pioneering examples of smart infrastructure systems. This is why an initiative such as SmartEN is so welcome, and indeed necessary. SmartEN will create a multi-disciplinary network of researchers across Europe, enable them to work together on topics of common interest, to share experience and to train a new generation of researchers and practitioners who will drive the field forward in the future. The project has the potential to have a significant and lasting impact on the evolution of the field.

At this point, I should like to express my thanks and indeed those of the whole SmartEN consortium, to Professor Toula Onoufriou and her colleagues in the Department of Civil Engineering and Geomatics at the Cyprus University of Technology for having taken the initiative in developing and leading the SmartEN project. Without both Toula's vision in conceiving the idea of the project and her enormous energy and determination in overcoming the many hurdles that inevitably beset a large and complex European-wide bid, we would not be in the happy position of launching the project today.

Finally, I should like, if I may, to make a small observation from the perspective of Cyprus University of Technology more widely. As some of you will be aware, I have had the pleasure of being a member of the Advisory Committee of the Department of Civil Engineering and Geomatics for the past few years and in that capacity I have had the opportunity to observe the development of the Department during a critical formative stage. From this perspective, it is extremely satisfying to see that the Department has now matured to the point that it can play a leading role in such an important and high profile project. This is an achievement of which CUT should be, and I know is, justifiably proud.

With that, I will close and wish you all a very pleasant and enjoyable evening.

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