

## **Discussion with Mr. E. Hartlog**

Participants of the meeting described the structure of research and education networking in Europe and the urgent need for access to dark fibre. In many countries it is difficult to get dark fibre on the market. The discussion was about the possibility of laying optical cables with ERDF support. Some participants asked about the interpretation of the Commission staff working paper »Guidelines on criteria and modalities of implementation of structural funds in support of electronic communication« in the case of building optical infrastructure.

Mr. Hartlog stressed the main requirements (market failure, open calls for tender, technological neutrality) and explained that some other requirements (e.g. building in rural areas) are not relevant when establishing infrastructure for research and education.

Some participants complained that it is difficult to get reliable information about the conditions of using structural funds. Mr. Hartlog explained that DG REGIO is always ready to explain the rules but it would not interfere in decision processes inside countries.

Two useful hints were given:

- It is useful to show that a project complements other projects co-financed by the EC (e.g. building optical fibres which will allow more universities to use new services provided by GEANT2)
- Look what others are doing. If some project is accepted by EC in one country it is obviously according to the rules and can be proposed by others.