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eSilk & eAmber Roads Innovative Regions Think Tank: Business and Government Executives & Professors' Commitment to Making a Difference

Universities Potential Contributions to the eSilk & eAmber Roads Innovative Regions Development

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Think Tank Outline

The old Silk and Amber Road are historical artifacts with reborn contemporary significant. The Amber Road wound its way from the Baltic countries in Eastern Europe to Venice that, also, was a terminus of the Silk Road albeit in a somewhat different time frame. The Amber Road was a Roman-age commercial route in the general 200 BC – 200 AD timeframe. The old Silk Road was a historical trade route (with its zenith in the 7-9th century) linking Asia and Europe that changed the nature of commerce in the medieval and renaissance world. Today, as in ancient times, these roads are a study in contrasts. These historical trading routes have commonalities yet distinctions both in the past and present and, perhaps, on into the future. Re-establishment of business and government relations on the nodes of the Silk and Amber Road towards creation of eSilk & eAmber Roads presents both challenges and opportunities.

Challenges common to both the renewed Silk and Amber roads are many. Culture and tradition vary dramatically. Awareness of the past, much less future potential, requires attention. Infrastructure elements along some parts of the roads are mature and futuristic while, along other parts, have far to go to merely catch up with modern times. Economic viability needs to be carefully examined as multiple choices and alternatives now exist that, clearly, were not present in ancient times. Political conventions give way to numerous forms of governance. Business procedures vary widely under differing government rules and regulations. Overall feasibility comes into question as to the ability of individuals, organizations and countries to achieve a degree of cooperation necessary to facilitate effective establishment of eSilk & eAmber roads.

Although the challenges are many, however, the potential rewards are great. Common opportunities are based around the Internet – the fastest diffusing technology in the history of the world – with a presence in over 200 countries. The Internet provides an opportunity for us to regain our awareness of these regions and the goods and services that they can provide in a renaissance of the Silk and Amber Roads. Based on the

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backbone of the Internet and associated telecommunications capability, aspects of intelligent logistics become reality. Numerous forms of collaboration exist. Some are oriented around business models whereby multiple partners win through cooperation and achieve synergy. Other collaborations between government agencies both within and between countries open new opportunities.

In the spirit of a revived Silk and Amber Road, we envision an eSilk & eAmber Road. Towards that end we will hold a series of meetings and sustained interactions to explore opportunities, remove uncertainties and addresses challenges. We expect to enable e-connectivity (eCommerce, eBusiness, eGovernment, eHealth, eLearning and all other types of "e") in those countries and cities that once were famous, and may prove again to be, through involvement of stakeholders with knowledge and an outlook towards the future.

Think Tank Objectives

- Establish contact with like-minded people: researchers, administrators, policy makers and advisers, businessmen, and other stakeholders.
- Raise awareness among such people of contemporary issues related to "e".
- Begin building a network of institutional links and researchers for further collaboration in joint activities.
- Obtain first hand experience with existing applications of eCommerce in the Region.
- Establish an indication of the level of awareness of eCommerce issues and opportunities in the Silk & Amber Road regions.
- Identify opportunities for continued collaborative research into problems and possibilities for expanding eCommerce in the region.
- Stimulate inter-university cooperation in "e" development along the eSilk & eAmber Road.
- Suggest an agenda for future collaborative research and development activities intended to further the aims of the meeting.

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