Russia – The Swissotel chain is to open its first five-star hotel in the country – the Swissôtel Krasnye Holmy in Moscow. A range of telecoms services are planned across its 34 floors, 235 rooms, restaurants and cafes, including voice, data and Internet.

The services will be supplied by Golden Telecom in partnership with Alcatel. Under the terms of the contract, Alcatel will provide its *OmniPCX Enterprise* communications platform, a *4760* network management platform, and *Mobile Reflexes* DECT phones. Equipment will be delivered by the end of April and installed by Golden Telecom at the end of Q2 2005.

The solution will provide the hotel and its staff with a full range of administrative services, including room management and advanced call management and will also offer the hotel's guests check-in and check-out services, as well as voicemail and Internet access. ■

Slovenia – The ski-jumping World Cup finals were again presented on Mobitel's multimedia portal *Planet*. Visitors were able to access statements from and presentations of ski jumpers, a photo-gallery, latest news and results, prize-winning game, wallpapers and games for mobile handsets. Mobitel UMTS coverage was available in the area of the Planica ski jump. The UMTS signal now covers more than 60% of Slovenian population. ■

Fixed-line telephony a shrinking market

The fixed-line markets of CEE (Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia) contracted slightly last year, according to an IDC study. The number of fixed-line connections dwindled in 2004 by a half percent year on year to 32.88million and total telephony spending fell by 0.83% to US$8.04 billion. Although mobile substitution continues apace and is the primary reason for the decline of the fixed-line telephony market, voice over IP has also played a significant role, though its full effect will not be realised for several years, the study concludes.

"Falling prices and heightened competition for voice services mean the fixed-line telephony business is moving towards a low-cost utility model," said Emir Halilovic, senior analyst, IDC's CEE Communications Group. "Nevertheless, the total number of connections should remain about level. Although DSL has taken off across the region and many residential and business customers are electing to use it over dial-up or ISDN, DSL often serves as an incentive for residential customers to maintain their telephone lines, as the technology requires them to be in place anyway."

For details of IDC's Central and Eastern Europe Telephony Services 2005-2009 Forecast, visit: www.idc.com

Croatia tunes in to Tetra & WiMAX

Last month (March), MicroLink d.o.o. organised a TETRA and WiMAX presentation at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing in Zagreb, that was attended by around 100 radio experts.

As well as defining the technologies and their applications, it was pointed out that the future of the TETRA system lies in the TETRA Release 2 standard, which will be defined by the end of 2005 and will describe broadband multi-functional digital radio mobile system for professional applications – its primary basis being digital data communication. Particular interest was shown in the development of a European information communication protection and rescue system, whereby each European country should implement its own system with a common dial number in cases of emergency – 112. Such a system would enable integration at the European level and, in a Europe without borders, intervention by the public safety services regardless of national borders.

The 112 service was established in Croatia at the beginning of 2005, in conjunction with the Law on Telecommunications, reconciled with the European Union directive, mandating the establishment of the 112 service. By calling the 112 number, Croatian residents as well as the tourists in Croatia will be able to seek aid from police, ambulance, fire brigade, National headquarters for search and rescue at sea and the mountain rescue service.

The second part of the presentation was related to WiMAX systems – the primary purpose of these systems being to provide users with broadband radio access to a fixed core network which benefit from the high data transfer capacities achieved in the 1GHz and 2GHz frequency range.

The first WiMAX equipment is expected in the second half of 2005 *(see p.34)*. The next phase will be the development of a nomadic network, that will enable users to access the system from several different locations, under the condition that once the connection is established, they do not change their location. The final goal of this process is the development of fully-mobile system for broadband radio access.

The presentation was held by MicroLink experts, as well as representatives from European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI), delegates from Broadband Wireless Access (BWA) manufacturer, Redline Communications and delegates from Nokia Networks.

Microlink demonstrated technical solutions for both TETRA- and WiMAX-type networks, that mainly focused on urban areas and the Adriatic coast. ■

Omnitel helps govern the roads

A Lithuanian operator is aiming to simplify communication between road haulage managers and their drivers with an SMS-based service. Designed specifically for the sector, *SMS Tarnyba*, from Omnitel, features a Web browser interface for the reading, writing and sending of SMS messages, and includes on-screen delivery status monitoring.

Omnitel is offering the service in partnership with Vilniaus Altas, which will also distribute and support the package. Available via a secure login ID on any computer with Internet access, the system stores message history and supports grouping of recipients to reflect the organisational structure of different companies.

SMS Tarnyba is also designed to simplify driver communication with managers by enabling short codes for outgoing messages. Driver lists can only be created by nominated personnel via specially installed administration software that is secured with a USB identification key.

The service is available for a monthly service fee of LTL20 and the administration software kit costs LTL99 with messages charged at the same rate as Omnitel's *Omni Connect 20* tariff, whilst messages sent by drivers are charged according to their own standard SMS rate.

In addition to its SMS offering, Omnitel has also announced an agreement with Lithuania's House of Parliament – known as the Seimas – to deliver mobile communications and related services for the next three years.

Before the agreement, Seimas spent about LTL1million on telecommunications services but expects to save 15% of that figure in partnership with Omnitel. In addition, it is hoped to extend the range of citizen services offered electronically.

"The ICT Department of the Seimas expects close collaboration with Omnitel specialists; it not only expects the assurance of high quality services for politicians and employees of the chancellery of Seimas, but, after developing the service spectrum in the future, greater availability of information for Lithuanian citizens about the work of the parliament. For example, the use of SMS messaging to get information about the date of a specific project or voting results," says Jonas Milerius, director of ICT, Seimas.

Omnitel will also be obliged to provide governmental communications and WAP services under the terms of the deal. ■