



COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PUBLIC E-SERVICE CENTRES IN EUROPE

A contribution to the "e-Inclusion: be part of it!"
campaign of the European Commission

June 2008

The opinions expressed in this document do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission

CONTENTS

| | | |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| 1 | E-INCLUSION: A SOCIAL NECESSITY, AN ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY | 3 |
| 1.1 | This report in context; the "e-Inclusion: be part of it!" campaign..... | 3 |
| 1.2 | Observations | 4 |
| 1.3 | Recommendation: design a PESCE Community of Practice..... | 6 |
| 2 | CONDUCTED INTERVIEWS | 9 |
| 2.1 | Interview with Else Rose Kuipers | 9 |
| 2.2 | Interview with Milvia Rastrelli | 14 |
| 2.3 | Interview with Krassi Simonski | 19 |
| 2.4 | Interview with Audrey Frith | 23 |
| 2.5 | Interview with Stephen Dodson | 26 |
| 2.6 | Interview with Pedro Aguilera..... | 30 |
| 2.7 | Interview with Ricard Faura i Homedes..... | 33 |
| 2.8 | Interview with Juan Carlos Exposito and Rafael Gonzalez Moraza..... | 37 |

*REPORT ON BEHALF OF EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Directorate General Information Society and Media, Unit H3 – ICT for Inclusion*

DATE: JUNE 2008

AUTHORS: SYB GROENEVELD & ALEXANDRA HACHÉ IN COLLABORATION WITH STEFANO KLUZER

EDITOR: MARY BERMINGHAM

COORDINATION: MIGUEL GONZALEZ-SANCHO

1 E-INCLUSION: A SOCIAL NECESSITY, AN ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Currently 30-40% of the European population, mostly older people, people with disabilities, lower education groups, unemployed and those living in less-developed regions, are still not actively engaged in using ICT and are not part of the Knowledge Society in Europe.

E-inclusion aims to prevent the risks of 'digital exclusion', that is to ensure that disadvantaged people are not left behind, and to avoid new forms of exclusion due to lack of digital literacy or of Internet access.

Riga targets

The Knowledge Society has the potential to ensure that knowledge resources are more equally distributed, and to offer new job opportunities by overcoming the traditional barriers to mobility and geographic distance. The use of ICT is at the heart of a strong Knowledge Society for all. It contributes to more access to data and information, creates opportunities for life long learning, opens new networking dimensions and innovates the culture of production and cooperation.

For these reasons, 34 European countries signed a Ministerial Declaration¹ (Riga, 2006) committing themselves to ambitious policy targets for an inclusive knowledge society:

- Broadband coverage to reach at least 90% of the EU population by 2010;
- Ensure accessibility of all public web sites by 2010;
- Literacy and competence between disadvantaged groups and the average population should be halved by 2010; and
- The differences in Internet usage between current average use by the EU population and use by older people, people with disabilities, women, lower education groups, the unemployed and people from less-developed regions should be reduced to a half, from 2005 to 2010.

1.1 This report in context; the "e-Inclusion: be part of it!" campaign

Commission services recently adopted the Riga Dashboard report², which reports on the midway progress towards these 2010 policy targets. A call for e-Inclusion contributions to start the 2008 campaign 'e-Inclusion: be part of it!' was launched to demonstrate good e-Inclusion practices from around Europe. The results of the call were summarised in a report that was presented at a ministerial event on e-Inclusion (Lisbon, December 2007)³. The Commission services also stimulated the exchange of e-Inclusion experiences and material through the portal www.epractice.eu.

The resulting message is that the social and economic relevance of e-Inclusion is increasingly recognised by public, commercial and non-profit stakeholders, with many actions being undertaken at all levels. Despite these, progress towards the Riga targets is still at only half the speed needed to realise them by 2010.

The next step was an in-depth analysis of evidence-based cases. Analysing their impact and the publishing of these cases will improve the ability of stakeholders in the e-Inclusion field to identify obstacles, to see how successful initiatives can be started, and to find sustainable solutions to operate and manage an e-inclusion project in an efficient and accessible manner.

In addition a call for e-inclusion awards⁴ (from May to September 2008), launched in preparation for the ministerial conference on e-Inclusion (Vienna, December 2008) is providing many interesting insights regarding the impact assessment of each initiative submitted.

The findings in this report are based on eight interviews⁵ with representatives of Public E-

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/events/ict_riga_2006/doc/declaration_riga.pdf

² http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/einclusion/docs/i2010_initiative/rigadashboard.doc

³ http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/einclusion/bepartofit/index_en.htm

⁴ <http://www.e-inclusionawards.eu/>

⁵ The seven first cases were selected out of the contributions in the 'e-Inclusion: be part of it!' campaign (see http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/einclusion/docs/bepartofit/contributions_booklet.pdf for details), cases

Service Centres in Europe (PESCE). Syb Groeneveld (independent expert to the European Commission) and Alexandra Haché (Directorate-General Joint Research Centre - IPTS of the European Commission) conducted the interviews and the additional research.

The interviews put emphasis on demonstrable user benefits of e-Inclusion through services and activities conducted by centres involved in public e-services across Europe. These centres are organised in different models. Some can be defined as NGOs, others as non-profit government organisations that manage large networks of ground level organisations, some are run within a public-private partnership, or have the form of a civil society community project without being a legal entity.

The common denominator of the selected projects is that they have a physical location with ICT infrastructure where technologies are accessed for training, information sharing and where e-inclusion services for citizens with a lack of e-skills are offered freely or for a low monetary contribution. Often the projects adopt specific approaches, methodologies and tools towards specific disadvantaged target groups like the disabled, long-term unemployed or economically vulnerable people, seniors, women, minority groups or children at risk.

The following pages summarise some of the most noticeable characteristics of the PESCE encountered during the interviews.

1.2 Observations

1. **PESCE:** A number of names and abbreviations exist for the projects under research: PICs (Public Internet Centres), PIAPs (Public Internet Access Points), Telecentres, Digital Playgrounds, Cyberbases etc. The interviews in this research show that these names no longer fully reflect the objectives and the activities carried out by the projects as they are no longer simple physical locations to access ICT.

The missions of the projects are increasing in their complexity; apart from providing an access point to computers and the Internet, training programmes are offered, community activities organised and new services introduced. The centres often function as a node to activate social capital in the neighbourhood: they empower people at the local level to speak out and to team up with the help of ICT. This increasingly complex and multidisciplinary approach has consequences for the way the centres work, are organised and offer services⁶. For these reasons, this research intends to capture the variety of approaches through the concept 'PESCE': Public E-Service Centres in Europe.

2. **Impact assessment:** Although much of the research of this report targeted evidence-based user-benefits of the PESCE, it turned out that most projects simply don't have quantitative data to validate their impact. There is a fundamental lack of widely accepted standards for impact assessment, monitoring mechanisms and evaluation methodologies for PESCE. Monitoring in PESCE is carried out on a random basis rather than as a systematic activity.

Web research indicates that since 2000 only a few studies have been completed which monitor and/or assess the impact of PESCE-like projects. The Dutch '*Monitor Digitale Travelden 2003*'⁷ provides a framework for the measurement of number of users, the appreciation of services by both users and providers and the fulfilment of policy objectives. A similar report is the '*Evaluation of the Public Internet Access Point*

submitted at <http://www.epractice.eu/> and from an Internet quick scan that identified potential candidates for research. The last case described, Guadalinfo in Andalusia (Spain), has been added through a contribution from Stefano Kluzer (European Commission, DG JRC IPTS) as part of a research still underway for DG INFSO H3, in the context of the 2008 e-Inclusion Initiative, on the role of the European structural funds for eInclusion in the new 2007-2013 programming period.

⁶ See also the December 2007 IPTS study '*ICT, Social Capital and Cultural Diversity*' by Romina Cachia, Stefano Kluzer, Marcelino Cabrera, Clara Centeno and Yves Punie, which analyses the potential of ICT (in particular social computing) and social capital, for the social and economic integration and participation of Immigrants and Ethnic Minorities (IEM). The study is available at: <http://ipts.jrc.ec.europa.eu/publications/pub.cfm?id=1534>

⁷ This report monitors the '*Digital Playgrounds (Digitale Trapveldjes)*', a national policy initiative that provided computer training for disadvantaged groups. This resulted in 447 training centres in 30 cities with an average of seven computers and more than one million visits in four years. These centres were located in social centres (30%), libraries (25%) and schools (9%) (2000-2004) http://www.kennisland.nl/binaries/documenten/rapporten/Kennisland_%20TrapveldMonitor_2003.pdf Although evaluated to be successful, the initiative stopped receiving support from the government in 2004.

*Initiative*⁸. It clearly illustrates the impact of the 1,600 computers in 725 different venues in Scotland and assesses how well the programme has met its objectives. The March 2007 *'Digital Inclusion Landscape in England'* report⁹ brings analysis one-step further and measures the social impact of ICT. It concludes that there are many excellent examples of technology delivering social benefits for people and communities. However, policies and strategies for citizen and community uses of ICT are fragmented across government, industry and the third sector. According to the report, there is also a fragmentation of resources and effort: programmes and policies that could be joined up are not being linked. There is duplication and there are also gaps. Furthermore, the report states that there are programmes and projects that have delivered social impact and form an excellent foundation to build on, but these tend to have low visibility. This is partly because there are barriers to scaling-up pilots. These barriers hinder the extension and replication of successful initiatives.

Finally, the research conducted through a joint effort between several non-profit organisations, and supported by EC funding, to evaluate current typologies of *'Public Internet Centres and education of @dults in Europe'*¹⁰ gives additional insights. This research developed a specific online database on best practices. Several studies focused on a precise subject such as *'evaluation guidelines'*, a *'guide for non-discrimination'*, and one report looked at *'Monitoring and evaluation of services provided by Public Internet Centres in Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy and Spain'*. The study also concluded that *"despite the fact that monitoring and evaluation are not positively perceived by individual PICs, they are indeed necessary. If the quality is not monitored, a centre is not able to evaluate its strengths and weaknesses and thus it is not able to implement any remedy, if needed"*¹¹. Similar comments appeared in the interviews.

The understanding of the impact of PESCE initiatives varies from country to country and a common framework for measurement is therefore considered essential. This is not just to improve the performance of single PESCE, but also to assess the evolution and impact of broader e-Inclusion policies.

Impact assessment is top priority for PESCE, but a lack of knowledge, methodologies, staff and resources have made it impossible so far to develop and systematize such a framework

3. **Organisational structure:** Many PESCE are beyond the initial phase that each project and organisation goes through. They are now in a phase of consolidation and expansion. They need a well-balanced sustainable organisational plan to continue their activities. The interviewed PESCE show a focus in their plans on:
 - *E-Services:* After years of providing basic access and training services there is now a shift towards developing innovative activities and services to meet specific needs of the target groups. Tailor-made professional e-services can be financed more easily and will decrease the dependency on incidental funds (by government, private partners or third sector). It also opens new ways of cooperation with the private sector¹².
 - *Accreditation:* The growing training potential of many of the PESCE asks for a professional accredited training organisation to give, for example, cultural diversity, language and employment courses. Establishing this certification is at the core of future plans as it ensures sustainable revenues and further development of the organisation.
 - *Human resources:* Many PESCE work with volunteers. Lack of financial support results in a lack of qualified staff, which limits the possibilities to innovate the ways of working in the centres. If PESCE employ well-trained and educated staff it has proven difficult to keep them. A lack of job certainty and of financial and educational

⁸ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/17002/0024844.pdf>

⁹ Downloadable from the e-practice website www.epractice.eu/resource/1881

¹⁰ <http://www.pic-project.eu/>

¹¹ Author: Alexandra Zlatniková (Centrum Internetu) and With inputs from all Project partners and methodological support by LMI (University of Barcelona), downloadable from the PIC website: http://www.pic-project.eu/fileadmin/PICS/documents/EN_Study_2.pdf

¹² See also the 'Digital Inclusion Team – Final report and case studies' of 25 April 2007 on why companies seek to engage in e-Inclusion activities: www.article13.com/OurPublications/Digital%20Inclusion_April%202007.pdf

resources, often result in staff leaving. Improving the benefits of working at PESCE (flexibility, permanent training, etc) is necessary to avoid such high staff turn-over that makes it difficult to capitalise on 'know how' and give rise to further organisational innovations.

4. **International cooperation:** Studying PESCE cases around Europe, can give the impression that the wheel is being re-invented at different places at the same time. This is the case for designed software, hardware configuration, knowledge on open content, and open source software standards, as well as for methodologies used for training personnel, addressing specific target groups, monitoring and data mining. Projects can also learn a lot from each other on new services and financial models.

There is a lot of scope for exchanging experiences and learning, not only at the level of individual organisations and networks, but also at the policy level¹³.

Interviewees all expressed the strong need for focused international cooperation and indicated their willingness to further discuss the 'ground rules' for an effective 'community of practice' (CoP) on PESCE. This concept refers to the process of social learning and shared practices that emerge and evolve when people who have common goals start to interact. So what could a PESCE CoP look like?

1.3 Recommendation: design a PESCE Community of Practice

Some of the interviewees indicated that now is the time to bring together the experiences and knowledge of as many PESCE as possible from around Europe. Most of those projects are executed with a small/tight budget and do not have the resources to start such a 'flagship project' themselves.

This part of the report focuses on how these projects could cooperate more effectively in the future. Bringing projects and people that share the same kind of activities together in a CoP seems a logical first step. Hence, the Telecentre Europe project that was born out of the Microsoft 'Unlimited Potential', programme¹⁴ and the PIC project¹⁵ (of AWO, ARCI, LA Ligue and others) are examples of already existing networks.

However, these two networks have not yet emerged into a true CoP. Bringing projects and people together is only a first step. The great variety of PESCE makes it necessary to classify PESCE on the basis of a number of indicators that include:

- **Scale:** Some researched initiatives like La Ligue represent as much as 30.000 organisations while others (WiN) are stand-alone projects. To cooperate effectively a distinction in the size of the projects must be made.
- **Home-market:** in some places PESCE still concentrate on activities related to offering access and e-skills to their target group while in other countries and regions 90% of the population already have access to a computer and to the Internet. New activities and services have been developed and implemented. Such criteria should be used to team up projects in the CoP.
- **Maturity Level System:** to assess the level of maturity of each PESCE. This includes standardised variables to measure the development level of the PESCE. This can be combined with a set of recommendations to specify the process of reaching the next level.

This way projects and organisations can be better linked within the CoP. The community of practice should be a give and take network that takes into account the specific conditions of human and financial resources that are connected with the project partners.

Objectives, scope and deliverables of the network should be very precisely defined in a widely supported working programme that ideally covers a period of four years and is financed by at least two different sources.

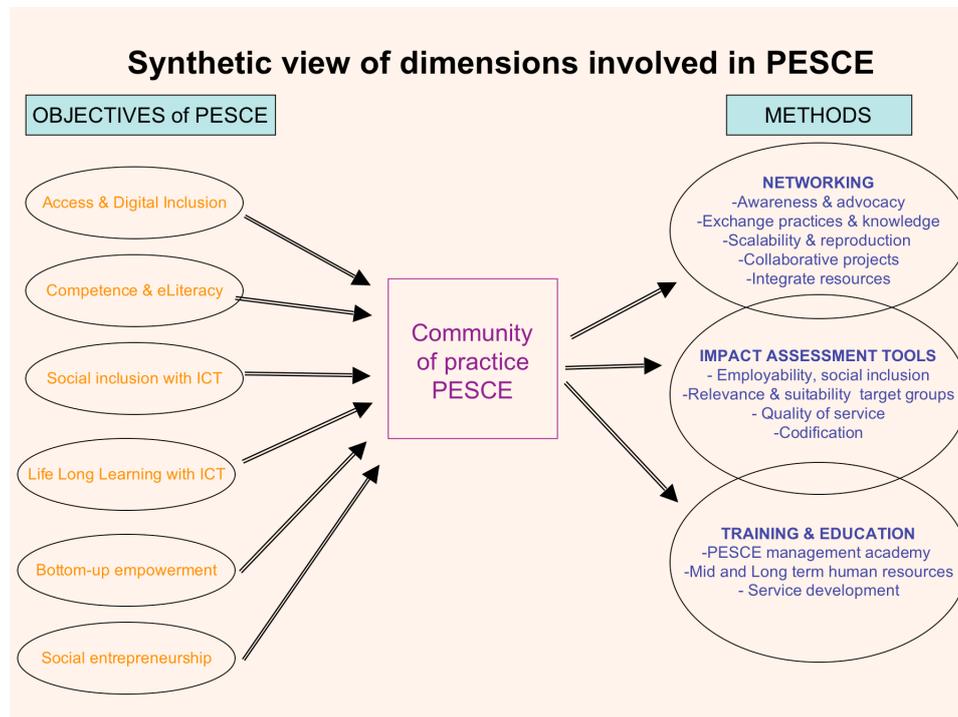
¹³ See for instance section 2.8 of this report that describes the use of PIAPs as an 'outlet' for the delivery of other ICT-enabled policy initiatives in disadvantaged areas.

¹⁴ See also: <http://www.telecentre.org/telecentre-europe>

¹⁵ See <http://www.pic-project.eu/>

The characteristics of PESCE and the experiences with earlier initiatives imply that a transparent, flexible but efficient network-organisation should be founded, which bears responsibility for the execution and management of the working programme.

The synthetic view presented in the figure below lists most of the objectives that PESCE are involved in. It is a basic framework of how the PESCE CoP could be designed, what kind of activities can be conducted and what methods used.



Platform

The online platform of PESCE practice is at the centre of the CoP. The Internet offers a tremendous variety of web 2.0 tools which can be adapted to specific needs (that came forward in the interviews) of PESCE. For example:

- A marketplace to exchange tools (learning material for courses to specific target groups), methodologies (pedagogical frameworks, training manuals etc) and (open source) software;
- A hallmark for best PESCE methodologies (combined with a process of codification of best practices of PESCE around Europe);
- A 'work in progress' handbook wiki on standardised impact assessment, monitoring mechanism and evaluation methodologies;
- An online secured system for members to execute evaluations, and monitor results;
- Profiles of members (organisations & persons) specifying expertise, interest and questions;
- An inclusive geographical coverage of PESCE initiatives;
- A platform for collaborative advocacy and awareness raising at (inter)national level;
- An open, edited, intuitive multilingual database of categorized examples of best practice. To keep the CoP focused, up-to-date and selective, the maximum number of cases discussed should be no more than 100. The same counts for PESCE literature. The maximum number of publications

discussed should be no more than 250 (of which 75 should not be older than 2 years).

- The possibility to start up projects together and/or form coalitions for joint applications;
- Collaborative organisation of workshops, seminars and conferences;
- A PESCE academy that helps members to re-formulate their financial and organisational strategy and to develop new services.

This is only a brief list of online and offline activities and instruments that could fall under the umbrella of a PESCE community of practice.

This report does not intent to be exhaustive on this subject but merely gives a possible direction. In combination with the interviews, listed in the next chapter, it presents the current state-of-mind of professionals who work on public e-services and for a more e-inclusive society in Europe.

The next step is up to the community.

2 CONDUCTED INTERVIEWS

In February and March 2008 seven representatives of e-service centres across Europe were interviewed as part of an in-depth analysis into e-inclusion best practices to demonstrate some benefits for end users. This chapter presents the outcomes of the interviews, which is combined with extra information from literature and web research.

2.1 Interview with Else Rose Kuipers

Project coordinator Web in de Wijk/ Web in Neighbourhoods¹⁶
+ 31 20 6247743, info@webindewijk.nl www.webindewijk.nl

Interview conducted by Syb Groeneveld on 20 February 2008.

Introduction

The Netherlands has one of the highest Internet penetrations in Europe. One could ask if it is still necessary to have Public Internet centres. Else Rose Kuiper, Project coordinator of Web in de Wijk/ Web in Neighbourhoods (WiN) explains: *“8% of the Dutch population still access the Internet outside their home, school or office. WiN is centred on the idea of 'Digital Livingrooms' where citizens meet and can use ICT and Internet technology for common activities. Social professionals can offer advice and assistance.”* The Digiroom is frequented by a wide range of community members (the location is close to a shopping centre) and is designed to create a welcoming and relaxed environment. The social professionals (animators) are trained in community building and are knowledgeable on ICT and its social meaning (not only the technical side). A user-friendly software programme is at their disposal.

WiN is an approach to assist inhabitants of a neighbourhood to use ICT strategically to experience the extra potential of ICT for fun and communication and to help them achieve personal goals. It is a bottom up approach to stimulate self-organisation and cooperation. WiN transforms people from consumers into producers of web content using a special toolbox. The inhabitants learn to cope and to take initiatives in all domains of life: work, care, hobbies, education, etc. ICT is thus not the aim of the project, but the tool to meet the needs of the inhabitants. Their individual, and community driven ambitions keep them working with ICT. Along the way they develop e-skills. WiN usually works with people who have never thought of themselves as someone who can use computers, let alone create websites.

WiN started in Emmen, a Dutch city undergoing rapid economic change. Those who are 'left behind' are finding themselves increasingly isolated and trapped in deprived neighbourhoods. Moreover, this situation is passing from one generation to the other, with young people growing up in districts deprived of a sense of community, social support and reduced job prospects. In Emmen, the average education level is particularly low: 50% of the population do not have a basic qualification. 14% of young people are unemployed, while for those who are employed, wages are 10% lower than the national average. Furthermore, previous negative experiences of learning and periods of unemployment often discourage people from training courses or educational settings. Starting WiN in Emmen where many people lack ICT skills and lack personal contacts was a logical step.

A. Users

WiN is a bottom-up approach for all citizens in a neighbourhood. However, extra attention is paid to special groups like elderly people (60+), people with no or poor digital literacy and unemployed people.

B. User benefits target group

WiN attracts people for various reasons. Some are simply entering the Digirooms to check their email while others are eager to participate in an advanced Photoshop or ECDL programme. WiN only offers beginners courses which are not available on the market. Low threshold modules help visitors to overcome their uneasiness with computers and the Internet. They also help them work on learning disorders, or help them to overcome social

¹⁶ Additional information to the interview was gathered from http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/equal/practical-examples/adapt-07-nl-myport_en.cfm <http://www.webindewijk.nl/portaal> and <http://www.epractice.eu/cases/WebindeWijk>

isolation. The Digirooms are regarded by most visitors as a meeting place to get to know people who live locally.

Else Rose Kuiper declares that after five years of experience, she finds that *“many WiN visitors have better self-esteem and an improved self image. WiN helps them to build their own identity and to learn to express themselves in their neighbourhood. One of them was a very talented artist but nobody knew he was painting. By starting a website on WiN and talking about his work in the Digirooms people now often ask him about his work.”*

It is just one example of how WiN empowers people at the local level to speak out and to team up. It starts with daring to take the first step and enter the Digiroom, the next step is trying out the computer and the art of making a website. This often means working with neighbours starting small-scale projects.

Others prefer to build a website that is only accessible for friends and family. What they have in common is that all these small encounters contribute to more human contact and better understanding on a very local scale. It's as simple as that. This makes WiN a valuable instrument for building social capital on a local level.

The ongoing WiN project started in November 2002. Some figures:

- In Parkwijk Almere (4.500 households): in one year 663 web pages were built by 300 people;
- In four years in Bargeres, Emmen (4.300 households) 4.500 web pages were built and 1.500 people logged in;
- The WiN portals are visited by approximately 1.400 visitors a month;
- The Digirooms are visited by many citizens (in Emmen 2.900 people in 2006). 60% of them are out of work, 50% are women, 14% handicapped. They are of all ages.

WiN has little to do with the amount of online visitors but more with the number of (very-small) projects people start in their direct environment. This can be an initiative to share an online agenda for the care-schedule of a handicapped neighbour or to start an online petition on a specific local issue. People nowadays often know very little about what is available and happening in their neighbourhood. WiN contributes to social cohesion and integration.

Of course WiN has been trying to get more detailed information on the precise user-benefits of their services. This is hard to measure and to monitor. It is difficult to monitor all visitor data due to privacy issues. We have to be very careful. According to Kuiper, *“the government should stay away from this data and shouldn't expect too much insight into behaviour and results. WiN has a central server system and data are gathered by inhabitants of neighbourhoods. None of this data is provided to third parties and only a local coordinator can, with many restrictions, change/delete data of visitors.”*

C. Services & Activities

The dynamics of Web 2.0 on a world scale are totally different from the dynamics in a local environment. Blogs, for example, are very popular on the world-wide-web, but seldom a success in a local community. WiN therefore developed a web-based application, which everyone can handle. It is based on visitors' suggestions and the knowledge of professional social software programmers. In the beginning there was a *'Forum'* module on WiN but it was deleted from the portals as it was not working in a local environment. Kuiper: *“People keep on posting notes in the street and in the local butcher or supermarket when they loose their dog, and also post it on the local portal website”.*

WiN is used for sharing information (text and photo's in web magazines), communication with others (guest books, links) and for organisational purposes: agenda, map and manuals with the publication of tasks and deadlines.

The used proprietary software is built by Q42 (www.q42.nl) in close cooperation with WiN. On the client side, HTML, CSS and JavaScript are used and content is obtained via MySQL and XML. To stay in tune with new developments, new modules are added every six months. This modular approach is orientated towards the user. The last module is *My Portfolio online*, where people can start an activity and invite others to join. If people join they can receive

'compliments' on their profile. It is meant to offer some self-reflection on the value of voluntary work and it is related to formal competencies used by companies and Social Services.

The software fits the needs of the target group, but is technically not yet perfect due to lack of finance.

Methodology used

WiN is implemented per neighbourhood (around 4.000 to 10.000 households). WiN does not work with ICT teachers or ICT programmers to contact inhabitants, but with social professionals who are skilled in supporting individuals and building networks, they are trained to involve media for i.

The WiN approach has been developed over five years. The approach is described but not in detail, since every environment has demands of its own and the local implementation is custom-made. Developing the concept, tuning it to the location and organising exchanges between projects is done by the national board, in close co-operation with the local projects.

D. Organisation

The WiN project is coordinated by the Web in the Neighbourhood Foundation. The aim of this organisation is to stimulate social cohesion, using ICT to support the process. WiN develops the methodology and the software in close contact with the users.

The organisation has an advisory body, which represents the projects in the different neighbourhoods in the Netherlands. This body advises on all matters concerning the development of the method. Each local project has its own organisational structure. More info on the local projects can be found on the individual project websites:

Den Haag:

Moerwijk <http://www.moerwijker.nl/>

Ypenburg <http://www.ypenburgnet.nl>

Emmen:

Bargeres <http://www.bargerres.org/>

Angelslo <http://www.angelslo.org/>

Almere:

Parkwijk <http://www.parkwijkalmere.nl/>

Tussen de Vaarten <http://www.mijnwebintussendeVaarten.nl/>

Amsterdam:

SpaZeebuurt <http://www.spazeebuurt.org/>

The WiN foundation is not responsible for the local projects and does not receive any subsidies or donations for the local projects, but only for the national coordinating role. This also means that WiN cooperates with many local welfare organisations, libraries, schools private initiatives, housing corporations, municipalities, volunteer organisations and many other civil society organisations to get a local project going and financed. When started, WiN first consults with non-profit initiatives and invites them to discuss the possibilities of becoming a WiN project. Key-people and professional community workers are invited to get to know the WiN approach. A detailed description of how one gets connected can be found at <http://www.webindewijk.nl/portaal/english>

The local organisations that host a WiN approach in cities like Gouda, Emmen, The Hague, Amsterdam and elsewhere consider themselves to be part of a network. Twice a year they come together for a national WiN day. This is an event for networking, exchange of practices and peer-to-peer training.

The national WiN organisation chose a bottom- up, rather than a central policy, approach. It is a franchise based organisational form. The national WiN organisation provides the methodology, helps with starting up the organisation, co-drafts a project plan and makes sure that four requirements are fulfilled:

- Setting up a professional team including an animator;

- Design of the Digiroom with necessary equipment;
- Use of the appropriate methodologies, software (in license) and tools;
- Secure data environment on central server.

After that the implementation starts with PR campaigns in the neighbourhood and training. The national organisation helps with the implementation in the first three years of the initiative. During this period the sustainability of the project is examined. This starts with securing commitment. If possible the project is integrated within an already existing organisation and infrastructure. This assures that operational costs are kept to a minimum. Only the payment of a part time staff member has to be financed.

WiN is researching the possibilities of starting similar projects abroad in cooperation with other organisations. It would welcome the establishment of a practice community with similar organisations to exchange tools, methodologies software and start projects together. WiN already has contacts in Italy, Spain, Sweden, England, and Latvia. It founded Vit@I Society¹⁷, a consortium which made a declaration on the new social use of the internet. This was supported e.g. the Nordic Council and the Baltic IT&T Conference 2006.

In 2008 WiN will publish a book on the methodologies developed and used. The niche of the WiN project is not so much the software it uses but the methodology of training, educating and communicating using the Internet as a tool for empowerment and community building.

E. Financial

WiN has received financing from a variety of sources. Primarily from:

- the EQUAL programme of the European Commission which made local pilots possible in six neighbourhoods;
- Housing corporations;
- Municipalities;
- Private funding including the National VSB fund and the Oranjefonds.

All funding of the WiN foundation has been project finance. So far, no structural subsidies have been granted. This makes the sustainability of many of the projects insecure. All local projects plus the national WiN foundation, rely on a small amount funding. Operational costs are now relatively low with less than 50k per year per project.

For the sustainability of WiN and the local projects, a solid business plan is necessary. WiN is therefore working on a strategic business plan for future activities. The business plan focuses on:

- Training of staff
- Software licenses
- Consultancy on implementation
- Consultancy on methodology

F. Recipes for success

WiN shows that educating people is at the core of projects on the social use of ICT. Education is not only focused on the users, but starts with the people employed at the centres. This assures a quality standard and stimulates the empowerment of people. The animators can support people in using the internet as a tool to facilitate their activities.

As Kuiper explains: *“On the popular video platform YouTube around one percent of visitors really contribute to the community. WiN is built on the idea that there is a continuing interaction possible between the physical and virtual world if you bring Internet to attractive social places in the neighbourhood. The actual building and updating of users websites can easily be done by the person him/herself. The result of using this software for the design of websites and web applications is that people are no longer thinking: I'm developing a website in the technical sense, but more what am I going to use it for, what can I do with it and how can I use it to reach out to other people. Then the eagerness for some professional advice starts”*

¹⁷ See: New social use of ICT: <http://peabody.org.uk/Filestore/AboutUs/Downloads/NewSocialUseOfICT.pdf>

Lessons learnt

Lesson 1: WiN works from a project management perspective. Kuipers: "Often we are confronted with result orientated policy objectives set by a local government. For example they want to organise a festival for marginalised young people and request that fifteen different organisations and groups are involved in order to guarantee proportional representation. This does not work for an initiative like WiN. We work programme related and bottom-up. We cannot guarantee the participation of all these groups. In our approach we need freedom and trust to let us organise the best ways to involve users. Our methods and track record should give enough assurance to the policy makers. But this is not always the reality."

Lesson 2: A project like WiN needs three years (at least) to work on methodology, to build a track record and to manage setting up all aspects of the organisation at national and local level. Then a period of consolidation and growth starts. This should be followed by a period of codification in which methodology and results are properly analysed, adjusted and disseminated. In local, national and European programmes this development is not recognised and it is almost impossible to get any finance for this codification phase.

Lesson 3: Workers in the social sector are not by default interested in educating their clients in eSkills. Convincing social sector workers of the benefits of eSkills support needs a coordinated and sensible approach.

G. Policy & Strategy

WiN operates in the fields of health, education, science, culture, media, and employment. This means its activities contribute to policy objectives of five ministries in the Netherlands. But projects like WiN only succeed if they have enough backing and the support of various partners in the sport, welfare, labour, and health sector.

WiN has this support but this is the pitfall: WiN, being multi-sectoral, does not qualify for many subsidies and policy arrangements as Ministries do not acknowledge the activities of WiN as their primary responsibility and point to other departments within government. As a result, all the support, awards and recognition do not result in structural financial support or in project finance.

The national board of WiN has plans for expansion and is looking for partners to be able to scale up to more neighbourhoods.

2.2 Interview with Milvia Rastrelli¹⁸

Researcher, Associazione ARCI & PIC project
rastrelli@arci.it, www.arci.it + 39 0641.60.95.02

Interview conducted by Syb Groeneveld on the 24th of February 2008

Introduction

This partly EU funded Public Internet Centres (PICs) project has a strong methodological and pedagogical approach. It was carried out between 2005 and October 2007 by national (umbrella) NGOs, Non-profit Associations like AWO (Germany), Associazione ARCI (Italy) and La Ligue (France), together with large regional PICs networks (i.e. the Spaniards Catalanian Xarxa de Telecentres, Andalusian Guadalinfo or the Extremadura NCC; the Czech Centrum Internetu, the Italian PAAS). The scope of the project was to detect the best practices of the PICs in terms of Adult Education and Digital Literacy, Evaluation and Quality, Non-Discrimination and e-Inclusion, with cases of local partners identified in the Czech Republic, Germany, France, Italy and Spain.

The project was started to address the following issues:

- 1) There are many good practices in PICs throughout Europe but they are not shared at the European level. There is a need for better visibility regarding who does what in Europe.
- 2) Evaluation of the work carried out in PICs is nonetheless only at its very first stages. There is a need for practical tools on how to evaluate what has been done and how to secure quality.
- 3) It is sometimes questionable whether PICs really reach people disadvantaged due to the digital divide (as the problem is not only to access internet centres, but also to make sure that they are managed so that services are provided in a non-discriminatory way). There is a need for training tools on how to promote non-discriminatory services in PICs.

The project consisted of the following partners:

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ARCI (Italy) www.arci.it | ARCI has 123 county departments and 5,440 local associations that promote adults active citizenship at local level through leisure, training and cultural activities, social action and international solidarity addressed to either their 1.060.000 members and to other hundreds thousand of citizens. |
| AWO (Germany) www.awo.org | AWO is one of the 8 most important German social service providers. AWO coordinates a network of 12000 local branches of services; educational activities; social support; vocational training directed towards different target groups: disabled people, elderly people, migrants, etc. firstly to AWO's 650.000 members, as well as to other non-member citizens. |
| Centrum Internetu, CI (Czech Republic) www.centruminternetu.cz | CI has over 200 educational centres and provides personal assistance and courses to people who can't use a computer. It also offers professional inclusion services to target groups with special needs: disabled people, elderly people, unemployed youth, and potentially socially excluded people. 32,000 participants benefit from this Computer Literacy National Program |
| La Ligue de l'Enseignement (France) www.laligue.org | Le Ligue is a confederation of 102 provincial federations and 30000 local associations and 2.000.000 members in France. The organisation deals with education, training, culture and communication. It manages 600 educational centres, leisure centres and discovery classes all over France. |
| FCV (Spain) www.fundacionviladecans.org | FCV works with local actors from Spanish cities to promote access to the information society for all. FCV runs several PICs. It carries out studies on the use and impact of ICTs. Under this project, the co-operation is involved in three large regional PIC networks accounting for about 600 PICs: the Catalanian Xarxa de Telecentres, the Andalusian Guadalinfo and the Extremadura NCC. |

¹⁸ The presented information is based on the interview, the "Suturing the Digital Gash" publication, the "Public Internet Centres (PICs) and Adult Education" DVD, internet research and the project website <http://www.pic-project.eu/>

A. Users

In the project best practices on Digital Literacy and Adult Education from all partners in the consortium are identified, analysed and included in a multilingual database. They are presented by country and vary from courses on eSkills, job training, language training to 'blended learning' (multi-disciplinary approach to learning). The wide array of projects focus on socially disadvantaged people; people in rural areas; unemployed people; women; young people; the elderly; disabled people and migrants.

The project team concludes that PICs are conscious of the social dimension of their mission - the reduction of digital illiteracy - and play their educative roles in a variety of ways, normally adapting their training strategies to the different target audiences, "customizing" the content, methodologies or procedures to help users embark on the digital world more easily.

B. User benefits target group

The approximately 2.500 PICs involved in the project concentrate on tailor made approach, adapted to the individual user or for a specific target group. A conservative quantitative estimate of PICs' audience in the five European States involved is that around 1.000.000 users a year benefit from at least one of their several services.

Rastrelli stresses that *"this personal approach is strengthened by the bottom-up management many of the PICs have. Volunteers, employers and users at the PICs share responsibilities; it is a face-to-face democracy. This is at the core of all ARCI's work and activities."* Unfortunately, the project does not have hard data on the user benefits. Measures of changes in awareness, attitudes and skills over the life of the project are not available. This would require a large-scale survey which was not envisaged. Nevertheless, the PICs' map provided with one of the final project products (the DVD) included web addresses/phone numbers/contact details, enabling EU experts to get additional data.

The evaluation strategy was considered to be the weakest element of the PIC's project. . Rastrelli explains that *"Measuring the quantitative results of the project has proven difficult and even where available the reliability of the presented figures cannot be guaranteed. This is partly caused by the fact that, for example, here in Italy we don't have a strong history of monitoring projects and evaluating results. We know of cases where they keep detailed notes of number of visitors and results of projects. So there is a system but the methodology is not always given a proper value by public authorities in public tenders. Indeed, quite often public authorities are interested in knowing the number of users, but not in qualitative results, which are relevant in services supply processes."*

We are now working on the e-Inclusion topic for almost ten years and evaluation and monitoring is required and necessary. However we still do not have a good methodology to measure the quality of our services. At the same time, one should also consider that, for example, PICs in Italy attract many ethnic minorities and we are now faced with a law that makes it compulsory to keep records with names, surnames and other relevant personal data signed in the original, despite the privacy laws and the high costs to maintain all of this. Authorities check these records to look for irregularities. A good monitoring system may then not be the best solution..." Qualitative-participative evaluation schemes are more likely to give a concrete added value and to be transferred: some interviewed ARCI's centres have developed interesting functional systems (i.e. in Campania region ARCI Caserta and Passwork in Salerno, in Tuscany the PAAS Network and the TRIO net collaborate with the University of Pisa). In fact, the key-issue is that services offered by a non-profit entity cannot easily adopt external monitoring and evaluation systems used in the private sector and by industry (i.e. ISO). Internal participative evaluation models (like i.e. social reporting schemes adequately adapted), would probably be more useful as their users (or at least those who become members) very often participate actively in the PIC services planning/management.

The study on "guidelines for evaluation and quality" of the project concludes that *"Experience has shown that questionnaires are the most frequently used tool to evaluate a PIC's services. The reasons for this are that questionnaires are cheap, easy to evaluate and the size of the respondent group can be unlimited. Regarding the heterogeneity of the individual PICs we cannot recommend any one evaluation method as each organisation requires different approaches. It is unrealistic to think that a minor, regional PIC can apply professional quality*

standards, such as ISO etc., as they lack the financial and personnel means to do so.” Despite this, the monitoring of quality and evaluation of services represent a must for the further development of any centre.

C. Services & Activities

Below is a list of the objectives set at the start of the project and the products developed to meet them:

1. To draft a typology of teaching practices in public internet centres in Europe. This is realized by the project through a multilingual on-line database presenting (best) practices in selected European countries at <http://www.pic-project.eu>. It houses a significant number of cases (over 100 networks of PICs/individual PICs) with a lot of descriptive information but is, after closer examination, not really a community tool. There are no tools for socializing (no interactivity, no contact details for best practices etc.) and it looks as if there have been no updates since last year. It is merely a product of the project rather than a useful tool for interested professionals.
2. To study which are the most innovative centres in terms of quality processes and evaluation practices that could potentially be transferred to other countries in Europe. This resulted in European guidelines for PIC staff and should have an impact on the evaluation methods inside PICs and the recognition of adult education provided in PICs. The study states that the best method to evaluate the provided services is the regular questioning of participants' on their satisfaction with a PICs' activities, and with the general quality of the course. The most frequently used and, at the same time, the most efficient methods involve the written anonymous questionnaire. However methodologies differ between countries. The IMES association from Hannover prefers the qualitative evaluation. They carry out interviews with the different target groups (mostly migrants), and also use participant observation. Through these methods they see what they do and what they need to do. They take into account participants' motivation as well. Many migrants prefer informal discussions to a formal interview. A strong part of IMES' evaluation is to make an evaluation report that is circulated to the people who work on the project. There is an Internet platform where participants can read the report and the results of the evaluation.
3. To identify best e-inclusion orientated practices, especially those that aim to promote a non-discriminatory access to digital literacy in PICs. The project therefore produced a multilingual training guide for PIC managers, facilitators and trainers in Europe, to facilitate non-discriminatory practices in PICs. The guide offers a better view of still existing discriminatory practices in PICs and contributes to further improve e-inclusion of excluded groups. Rastrelli adds that *“at ARCI we try to design infrastructure and services for special and specific groups or even individuals. However, there is a lack of proper material to use in the training courses with specific groups. Most projects tend to use standard material, sometimes in foreign languages. At the same time the large numbers of migrants who use our services need more qualified staff. Our financial resources are limited and as long as we cannot focus on all the needs of the specific group, the digital divide remains.”* In addition to that, to build a non-discriminatory environment really open to all is a demanding task. It means investing time and resources (personnel firstly) not only in assessing the degree of openness to all the Lifelong learning services offered, but also in changing/revising/updating info/guidance/learning/training patterns on a continuous way. This has proven to be much easier in areas where regional authorities are more sensitive to these issues and support/reward these efforts, as they are time/cost expensive, especially for NGOs. It must also be taken into account that private profit making PICs limit their services to the basic typical Internet ones in order to maximize the expenses with acceptable revenues. Meanwhile the non-profit PICs investigated by the project offer a complex comprehensive mix of informative/guidance/tutoring/learning-training services, accompanied by a wide variety of cultural and social face-to-face activities. Only in this way, can citizens concretely access the opportunities offered by the Information-Knowledge Society.
4. To disseminate the results of the project in Europe and to promote the use of the different products elaborated during the project. From the conducted interviews the

project learnt that the 'Dinamizador' project helped clients with their self-confidence. This "Dinamizador", is rather socially-oriented and refers to personnel playing an active animation/facilitation role which includes the promotion of activities inside and outside the centre. He adapts him/herself to the characteristics and needs of each network or community. This Spanish "Dinamizador" role could be exported and adapted to other regional contexts in Europe. It was judged to be a very complete and balanced role that can deal with the diversity of PICs' mandates and activities. Most importantly, its focus on promoting users' participation and involvement, as well as providing the link with the local context, were evaluated as valuable approaches to be adopted on a broader scale. Dissemination is carried out using the project website, DVD and the publication of 'Suturing the Digital Gash".

D. Organisation

The PIC and Adult Education Project has identified some 106 PICs and/or networks of PICs in the five participating European Member States: the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy and Spain.

Despite their different legal status (public and/or third sector) and specific goals (amongst them there are secondary schools, adult education centres, libraries and médiateques, civic centres, NGO local clubs, cyberbases, info points, popular education movement sites, universities, guidance and job centres, points to access public services, etc.), these centres share a core mission: to educate beneficiaries on the use of ICT and to provide access/use to all citizens (including those most at risk of exclusion) to social, health, educational, cultural, employment services. They also share the mission to empower local people through a critical use of ICT opportunities and to train people through blended learning methods, combining face-to-face sessions with e-learning ones and Socratic-co-operative learning pedagogies.

The ARCI umbrella brings together 5440 local member organisations. 10% are considered to be PICs. 80% of these are located in the two richest regions of Italy. Rastrelli puts this into perspective: *"It is only now that the less developed southern regions become interested. We consider this regional level very important. The impact of the PIC project for ARCI was huge. The mother organisation often made declarations on the importance of e-inclusion but at the same time did not execute many projects. This has now changed with the PIC project, the international collaboration, the identification of best practices and a first step towards measure the real impact of the PICs."*

ARCI is also collaborating with the Free Software Foundation on an open source software strategy. This could reduce the high costs of hardware and software for projects but can cause problems with compatibility, hardware configuration, user accessibility and maintenance. It has been decided to use Creative Commons systems to register and disseminate the contents of the added value of ARCI's PICs users-members-participants.

E. Financial

Funding remains problematic. To provide local integration, language or employment courses, you need to be accredited. This is a timely and costly process and it is difficult for local partners to comply with all the rules. So, often only social and integration funds are available for PICs. Changing and transforming this rigid system is very difficult. For the moment we work with many volunteers, as no budget is available to employ (qualified) people, or to give them a contract for a longer period. Lack of financial support results in a lack of qualified staff, which makes it hard to improve working methods and to innovate. Staff are often not trained to deal with users' social, cultural, ethnic or religious differences. This, in turn, makes it harder for the centres to become accredited.

Volunteers often encounter users with language difficulties.. A programme for recognizing volunteers in PICs as professional workers would relieve the problem.

F. Recipes for success

1. Learning is easier when related to users' interests, and adaptation to personal interests is essential for successful PIC's training. This is why we think that a stronger linkage between Digital Literacy and other Adult education courses (languages, vocational training /labour market insertion, entrepreneurship/self employment, socio-

- cultural promotion or integration, etc.) would help attract the interest of people who are still e-illiterate.
2. What really makes an impact on the quality of the service offered is the level of preparation by staff. By joining previous results, we can imagine that PIC staff in the future will be specialised in socio-cultural animation, capable of attracting users and keeping them interested in the whole learning process (not only in ICT), and they would also be specialised in blended learning processes to provide users with pedagogical assistance or guidance that could help users learn to learn.
 3. Careful backing and funding from Public Authorities and non-profit foundations is a key-factor towards success. In particular, Public Administration plays a major role in creating an overall legislative and policy framework which takes account of the strategies / programmes of NGOs and other third sector organisations thus enabling them to put non-discrimination and e-inclusion initiatives into practice.

G. Policy & Strategy

There is a strong need for an integrated policy look on e-inclusion that takes into account that e-inclusion is directly related to the quality of life and society and encompasses culture, education, eSkills. Public administration needs to take a leading role in transforming the system. Rastrelli claims that there is *“a lack of a national policy framework in Italy and Spain if you compare this to countries like the UK, the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries. Combating unemployment is action point NR 1 for the government. E-inclusion and Life Long Learning are not. But if you want to become a knowledge based society you need to invest in these issues. That is long-term policy. Maybe the EU's regional development fund can address this issue.”*

Rastrelli stresses the need to sensitise all those persons and centres working with discriminated people in the field of social insertion and integration in order to introduce computer activities in the existing centres as part of inclusion activities.

- promote and strengthen the cooperation between social workers and technicians;
- promote and strengthen the cooperation between technological centres and third sector organisations active in the field of social inclusion.

Rastrelli believes that *“an E-inclusion strategy can only be successful if users become active not only as users, but also when they become aware of the various opportunities provided by ICT, through Internet and address the information society in an informed, active and participative way. Users also become producers, creators and suggest new PICs' services and/or contribute personally and directly to innovate existing services.”* Rastrelli underlines in her study that *“general evidence shows that there is no great distinction between Networks of PICs and single PICs on matters of building/respecting general service standards, as this aspect seem to be more influenced by the degree of implementation of e-inclusion/non-discrimination policies by each European member states/regions concerned. Finally, I want to mention that AWO/ARCI/LA LIGUE/FCV experts have already presented a new joint initiative under the EU Life-Long Learning Programme Call (the Leonardo project named: “Developing Knowledge Society Learning Environments”) to continue to work on these issues. And they intend to present others.”*

2.3 Interview with Krassi Simonski¹⁹

Deputy Chairman, iCentres Association, Sofia, Bulgaria
Krassi@icentres.eu

Interview conducted by Syb Groeneveld on 24 February 2008.

Introduction

The iCentres Project is a joint project between the Government of Bulgaria and United Nations Development Programme, which aims to establish a broad-base network of public telecentres providing services to the widest possible range of users in small or economically underdeveloped communities. The iCentres Project is the leading provider of access to information, broadband connectivity and services to citizens and SMEs in local communities in Bulgaria. They have become a key provider for ICT skills and competences to all people.

iCentres wants to take the project a step further and become the “blood” system for nation-wide projects and initiatives aiming to reach all citizens by the means of information and communication technologies.

A. Users

Currently, the number of telecentres totals 109. Nearly 1,250,000 users have visited the telecentres since their establishment in 2004. By 2009, the network of telecentres will expand and mature to provide affordable access to computers and information for all Bulgarian citizens. The project will contribute to the convergence of the civil and information society to a level meeting the European criteria for the knowledge based society and economy in the part related to access to information and IT services as well as developing IT skills and competence. There will be a well established and functioning content aggregation and distribution network adding business and social values to different information products and services.

B. User benefits target group

Over 30 types of services are offered at telecentres in the categories of e-government services, educational services to a wide audience, content, and other (Internet access, e-mail, fax, telephone). Over 450 instructors have been trained and involved in different education programs and initiatives.

In 2006, the project developed and implemented the largest Bulgarian training project. The target was the state administration. 23,000 civil servants were trained on site in core IT skills. The project expanded in 265 locations (every municipality) to organize 430 instructors in 2,500 classes in less than a year. We succeeded to introduce the principle of continuous education by providing materials, exams, and course management electronically. In 2007, another 22,000 civil servants were trained under the project. For 2008, 15,000 more administrative employees are planned for training. Moreover, within two months, more than 55,000 civil servants took tests in anti-corruption using the e-learning system of the project. For comparison – the largest similar training initiative registered in the world has been implemented in Mexico and provided training to 30,000 people.

Simonski: *“The key of the telecentres is combining the quality of connection with the individual skills and requirements. We developed a skill programme for disabled people. They have an exceptionally high motivation to learn and concentrate well in class. We started this programme with a group of more than one hundred and after finishing all parts of the course three of them had accepted a job offer. They wouldn’t have had the capacities to fulfil the tasks of their job without this programme.”*

Also the local significance of the telecentres is great. This is proven by the fact that the telecentres resources were used in crisis situations. An example is telecentre Elin Pelin where, after the devastating floods in the region in August 2005, relief for the people in the

¹⁹ The presented information is based on the interview and additional web research (e.g. <http://www.icentres.net/index.php?id=204> <http://www.microsoft.com/about/corporatecitizenship/citizenship/giving/overview/UPrecipients/europe2008.msp> and the iCentres presentation by K. Simonski (PDF file)

municipality was gathered. Another example is telecentre Nedelino which was used as a Crisis Information Centre where data on the size of the losses caused by the floods in the region in April 2005 was processed and furthered to the Regional Directorate of the State Agency for Civil Protection.

C. Services & Activities

Telecentres is more than computers and access to Internet: Human resources are the biggest asset. However, the work of the telecentres starts with the well developed *Technology Base*, allowing provision of services in every spot of the network. It includes broadband connectivity, modern computer and multimedia equipment in every telecentre, a sophisticated server system, a real-time communication system, as well as a specifically designed mobile telecentre, fully equipped with state-of-the art technology.

The *Content Aggregation and Distribution Network (CADN)* is the content processing model of the iCentres project. It is basically a system where different content providers are able to upload, present and supply their content at central level, which is then distributed in the whole network of telecentres.

An iCentres' E-Learning System has been developed in order to introduce continuous and distance learning and handle the growing training needs. In April 2005, the T-Centres Project was recognized as a partner in the international ICT Skills Development programme of Microsoft. Under it iCentres was granted the implementation of the programme for Bulgaria which is directly monitored by the headquarters of Microsoft and UNDP in the USA. Using this project's resources of USD 98 000, the full cycle for providing training in computer skills has been developed. The Unlimited Potential (MS UP) learning curriculum for IT skills training has been localized in Bulgarian language ensuring that the training is accessible to all citizens. Moreover, the iCentres project has developed a team of instructors, including units of professional cadres in all telecentre regions.

In order to better achieve self-sustainability of the project, a *Maturity Level System* has been developed with the aim to assess the level of maturity of each telecentre. It includes a number of metrics to measure the performance of a telecentre. A set of recommendations on central and local levels specifies the process of reaching the next maturity level. In addition, a *Location Eligibility Calculator* has been developed to evaluate the viability of locations for telecentres. It applied criteria for a successful telecentre.

The growing training potential of the telecentres resulted in the necessity to certify their activity as a training organisation. As a consequence, the idea of applying for certification before NAPOO (National Agency for Professional Education and Training) took shape in 2004. The creation and registration in 2005 of the iCentres Association as a separate legal entity now allows for licensing the telecentres as a network of training venues, possessing the necessary qualified staff and the relevant training facilities.

Selection of Social value projects

iCentres also started the Roma Integration Project. This project aims at enhancing the social integration and employment opportunities for the Roma minority, by utilizing the pyramid training approach. The latter includes 2 levels of training (Core and Professional IT skills course), the second one being provided to a smaller number of trainees with demonstrated motivation and potential. Similarly, iCentres adopted the same approach for the implementation of the "Disabled e-Inclusion" project under which people with physical disabilities were trained throughout Bulgaria with the aim of facilitating their integration into society. The 'Young criminal probation' project is aimed at educating young people that committed minor crimes. It contributes to their re-socialisation and professional realization, instead of further isolating them from society. Finally, the 'Digital heritage of the older generation' creates an on-line platform where they can share their experience and memory. The project will ultimately contribute to preserving the cultural heritage of Bulgaria by establishing digitally-enhanced means for aggregation of local content.

D. Organisation

In 2005, with a view to better answer the dynamic and fast changing reality in the ICT sector in Bulgaria, a non-profit organisation called iCentres Association was established with Bulgarian government entities as its founders (the Ministry of Transport, the State Agency for

IT and Communications, Bulgarian Posts and the Ministry of State Administration and Administrative Reform). The iCentres Association is also envisaged to act as the successor in right of the telecentres network established under the project.

The Human Resources of the telecentres network includes a total of 145 employees, a mature internal structure in three levels – central, regional and local and an established efficient communication and coordination mechanism.

Telecentres defined 7 goals to fulfil its mission:

1. **Expand and develop the network of telecentres:** What is interesting is that telecentres directly link this goal with a sustainable business model by developing a strong business organisation of competent telecentre managers who will lead the society towards achieving the goals and objectives of the Bulgarian knowledge based society.
2. **Promote and provide citizens' access to different electronic services.** This explicitly includes the joining of efforts with other central and local government structures to provide convenient and affordable e-Government services. *"This is a special opportunity for iCentres", says Simonski, "In 2009 we will have a nation wide network. The government needs partners in (rural) areas to communicate, advocate, and deliver services. There are no other organisations in Bulgaria that can offer the same infrastructure and network as iCentres. This is the way forward for the government to assure more access to and use of e-government services for its citizens. Citizens now use only 5% of the offered e-government services. This is marginal compared to the 80% of the private sector. It is a challenging subject. We are now in three-step-process to: help the government doing this, to provide the necessary infrastructure and to train the people. We will become a front-office for municipalities: providing the e-services remain their duty, we help: we simply bridge the gap."*
3. **Develop citizens' skills and competence relevant to the knowledge based society.** Apart from standard activities, this goal is about becoming the leading nation-wide institution for IT training and certification using up-to-date content and modern teaching technologies. This illustrates the high ambitions the management of the organisation has set. Many of their well-thought-over business strategies can be exemplary to other telecentres/public internet centres across Europe. Simonski stresses the importance of trust, *"In e-business trust is the single most important issue for your client. Telecentres are very trustworthy partners in numerous ways. Here we have a competitive advantage over comparable initiatives in the private sector."*
4. **Focus on regional development and exposing local values by promoting local content.** The interesting activity under this goal is to provide support to local IT clubs, contests and other voluntary activities through using the telecentres as outsourced *infotainment* (information and entertainment) areas with an atmosphere similar to clubs. This could indirectly lead to new innovative services.
5. **Develop value added services**
 - a. Develop sustainable E-business models:
 - i. Develop further public private partnerships with different companies and organisations;
 - ii. Qualify and train human resources to be able to perform product and service demonstrations in the iCentres network;
 - iii. Assure e-services availability in the iCentres network through a variety of information portals;
 - iv. Provide expertise in product and service consultations as well as help with the transaction process.
 - b. Develop and promote commercial services:
 - i. Ensure a virtual market for services and products;
 - ii. Build users trust of products and services through virtual feedback mechanisms;
 - iii. Identify and receive payments from service subscribers.
6. **Develop the existing Content Aggregation and Distribution Network (CADN)** Under this goal the iCentres project will seek to promote content generation, provides updates and develop distribution models ('master to slave' model and 'peer to peer' model). This interesting objective can make iCentres a potential distribution channel of services and content for many public and private partners. For example, administrative authorities may provide citizens with electronic and online means for submitting applications or tax returns.. Or a local tourist company could use an information portal to promote their

services all over the country.

7. **Social contribution Beyond the** 'standard e-inclusion activities' this also entails promoting safer Internet use and child protection by organizing awareness raising campaigns..

E. Financial

Project Telecentres started as a joint initiative of the Bulgarian Government and the United Nations Development Program. It was initiated in December 2003 and received government funding of one million USD. Since the beginning of 2004, the T-centres Project has received additional funding of 4,2 mln. USD. In addition, the budgets of other projects implemented within the iCentres network, such as I-government (training of the State Administration) and MSUP (localization of the Microsoft Unlimited Potential learning curriculum), are 1 592 200 USD and 98,000 USD respectively. Moreover, the Project T-centres has received donations and payments of approximately 180,000 USD for conducting a variety of training courses to different marginalized groups on local level.

The T-centres Project has also attracted other investments such as approximately 300,000 USD from the Korean Agency for Digital Opportunity for the establishment of a demonstration telecentre in Sofia. Almost all companies and vendors involved in the Project have provided their low-cost offers and discounts such as 800,000 USD discounts from Microsoft licenses.

F. Recipes for success

1. Most countries have a project that does similar work to iCentres, even if on a smaller scale. It makes sense to create a network and exchange practices. We already do this in the Microsoft Unlimited Potential programme. Simonski adds, *"last year we had an initial workshop for this network in Barcelona to start disseminating our experiences and knowledge. I am now chairing a committee to formulate the strategic and pragmatic goals of this network. In April 2008 we will initiate a more formal organisation in Riga."* The Unlimited Potential programme of Microsoft supports the initiative. They don't have a formal position in the network and it is open to non-members of their programme.
2. Start validating results of the various initiatives in different areas and countries. Nice things often happen in the periphery. There is a need for a standardised framework.
3. Organisations such as ours always need to keep a sensitive balance between process and project...when you become a traditional structurally subsidised organisation, your ability to innovate and to be dynamic is reduced...
4. Start writing a business plan: *"Writing a business plan forces you into disciplined thinking if you do an intellectually honest job. An idea may sound great in your mind, but when you put down the details and numbers, it may fall apart..(Eugene Kleiner, Venture capitalist)"*

G. Policy & Strategy

We are looking for the right balance between social and business: between public and commercial services. How do you value the social component if you operate in the market place but are also have public service obligations? Social return on investment is a relatively new phenomenon. Wikipedia defines it as: A social entrepreneur is someone who recognizes a social problem and uses traditional entrepreneurial principles to organize, create, and manage a venture to make social change. Whereas business entrepreneurs typically measure performance in profit and return, social entrepreneurs also measure social returns.

"We want to be a sustainable eco-system", Simonski states, "but we still depend on funds. This is not a bad thing, but in the coming years we have to grown to maturity. The nation wide coverage will help us. See our civil servants training example. No one else can do that. This also means we have to transform our project and team driven organisation to a complete process driven organisation. Financial stability is necessary to accomplish this next step and create a stable organisation. We need to carefully plan this strategy with all our public and private partners, because it is difficult to foresee what will happen in the coming years. It won't be the same. The need for e-access and e-skills will diminish. People have their infrastructure at home or in their pocket. So our power is in our network (human and infrastructure). Let's wait and see."

2.4 Interview with Audrey Frith²⁰

European Policy Officer for La Ligue de l'Enseignement
La Ligue de l'enseignement
<http://www.laligue.org/>

Interview conducted by Alexandra Haché, on 29 February 2008

Introduction

The Ligue de l'enseignement was founded in 1866, after the Introduction of universal suffrage in 1844. Since its beginnings the Ligue defines itself as *"a Ligue for popular education to build a society of woman, and men, better educated, capable of reflecting on citizenship and active democracy"*. The Ligue is a confederation of 102 local federations made up of 30.000 organisations members from fields such as education, training, culture, sports, leisure and communication. The league manages about 600 educational centres and about 60 vocational training centres. It organizes big national events related to education and ICTs, such as the summer Communication University at Hourtin.

The national headquarters of the Ligue works as a resource centre for the local federations, it elaborates educational contents and tools (practical guides, how to, websites, exhibitions...). The Ligue develops activities to counter the digital divide through its regional and local federations which manage public internet access points inside their local organisation. It also engages in national and local programs to combat illiteracy and in anti racism initiatives (for example through the coordination of the national week against racism in France). The Ligue has 2 millions members, 40.000 employees and over half million volunteers. Since 2006, the Ligue also accepts individual members. It is a movement for popular education and, it is also an enterprise of the 'social economy' with thousands of employees and a yearly budget of about 450 millions euros to promote the following aims: *"Living together with our differences; learning to understand each other; opposing racism and xenophobia; fighting injustices and inequalities; building a society where the central value isn't "money"; promoting an environment where entertainment, sport, personal and vocational education, culture and learning for all are the keys to improving the true quality of life"*.

Its core values are based on the concepts of popular education, secularism and citizenship. The Ligue therefore invites citizens to associate themselves with their work in order to:

- understand the changes of their contemporary cultures;
- contribute to the evolution of their societies and shape progress;
- promote the building of a political and social European Union;
- work in solidarity for the sustainable development of the planet.

²⁰ Audrey Frith travaille au sein du secteur International et Europe de la Ligue de l'enseignement (www.laligue.org) en tant que chargée de mission Europe. J'assure une veille sur les affaires et programmes européens pour le réseau et peut servir d'appui au montage de dossiers pour les autres secteurs de la Ligue, je monte et gère des programmes européens comme ceux sur les TIC, organise des formations sur les dispositifs européens ou des conférences / séminaires. Par ailleurs, je suis la coordinatrice d'une Plate forme européenne de la société civile pour l'éducation et la formation tout au long de la vie (EUCIS-LLL) (www.eucis.net)."

A. ICTs activities, initiatives and services:²¹

At local and regional levels, organisations affiliated to the Ligue can present three types of activities related to ICTs:

- Activities for the general public and more specifically those who do not use ICT (such as the elderly, immigrants, people at risk of marginalisation, disabled persons, prisoners... (as part of their different activities)
- ICT training for local associations (generally training embedded in their annual development plan).
- Activities through specific Public Internet Centres to improve access to internet and multimedia contents such as Espaces Publics Numériques presents inside local organisations.

"The issue of ICT inside the activities of the Ligue appears at the end of the 80's even if we are not a network of telecentres. Our training activities are bottom up and stem from our common goal to promote the development of initiatives of popular education"
"Actually the Ligue is planning to adopt a common strategy towards ICTs and inclusion activities; therefore it is planning to establish partnerships with organisations that already promotes the access to ICTs. To date, we share common values on pedagogy and teaching, on access for the excluded groups and the fact that we work as a centre of resources for organisations, ensuring training for members of affiliated associations"

"ICT initiatives appear at the local level when required, for example in some rural areas there are some mobile units to access internet, in some council buildings training is provided. These are mostly local initiatives, but we are developing a strategy on ICTs at a national level. This national group is composed of the groups working locally with ICTs. We organised a meeting in 2007 to analyse current best practices developed in the network inside six provinces.

"The number and frequency of activities related to ICTs depends of the local actors and organisations, for example in the Alpes d'Hautes Provenances, there is active promoting free software and develops training for other organisations. In the Dordogne, training for all is developed and the majority of participants are elderly; they also do training sessions for people in prisons. When issues such as broadband access are resolved this provokes changes such as the disappearance of the mobile internet unit. It means training and support will focus on individuals and will often be home based.

²¹ We list below some local activities of particular interest in relation to ICTs:

- Ligue de l'enseignement de Gironde (33)

Pierre Mazagot, Responsable du pôle développement numérique des territoires.

They develop specific activities for disabled persons and also develop a set of activities related to FLOSS

- Ligue de l'enseignement de Dordogne (24)

François Meynier, chargé de mission TIC

They count on an Espace Multimédia with 12 computers, has a strong advice vocation towards other organisations and associations aiming to develop formations and websites francois@laligue24.org ou +33 5.53.02.44.16

<http://www.laligue24.org/multimedia.php>

- Ligue de l'enseignement d'Alpes Haute Provence (04)

Jean-Christophe Becquet est coordonateur TIC au sein de la Ligue de l'enseignement des Alpes de Haute Provence, formation on open office and advocacy towards organisations around FLOSS, through also a website called Apitux.org, see also:

<http://www.expolibre.org/> et sur :

http://www.laligue-alpesdusud.org/html/dossiers/dossier_informatique/logicielslibres_udaf.html

+33 6 25 86 07 92 (pro) ou jcb@apitux.com

- Ligue de l'enseignement du Finistère (29) et Centre social de Brest : EPM Kérourien

Régine Roué, animatrice de l'EPM

L'EPM of Kerourien opened in 2001, and has two main goals: to be a place to access and improve skills to new technologies for the habitants of the neighbourhood, be a resource centre to stimulate multimedia projects for young people, local organisations, women and seniors, to help children and youth to study, <http://www.fol.infini.fr/SPIP/spip.php?auteur95>

<http://kerourien.blogspot.com/>

<http://www.a-brest.net/article1187.html>

http://www.wiki-brest.net/index.php/PAPI_de_l'Espace_Public_Multim%C3%A9dia_de_K%C3%A9rourien

- Ligue de l'enseignement du Var (63)

Propose a formation to all members affiliated to basic steps of digital literacy

<http://www.fol83.laligue.org/fo83/index.html>

04 94 24 72 96 ou pboumessata@laligue.org

- Ligue de l'enseignement du Calvados (14)

<http://epnbn.ctn.asso.fr/userinfo.php?uid=9>

- Ligue de l'enseignement des Hauts de Seine (92)

Develop multimedia classes in schools for kids

"We see that some of our local affiliates are partners of other networks, such as the "Espace Public Numérique", (for example Finistère and Gironde), or the network of "Cyberbases". They become 'independent partners' and sign a specific charter, the Ligue headquarters doesn't get involved in the networks".

"Several initiatives targeting excluded people are developed locally such as the EPN²² Kérourien in Brest, where activities are based in an HLM²³ that develops activities for local youth, working around inter-cultural through the creation of multimedia reports. In the Dordogne, a lot of work is carried out with elderly people and with prisoners, others places target disabled persons, or, again In Brest, ethnic minorities and second generation immigrants mostly from Maghreb"

B. Related to the evaluation and impact of ICT activities:

"Generally where ICTs are used they are managed through simple system of sharing and borrowing multimedia resources and devices as required. The appropriation of ICTs is generally developed from a flexible and culturally oriented perspective. We can see that the activities of use and practice with ICTs work better if they are applied to subjects of everyday interest, when working with the elderly, they can learn how a blog can addresses their specific interests. Feed back is generally very positive, and the fact that there are "waiting lists" for several courses demonstrates the need and demand for such services. We don't have clear numbers because we don't have a national strategy or evaluation tools to measure interests and needs. Beside we don't clearly know the needs of the local partners, but we are going to address these issues with the national ICT group"

C. Partnerships:

At the national level, the Ligue is a member of APRIL the main French advocacy association, founded in 1996, devoted to promoting and protecting Free Software. Made up of nearly 2 000 members (individuals, companies, and organisations), it is a pioneer of Free Software in France. Its aim: making Free Software more accessible to the general public, professionals and institutions, and thus more widespread. It also acts as a watchdog on digital freedoms, warning the public about the dangers of private interests keeping an exclusive stranglehold on information and knowledge.

At local and regional levels, some Federations of the Ligue are members of ICT networks such as Cyber-Base, EPN, ERIC, etc. Each departmental federation is autonomous in building local partnerships.

The Ligue is also involved in ICT projects at EU and International levels. "We are also coordinators of a European Comenius project called "Europschools Network²⁴" (2006-2009) with 9 other countries involved. The Europschool network's main purpose is to create a common platform for nursery and primary school teaching in order to research "how to improve the way to inter cultural issues in early childhood, what training is needed for teachers, what methods should be used?". [...] This project has developed a forum for teachers to discuss inter-cultural issues. It has developed applications and tools, such as "the typing machine" adapted for the kids, and has created pedagogical contents in three languages.

The Ligue has also participated in European projects for adult education. "We have also been involved in the e-migra project for the e-inclusion of immigrants in Europe in the eLearning Programme." "We have also developed a guide to study and evaluate PICs called 'Suturing the digital gash: a European transnational project" where we have developed a guide to evaluate the quality of PICs, and also a guide for facilitators, to ensure they avoid discriminative attitudes and to introduce PICs to the notion of e-integration." We have taken into account the importance of having educators on site; we really like the Spanish model of "dinamizador". We are building a dossier for the

²² Espace Public Numérique

²³ Habitation à Loyer Modéré

²⁴ <http://europschool.net/static.php?op=partenaires.txt&nps=1>

Leonardo programme on the "skilfulness of animators". It would help us to develop an audit to understand best practices and see what needs to be done"

D. Resources & Funding:

"National funds in France for eInclusion issues have been reduced, so that most of our federations work with European funds or with regional and local cooperatives and councils. We see that in France since the national plan to invest in information society has diminished, local authorities also fund less, maybe because there is somehow the idea that access to ICTs has been generalised, with broadband, and there is less need for those issues... so the situation can be critical in some organisations. Our local organisations nevertheless have long waiting lists for their courses which shows the level of demand. Furthermore, statistics show discrepancies in access to ICT mainly for older, less educated, women or immigrant groups"

"While European projects are very valuable and positive for our federations, we lack information and knowledge about European policies. We know educational projects developed in France far better. [...] One recurrent problem blocking cooperation is language,. It makes it hard to understand the websites of the European commission. Calls for propositions are also really complex, they are scary. They look far too complicated and require a huge amount of time to develop proposals to respond"

E. Contact key persons:

- National level, working group on ICT
Coordinator: Christine Menzaghi
cmenzaghi@laligue.org
+33 1 43 58 95 84

- European Project europschool (www.europschool.net)
Coordinator: Annie Ysebaert
annie-ysebaert@wanadoo.fr

- European Partnerships: e-Migra, PIC
Coordonnateurs: David Lopez and Audrey Frith
mailto: dlopez@laligue.org and afriith@laligue.org
www.pic-project.eu
<http://www.e-migra.org>

2.5 Interview with Stephen Dodson²⁵

Director DC10plus network
www.dc10plus.net, stephen.dodson@dc10plus.net

Interview conducted by Syb Groeneveld on 3 March 2008.

Introduction

Stephen Dodson was employed at the Local e-Government programme in the UK where he was Director for e-innovations and Challenge within communities and local government. This programme was centred on three C's: connectivity, capabilities, content.

In 2007 a cross-government digital challenge competition was organised and won by Sunderland, winning them a £7 Million 'prize'. The quality of the other nine finalists was so high that it was decided that a wider network for public bodies, nonprofits and companies concerned to promote digital inclusion should be developed. This became the DC10plus network and was awarded £2 Million to drive forward initiatives proposed as part of the Challenge.

The DC10plus aims to act as a unique and national exemplar in working towards achieving social inclusion through technology. It is an umbrella organisation for local initiatives and a test bed for new services. Stephen is now running this DC10plus network.

²⁵ The presented information is based on the interview and additional web research (e.g. <http://www.dc10plus.net/accessibility-info>, <http://www.2dot0.co.uk/Films/swrda/a3/f3.html>)

DC10*plus* vision is to be a network for change; helping to empower people and connect communities through innovation and technology.

This vision underpins DC10*plus*' main objectives:

- exchange knowledge & jointly develop good practice
- promote digital inclusion to support delivery of Local Area Agreements
- jointly develop bids to EU and other funding sources
- identify key social inclusion issues and advise central government
- advise local authorities (and other organisations) on good and next practice
- organise and attend relevant events/seminars
- act as a national and regional resource for local authorities and their partners looking to address social inclusion issues through innovation

A. Users

The DC10*plus* are very aware of not being an inclusive 'club' and through their activities will be looking to widen the Digital Inclusion Network. It is about creating collaborative and learning partnerships, exchange good practice and developing new initiatives with other local authorities, central government, the third sector and industry to achieve common goals. The core elements of this will be:

- To work with regional stakeholders to demonstrate that they are increasing the take-up and use of digital technologies
- Linking service transformation to digital inclusion through focusing on neighbourhood empowerment, efficiency and effectiveness and in the delivery of Local Area Agreements through informing the regional improvement programme, Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP's) and Regional Economic Strategies (RES)
- To create space for dialogue around cross-sector objectives and see how the DC10*plus* can assist at a regional level in meeting/implementing these objectives by sharing and disseminating good practice based on individual and collective experience in delivering the core themes
- Demonstrate the efficacy and effectiveness of using ICT as a channel for the integrated and cohesive approach to the development and delivery of LSP's and RES's

B. User benefits target group

Following on from the Digital Challenge, DC10*plus* is now a leading authority on digital inclusion issues and how they impact at a local level. Indeed, the projects, pilot programmes and proposed initiatives submitted as part of individual Digital Challenge bids are all examples of how local authorities can reduce cost, tackle social exclusion and attain effective service delivery through the adoption of the innovative use of information communication technologies.

C. Services & Activities

DC10*plus* has identified seven key 'work streams' that will underpin their vision ongoing strategy and activities:

- **Next generation connectivity:** creating well-targeted and innovative interventions for "next generation connectivity" through the deployment of high-speed broadband (100 Mbs and above) using fibre, cable and wireless connectivity. This infrastructure is still not widely available in the UK.
- **Independent living:** Improving quality of life by making access to services easier and more time efficient and basing services around customer, rather than provider, needs (bringing multi-agency service delivery together). This will give the opportunity to the elderly to stay longer in their own home environment with assistant technologies. DC10*plus* is conducting a cost-benefit analysis on this issue.
- **Flexible working for socially excluded groups:** looking at the latest in projects that get people back into employment, for example 'Homeshoring in conjunction with UK Virtual Call Centres, Cisco and local call centre operators such as eOn. This service enables flexible working for socially excluded groups and targets the high level of unemployment in specific regions of the country where it is still hard to break the cycle of unemployment.

Specific methodologies have been developed like the 'Slivers of Time' concept²⁶, an online marketplace where anyone can sell spare hours, on their own terms, to multiple employers. The website offers insight in cases²⁷ that explain how and why people are using this service. In general this marketplace is focused on sellers and buyers:

- Sellers are work-seekers who need to find employment around other commitments. (e.g. childcare, existing partial employment, caring, attending job interviews, starting a business, medical issues.)
- Buyers are organisations wanting top-up workers at irregular times. (e.g.: Local Authorities, caterers, retailers, contact centres, service providers, promotions companies, care providers, the NHS.)
- **Digital communications and environmental impact** to identify and trial appropriate enabling technologies for homes and SMEs to reduce carbon footprint and tackle climate change. It is still not widely known that the ICT industry now has the same environmental impact as the airline industry.
- **Exploiting digital switchover for greater social inclusion** to capitalise on the opportunities presented as the entire country switches from analogue to digital TV between 2007 and 2012. As Dodson explains: *"Settop boxes are needed for this switch. These boxes can also manage a two-way communication, which would enable a wide range of new broadband services in a country where 37% is not connected to Internet. For example Digital TV channels can start for specific target groups but individuals by government. In South Yorkshire, e@syconnects links with health service provider systems to allow people to book appointments with their doctor 24/7 through the Internet, mobile telephones and digital interactive television (DiTV)."* E@syconnects delivers citizen-centred services by exploiting channels (mobile-phones, DiTV, and Internet) within inclusive services. This approach reduces the demands upon service providers enabling tangible benefits to be realised by both the citizens who use the services and the service partners who collaborate to offer these new services. For example, the online appointments service reduced missed doctors' appointment by 30%, thus improving efficiency of doctors' surgeries.²⁸
- **Communities building capacity is aimed at** creating a framework to support exchange of good practice between Community and Voluntary organisations, other partners and Local Authorities and brokers and champions fully supported by technology, building local capacity and service access. Dodson states: *"ICT based community building is a long standing subject in the UK. There are many neighbourhood organisations dealing with the subject but often they don't have the human resources to share their experiences. This causes a feeling that they don't get enough support from government organisations. We want to change this, by building support networks for their user groups. Local organisations are confronted with a wide range of issues."*
- **Regional engagement.** In order to advance their digital and social inclusion agenda it is, as Dodson states, *"essential that we embed this agenda in National Policy, as such we are identifying ways in which ICT can meet or contribute to addressing the governments 198 National Indicators"*²⁹, *varying from teenage pregnancy to recidivism. Part of this will be to create a database of best practices from around the country and process them for validation, transferability and scalability. The database will be available for professionals"*.

D. Organisation

DC10plus is a collaborative body that is dedicated to unravelling social inclusion issues by functioning as one group to promote the effective roll-out of technology-based initiatives. Its overall vision is to drive the digital inclusion agenda forward – underpinned by members' first-hand experience, knowledge and interactions at a local level.

The DC10plus is very aware of not being an inclusive 'club' and through their activities will be looking to widen the Digital Inclusion Network. DC10plus is about creating collaborative and learning partnerships, exchanging good practice and developing new initiatives with other local authorities, central government, the third sector and industry to achieve common goals. This also counts for international cooperation (within FP7 or otherwise).

²⁶ <http://sliversoftime.info/>

²⁷ http://www.sliversoftime.info/case_studies/sellers/building_skills/dave_lindsay.html

²⁸ See: <http://www.easyconnects.org.uk/Default.aspx?id=32> and "Creating a regional agency to foster eInclusion: the case of South Yorkshire," by Bridgette Wessels, University of Sheffield, UK (<http://www.epracticejournal.eu/document/4714>).

²⁹ See <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/nationalindicator> for further info.

E. Financial

This became the DC10*plus* network that was awarded £2 Million. Activities started in Autumn 2007 and within the current programme will continue until Spring 2010. DC10*plus* network is looking for additional finance to continue and expand.

F. Recipes for success

Much of the design and objectives of DC10*plus* is based on two reports that give a good understanding into the benefits of e-inclusion but also include recommendations on how to increase the social impact of ICT services:

1. **Inclusion Through Innovation:** Tackling Social Exclusion Through New Technologies, explores the potential that Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have to improve service delivery and quality of life for the most excluded groups, and argues that effective use of ICT is key to addressing exclusion and meeting complex needs.³⁰
2. **The Digital Inclusion Landscape in England:** Delivering Social Impact through Information and Communication Technology³¹. In March 2007 the report concluded that there are many excellent examples of technology delivering social outcomes for people and communities. However, when viewed in aggregate a number of key issues emerge:
 - Policies and strategies for citizen and community uses of ICT are fragmented across government, industry and the third sector. There is also fragmentation of resources and effort. Programmes and policies that could be joined up are not being linked. There is duplication and there are also gaps.
 - There are programmes and projects that have delivered social impact and form an excellent foundation to build on, but these tend to have low visibility.
 - There is a wide knowledge gap between social policy teams and technology experts that isn't being bridged, leading to low awareness of the opportunities. 'Digital' is all too often seen as an end in itself.
 - There are barriers to scaling-up pilots. These barriers hinder the scaling and repeating of successful initiatives.

G. Policy & Strategy

Dodson states that, in the UK *"After seven years, eInclusion has made it to the policy agenda. In January 2008 Gordon Brown appointed a Minister of Digital Inclusion (Paul Murphy). So the topic is finally getting the profile it deserves. Our agenda coincides with many of the targets set in the Riga declaration. We are pretty much on target for 2010. However, digital literacy remains a key issue to tackle. DC10*plus* is capable of building a network of living labs in the coming years. In there we need to demonstrate and collaborate in an open and accessible research process. This will further ensure the embedding of digital inclusion in national policy."*

³⁰ <http://archive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/seu/downloaddoc2c05.pdf?id=768>

³¹ The report is available at www.epractice.eu/resource/1881

2.6 Interview with Pedro Aguilera

Network Coordinator Red Conecta

Red Conecta: <http://www.redconecta.net/>
paguilera@esplai.org

Interview conducted by Alexandra Haché on 5 March 2008

Introduction

Connect Now is an initiative within the framework of the strategy to overcome the digital divide based on two networks: "Red Conecta" on the one hand, which focuses on: (1) helping users to access the labour market; (2) improving community development; (3) developing a training methodology for digital literacy called "Ordenador Práctico" for groups at risk of social exclusion, i.e. mainly young people, women, unemployed, immigrants, and ethnic minorities. "Conecta Joven", on the other hand, is directed at young people aged 16-18. Its main objectives are: (1) to improve the social participation and solidarity of young people, (2) to facilitate the access of young adults to ITCs, thus improving social inclusion, and (3) to promote synergies between, and cooperation among, the different actors of civil society. All telecentres are hosted by local NGOs which know the situation of the people at risk in their areas very well. The contacts with local NGOs and other networking telecentres have opened up opportunities for sharing knowledge and developing standards of excellence in training efforts. The programme is running in 61 NGOs in Spain at present and will be expanded to a total of 70 centres by June 2008. All telecentres are equipped with broadband connections and nine personal computers with web cams and headphones. They provide e-skills to 19,000 people every year, and to more than 30,000 people through collaboration efforts with other networking centres. The website of "Red Conecta" had registered 130,000 visits during 2007, and the number of pages viewed was more than one million. Similarly, the website of "Conecta Joven" has had 89,000 visitors in the same period.

A. ICTs activities, initiatives and services:

"Our methodology of eInclusion is called "practical computer", and it has been developed by our foundation Esplai. It is based on a the concept of: "trial-error", "action - error – action", throughout the initiative we always try to apply this dynamic, if we want to establish contacts and break existing mental barriers related to new technologies it is helpful"

"Red Conecta has two kind of publics, on one hand it is oriented towards NGOs and our strategy is to avoid delegation, the idea is to share the Project with each local partner, it is a good medium to create networks with other local organisations; and on the other hand it targets the beneficiaries of NGOs who usually work with socially excluded publics. This way we can better access target groups excluded by the digital divide such as women over 45 years, immigrants, unemployed people or jobseekers, youth at risk of social exclusion, niches of marginality and neighbourhoods with a high rate of unemployment. Therefore it is not a surprise that Red Conecta is present in NGOs located in poorer neighbourhoods located in the south of Madrid, in la coma (Valencia), in el Prat de Llobregat and San Cosme (Barcelona), in La eminencia (Sevilla). With this kind of program we can reach those two publics at the same time."

"The methodologies related to social inclusion are taken into account mostly by the local NGO and we take care and propose a framework for eInclusion issues. We provide them with bridges and tools so they can challenge the digital exclusion issues. It is like developing professional training (to get a job) and to add to it an ICT speciality".

"The Red Conecta "classroom" isn't developed to be elitist but its aim is to be integrated inside the normal activities of the organisation. We provide a "dinamizador", a facilitator (we dislike the word "educator") from Red Conecta. We are neither a cybercafé, neither a training school, we break barriers but our aim isn't to substitute training centres.

"Our program is developed in cooperation with local organisations, and it lasts at least three years. The first year we provide a set of eight computers, and also the salary of the "dinamizador", in exchange, the local organisation has to engage to maintain those computers and the dinamizador's salary for the following two years.

Our computer provider is Dell. This allows us to provide organisations with new and performing material that has a three year guarantee, so if there is any problem they get a technical service to ensure machinery working in perfect conditions."

B. Related to the evaluation and impact of ICT activities:

"So far 63 organisations have joined Red Conecta and none has left the project, all are committed to continue with the experience. I believe that that they keep going on because we are providing a strong service of endorsements to all those entities through an e-learning platform designed by us for the "dynamizadores". We also coordinate face to face meetings once a year, focused on e-inclusion issues. We still have to prepare one on e-governance in relation to links with public administrations, an important issue in the daily life of the publics addressed by our local organisations. We also have horizontal methodological groups that exchange views and experiences on several issues and this reinforces direct contact between them. They also use a common repository called e-pandora, that has been also created and designed by dinamizadores to upload all data and information they create to develop their activities, if, for example, they organise a specific workshop with specific materials for a target group they just copy and upload all those materials over there, so another dinamizador in another place can use and adapt it again. It is like a tool box. "

Evaluation impact

"Every three years we have an external evaluation, as one of our partners is Microsoft through its Unlimited Potential Programme) we are compelled to make this evaluation which we find very useful"

Indicators of this impact

About 22.000 people participate in our classes, but this is only part of the picture, we have to go beyond the numbers and search for other elements to classify and measure our impact, we lack of common criteria

We see an interesting shift in the qualitative composition of the classes, they are becoming increasingly specialised: this means two things, on one hand, demands from our target audiences are changing, and we are getting new demands from new potential audiences for example: our initial "practical computer" class didn't have a power point module as we thought that it wasn't necessary for digital inclusion, but we have received a lot of requests to have it and now it is has been added. The same thing has happened for Photoshop.

All this shows us that the network is alive and that we are moving from "digital literacy" to "digital education". There is a gradual integration of uses and practices that relate ICTs to daily lives: "is it true that I can do this and that?", this is a very common question, this is why the "dinamizador" is very important because he acts as an important and trusted source of information who can understand the social implications of passing this kind of information like "how to fulfil the unemployment registration by internet?", "how to buy food by internet from your local shop?"

We also get monthly information from our local organisations: we ask for some quantitative indicators such as number of pupils, number of classes of formation, gender distribution

Difficulties to measure this impact

The harsh question is the "improvement of employability" of the people trained through our network, enabling people to recognise a valid job advertisement, improve their CV and respond to job offers. Are the skills provided really helping improve access to the labour market? We should work on a methodology to measure this and be able to deliver evidence of this assumed link, and of course, this reflection needs to be shared, we can't do this alone, we need to reflect on this at the European level"

C. Partnerships:

- We are participating in the coordination of the Telecentre_europa.org network;
- We have developed a meeting on "eskills and employability" where we decided to become a network to enable us to better act at an European level , we are organizing another meeting in Riga, next 8/9 of April called "telecentre leader forum";
- Romi.net to develop the access to new Technologies for Roma women (it is the Roma secretariat who contacted us through the plan avanza).

D. Resources & Funding:

- Microsoft through the Unlimited potential plan
- Dell provide us with the hardware
- Our partnership with International Job Foundation that provided us with our original capital to begin the network 5 years ago
- Plan Avanza through the Spanish ministry of industry, tourism and commerce

E. Perspectives related to policies:

"We have seen some improvements, maybe it's related to the Riga declaration, it can be seen in that, over the past four years the Spanish government has developed eInclusion measures on access of all to the information society, of course if it isn't translate into concrete actions on the political agenda it is useless."

Our wishes would be:

- To provide more funds to people who have no access to technological resources. The excluded groups constitute almost 24% of the population;
- Keep stimulating the creation of telecentre networks that use a "dinamizador" and don't support the "orphan computers" dynamics. Free access is good but human support is needed to build skills in access and use of ICTs;
- More work in the subject of certification and accreditation. It would be helpful to measure the degree of employability of people who get certification recognized by the state;
- We would like the figure of "dinamizador" to be a valid and recognized professional status. If he becomes unemployed, it would then be easier to use this status to find another job, so it doesn't simply fall inside a huge category of "socio-cultural animator";
- We think that some degree of decentralisation, and also externalisation, in the management of the telecentres is positive, in order e.g. to get a "dinamizador" who comes from, or knows, the reality of the neighbourhood where he is working. They should know how to transmit digital literacy skills but also provide elements to build a relation of trust with the public, using their knowledge about the realities of local daily life. In that sense, we need more funds, and maybe, also to see the principle of subsidiary applied more systematically when delegation is really possible;
- Of course the management of these telecentres has to be carried out and "reserved" to organisations from the third sector and the civil society-, this is why we have to continue with subvention policies and co-management of services of proximity;
- As part of the third sector we are invited to a presentation by the ministry of industry of the new plan on eInclusion, and the new financial priorities allocated. Of course it would be interesting also to be taken in account when they policies are designed, and we should replicate in Spanish some good practice of the European Commission in involving and informing you about what is going on, I think the EC is more conscious of the role played by the third sector in eInclusion issues;
- It would be very important to obtain part of the European structural funds for eInclusion issues that would for change a lot of things.

2.7 Interview with Ricard Faura i Homedes

Head of the Society Information Department of the Generalitat de Catalunya
Xarxa de Telecentres de la Generalitat de Catalunya
<http://www.xarxa365.net/>

Interview conducted by Alexandra Haché on 12 March 2008

Introduction

"The network of telecentres wasn't born as a network in its beginnings. It did sum up some realities that were already working such as the OMNIA project and "teleworking" centres. A European programme funded this teleworking/teletreball centres project that connected public internet access points, located inside rural areas such as the Pirineos zone, Terres de l'ebre, in around 2000/01.

The OMNIA project was a network of telecentres oriented towards social integration for people with labour, or social integration problems. Initially the telecentres were located in neighbourhoods identified as presenting at risk. The project and network has grown and it is now composed of 111 telecentres (7 are located in prisons) and they are more dedicated to social and integration activities. Their minimum infrastructure for each centre is 8 computers, internet access and a "dinamitzador". The aims are more social than technical.

In 2002 an institutional pact called the NODACT project was settled and it was the beginning of our network, "xarxa de telecentres". This pact is based on several agreements with local institutions, town and local councils, and some organisations from the civil society also, but it is above all public institutions. The idea is to be able to reach the whole population and cover all areas."

Currently the global Picture of the "xarxa de telecentres" is the following: " 623 telecentres working, made up of 105 from the Omnia network, 30 from the Teletreball network (teleworking centres), 191 centres located in organisations like civic centres and citizenship associations related and 297 are located inside public libraries.

The number of "dinamitzadors" (Catalan word for the "dinamizadores" concept introduced above) is 640³² and they are distributed between 309 towns covering 32.5% of all towns in Catalonia that have at least one telecentre. The number of computers is 3.679 and 1.703 devices funded by the STSI (Secretariat de Telecomunicacions i Societat de l'informació). The average use per telecentre per day is 22 people.

The incorporation in our telecentres network of the public internet access points in public libraries has been developed in partnership with the public institution RED.ES³³"

"The kind of publics really depends on the local contexts, in rural areas the level of training required by the users has increased. The challenge now relates to the arrival of immigrants, it requires working in reshaping the methodologies and contents used in each telecentre. Besides, we think that some years ago some telecentres really specialized in certain aspects, with specific characteristics of connectivity and citizens, over the past few years this has become more blurred. For example, three or four years ago you wouldn't find yourself with a group of new immigrants from Africa, now they appear and you have to adapt to their cultures, of course this is an issue more addressed and well known in metropolitan areas and is where the role of our network is crucial, we help to transfer know-how. In that sense, the priorities have changed".

A. ICTs activities, initiatives and services:

"There is on not uniformity in the types of installations you can found, or in relation to the conditions of attention to the citizens, there is several realities coexisting. From the network we take care of the following services: the technological issues through a

³² Interesting to note that the interviewee had recent numbers relating to their gender distribution, he told me that 65% were women and 35% men, the most important slice is located inside 30 and 34 years and almost 70% have a diploma from university (or are currently cursing studies at the university)

³³<http://www.red.es/>

helpdesk service, a constant dynamisation of the network, the creation of technical guidelines for the dinamitzadors, the formation of the "dynamizadores" through e-learning platforms. We have also created with the UOC³⁴ a master for the "dinamitzadors" of the network and we do also take care to develop training tools for the users of the telecentres".

"Unlike other networks in Spain that directly manage their network and have a more uniform policy, we have several profiles of workers inside the network, for example the dinamitzadors from the Onmia network are employees of the Generalitat, but others have different agreements with the local entities they work for"

Technological issue:

Since 2005, we have created a "demo or beta stage" network of 28 telecentres that only work with free software; we distributed them all over the Catalan territory, selecting places where there was already an interest and sensitivity towards this issue. We are testing a system called client-server, "stupid screens" they call it, where all computers are connected to one single server, it can be a very economic and easy to maintain solution. Furthermore the software package is in Catalan and can be adapted to local needs and specificities; it was used initially as a demo test which was finalised last October. We are now developing an evaluation to see its use possibilities in other places.

The basic problems we encountered were one of acceptance by the local entities, and we have of course to help them to migrate from proprietary software to open source. There doesn't seem to be any problem for users having their first contact with ICTs, and internet, they don't even see it is different, it is the same to begin from there or from the traditional operative systems environment. The problem comes when people come to the telecentres looking for a more professional training, if they want to get trained on tools that they can use and apply in their labour environment, there might be a problem. At the same time and in theory telecentres were developed and are oriented towards people who have basic levels of digital literacy and ICT skills.

For more specialized networks like the "teleworking network" it is clear that we need both platforms, proprietary and open source so we can achieve more professional training and basic skills also"

"We opted for free software because a lot of people are developing applications and sharing them, it is based on a philosophy of working in network, it can also provide more inventive solutions for local businesses, adapting also to local language, but also to Arab or Chinese for teachers who have to teach the newly arrived people from third countries"

Formation for "dinamitzadors":

"They use a e-learning distance platform based on a CMS called Moodle, they are very confident and comfortable with it. We try to detect their needs as they emerge and we organize training modules using the moodle. A real problem for us is the high staff turn over of dinamitzadors. When telecentres close or if a dinamitzador leaves for another job or training, the situation can become very problematic. That is why a distance learning platform fits with their mobility. We adapt the contents to their needs and also by watching what other networks in Spain are developing"

"The status of "dinamitzador" as a professional recognized profile is complicated because most of them aren't directly our employees, they depend on the local entities that employs them. What we can do from here is to help local entities to recognize it as a professional role which is really important and difficult.

In the best case they are seen as a socio-cultural promoter, but in the majority of cases the dinamitzador really has a personal implication on the job, he provides it with an added value. When he is young and he likes the job he can become very engaged. The problem is all that the knowledge gets lost once he leaves, it is an important capital based on experience, its knowledge of local specificities but also of internal dynamics inside the telecentre and the hosting entity. So our network is trying to establish a system to capitalize on that knowledge in order to keep some trace of it and help to transfer it to others, and to new dinamitzadors. In order to achieve this we are working with the technical office, the TEB, which took over

³⁴ Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, <http://www.uoc.edu/>

managing this aspect for the network last month. We also work on this with the UOC through the masters' degree that just started two months ago.

Until now we have trained newcomers and also established channels where dinamitzadors can share, spread, and keep traces of the didactic materials they are creating in relation to specific tools, targets users, local contexts and so on"

B. Related to the evaluation and impact of ICT activities:

"We have just carried out a survey "La Fundació Observatori per a la Societat de la Informació de Catalunya, FOBSIC³⁵" monitored the gathering and the analysis of the data and associated indicators.

We are developing a test project called territori'tic in three localities, Ripollès, Pla de l'Estany and Ribera d'Ebre. We focus on how the telecentres impact on the economic promotion of the territory, and on the use of ICT, and on the degree of employability of its users. We also try to see how the telecentre can play a more crucial role in the governance of the territory in determining needs; in that sense we have signed agreements with those telecentres and we try to deploy a program of research and evaluation, all this is mediated by the foundation FOBSIC also"

Territori'Tic:

"We are in an experimental phase, our working hypothesis is that the only way to make a qualitative and quantitative jump forward is by establishing mechanisms where the territories indicate their needs. In a sense global projects can make us lose the sense of the most urgent or direct necessities. That is why we want to create referents in the territory in order to stimulate people, entities and telecentres to cooperate. This experiment will last all year and a lot of things are already emerging from it. As the department of the Generalitat we don't know what communication channels to use to communicate in each local contexts. Working like this we get advices and recommendations that are really embedded in the daily knowledge of the inhabitants. In another way, it helps citizens to have a referent person or entity near to them, with whom they can establish some a personal relationship and trust on subjects such as finding a good solution to implement ICT in their business, or exchange knowledge and so on"

C. Partnerships:

- "We are part of the comunidad de telecentros³⁶"
- Partnership with UOC (Universitat Oberta de Catalunya)

"Our contact with the other national networks in Spain are good, we have good relations, even relations of friendship. There is a yearly congress and every six months we meet.

At the European level we have very few relations, it is a level of different realities and rhythms. Our understandings of the impact of the information society are very different also. We can have Nordic countries as referents but it is difficult to move to Finland to see what they do and how, it is also based on a lack of possibilities to work as teams rather than mere visitors.

In what relates to the international level, I guess it is even more related to different realities, in a lot of places they still face problems of connectivity, where they can't rely on telephones, and their dimensions of scale are much bigger. We have several contacts with Latin America and they use us as a referent, they are really active and there is cooperation among us. But it could be better, Andalucia and Extremadura are far more active in international cooperation, they organise more meetings and invite people to come here"

D. Perspectives related to policies:

National Policy:

"For the past three or four years a great effort has been made through the Avanza plan. It is really helping a lot, in fact a large part of our budget comes from it. The action guidelines are developed by the ministry and we are more or less consulted, but it is more about outputs than inputs.

After, is another aspect of this cooperation through the agreements co-funded between the ministry and the Generalitat. We are referring to agreements to fund pilot plans at the state

³⁵ <http://www.fobsic.net/>

³⁶ <http://www.comunidaddetelecentros.net/quienessomos.php>

level or initiatives like "Ciudades Digitales"³⁷. In those agreements, the state funds 50%, the Generalitat 30% and the local entities 30%. There are also other actions funded on the basis of 60% for the Generalitat and 40% for the state."

"We have very few relations at the European level, here the Avanza plan plays "hard". For sure, we would like to develop plans and projects with other countries, work on funding options, and find suitable solutions to pay the dinamizadors, how to embed all this in a European framework?"

³⁷ <http://www.ciudadesdigitales.org/>

2.8 Interview with Juan Carlos Exposito and Rafael Gonzalez Moraza

Respectively former Director General for Technological Infrastructures and Services of Consejería de Innovación, Ciencia y Empresa (the regional ministry for innovation, science and enterprise of Andalusia) and technical consultant of Sandetel, Sociedad Andaluza para el Desarrollo de las Telecomunicaciones.

Guadalinfo (Andalucía, Spain)
<http://www.guadalinfo.net/>

Interview conducted by Stefano Kluzer in April 2008.

Andalusia is the southernmost region of Spain with approximately 7.7 million inhabitants living across a vast and mostly scarcely populated territory (over 500 km from the eastern to the western coasts of the region). Given its poor standing compared to other Spanish and European regions in several information society indicators at the end of the last decade, and acknowledging the crucial role that stronger innovation processes and wider diffusion of ICT could play to enhance the region's competitiveness and development, in 2001 the regional government launched the first articulated information society policy, known as *Plan I@andalus* of Strategic Initiatives for the development of the information society which was implemented in the period 2002-2004.

History

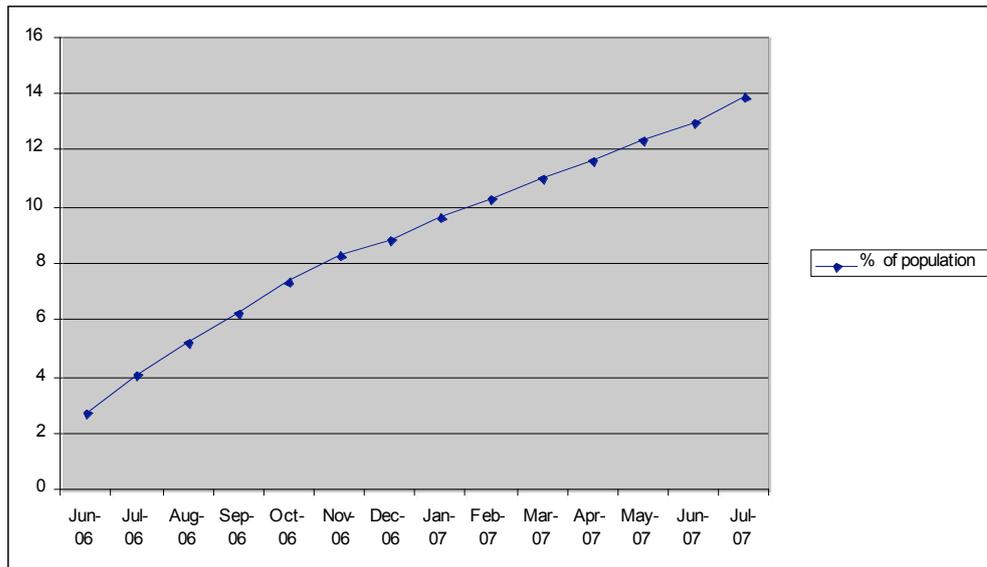
The Guadalinfo project started in 2002 as a pilot initiative of the Andalusian Innovative Actions Operational Program supported by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The goal was to test a scheme to bring internet access and ICT training to the smaller, usually rural and remote localities (municipalities with less than 10,000 inhabitants), where over 20% of the Andalusian population lives with a high presence of groups at risk of digital exclusion (people with low education, low income and less skilled employment and elderly people). In the pilot phase, 26 Guadalinfo centres providing broadband internet access and digital literacy training to any interested citizen were set up in as many municipalities, all of them with less than 20,000 inhabitants. Given the immediate success of the initiative, with the centres becoming poles of attraction and animation of cultural, social and economic activities for and by the local population, a second phase was soon planned aiming for full-scale implementation of the project at regional level.

In December 2004 Consejería de Innovación of the regional government started signing agreements with the eight provincial deputations of Andalusia, to define the funding and establishment criteria of a Guadalinfo centre. To receive support, an interested municipality had to have less than 10,000 inhabitants; to be covered by broadband access services; to make available a barrier-free office space in a central location, with adequate heating/cooling, electrical and other facilities; to guarantee the daily operation of the centre (minimum opening hours, cleaning and maintenance services etc.); for at least 36 months, and to contract the person responsible for the centre's activities –known as *dinamizador*– whose salary was then covered by the project's funds.

With the opening in 2006 of 271 new centres, by the end of that year, all the 637 Andalusian municipalities with less than 10,000 inhabitants (out of the 770 municipalities in the region) had a Guadalinfo centre, with a total of about 4.477 PCs and servers installed with different types of, mostly open source, software, all of them connected to the Internet.

The networking of the centres and their equipment with the central IT services of the regional government allows for the central management of the provision of maintenance services (e.g. software updates, patches etc.) and first level customer services on request, as well as the secure access and identity management of users (upon registration, they are expected to complete a personal profile and are given a login and password).

In September 2006 Guadalinfo had over 195,000 registered users, corresponding to 11.3% of the population living in the smaller municipalities (above 1.7 million), thus almost reaching the initial target of 12% of the population as customers, set for the Guadalinfo centres. In March 2008, Guadalinfo users were 365,126, i.e. over 20% of the resident population. The chart below highlights the progression of Guadalinfo registrations over the first year of operation of the 271 new centres opened in 2006.



Measuring usage and users

The management of the Guadalinfo network and access procedures makes it possible to produce many statistics about users and use practices. Besides data produced automatically from logging into the network and those provided when completing the personal profile upon registration, *dinamizadores* also periodically provide monitoring information on the activities carried out by the centres (e.g. training courses, number of participants etc.) and are expected to integrate aspects of user information which cannot be dealt with in the registration process, e.g. the disabilities suffered by certain users, immigrants' status and so on. In practice, this data gathering system on activities and users is still being fine-tuned and produces reliable statistics only on some aspects.

Reasons for success

As the above figures show, Guadalinfo centres have been in general very successful at becoming a reference and meeting point for different members of the local community (students after school day, housewives, and older people involved in the Grandfather's day activities and beyond). A key ingredient for this has been the framing of digital literacy and other ICT-related activities within broader animation and facilitation actions, which in turn has been crucially achieved thanks to the presence and social orientation, rather than a strictly technical profile, of the so called *dinamizadores*.

The role of this figure which is common also to other networks of public internet centres in Spain (in particular, the New Centres of Knowledge in Extremadura and the XTC/OMNIA points in Catalonia) has been defined as that of dynamizing a centre's activities through their promotion inside and outside the centre; by helping users to learn, providing assistance on request and favouring active user involvement and socialisation (collaborative learning even through virtual means); by promoting digital literacy through a full immersion process (Suturing the Digital Gash, 2007). As confirmed in the interviews at Consejería de Innovación, when dealing with new users, emphasis is put on use opportunities rather than technology as such, e.g. learning to prepare a CV for a job search by using a word processor or to manage one's accounting needs by using a spreadsheet and so on.

Another key factor has been the flexibility in adapting each Guadalinfo centre, including in terms of technical infrastructure (e.g. tools for specific disabilities), to local conditions and the composition and needs of its local customers. For instance, *dinamizadores* in Andalusia have been found "oriented to deal with intercultural issues, due to the fact that there are so many migrants now residing in the region" (ibidem, p. 53)

A third important success factor has been the enrichment of the services offered by the Guadalinfo centres, beyond the provision of broadband access and digital literacy support, for instance: the promotion of open source software among ICT users, the promotion of eGovernment services, the support of innovative micro-enterprises and others.

Services offered in partnership with other public organisations

The Guadalinfo portal today offers a number of services to its users and the centres have become an important channel for reaching the populations in rural areas and in socially disadvantaged locations by all kinds of ICT-related or public sector enabled initiatives launched by the regional government –many of them from the new information society plan known as *Plan ASI 2007-2010*-, but also by the national government.

For instance, the Guadalinfo centres have hosted training sessions of the *Movil cerca de ti* (Mobile next to you) campaign, launched in 2006 by Consejería de Innovación in collaboration with the regional Ministry for Equality and Social well-being and Vodafone, to teach elderly people how to make a better use of their mobile phones, in a friendly learning environment. Over 16,000 people of 65 years or older were trained as part of this campaign between 2006 and 2008.

Another example is the collaboration signed between Consejería de Innovación and the Andalusian Institute for Women to promote the use of ICT among women living in rural areas, as well as the networking of rural women associations operating in Andalusia. Between 2006 and 2007, almost 3,500 women belonging to approximately 200 different associations attended ICT training courses in Guadalinfo centres and many of them have since kept in touch with one- another thanks to a specific virtual community created inside the Guadalinfo portal.

New developments in the Andalusian PIAP network

CAPIs in deprived urban areas

Having completed the establishment of the Guadalinfo centres in the small municipalities a similar, complementary process was started in 2006-07 with the creation of CAPIs (Centros de Acceso Público a Internet, public internet access points in English) in the disadvantaged areas of the capital city Sevilla and other major urban areas (so called ZNTS, zones needing social transformation). Beyond providing ICT access and literacy, the main goal of these CAPI is to promote social inclusion and fight exclusion, given the high concentration in these areas of 'at risk' groups such as immigrants, drug addicts and Roma people. For this reason, local associations working in the concerned neighbourhoods have been involved both in hosting the centres' activities and in the selection of the *dinamizadores*.

By the end of 2008, 42 CAPIs are expected to be up and running in as many disadvantaged areas across Andalusia; more might be established later on, depending on perceived needs. The management and user access systems of CAPIs are the same as Guadalinfo.

The CAPI initiative is part of the *Plan ASI 2007-2010* and has been funded with approximately 2.3 MEuro from the national Plan Avanza (60%) and the regional government (40%). The initiative is jointly promoted by Consejería de Innovación and the regional Ministry for equality and social well being (Consejería para la Igualdad y Bienestar Social).

PORTICO

Having succeeded in helping local users experience the benefits of broadband internet connectivity in the Guadalinfo centres, a new initiative has been launched to extend the reach of (mobile) connectivity services beyond the walls of the centres themselves, so that people can experience them also in their private life.

Portico's goal is to make broadband mobile services available to at least 80% of the population living in all the 637 small municipalities with a Guadalinfo centre, at a cost comparable to that of connectivity in urban areas (30-35 Euro per month³⁸). A competition to identify a service provider who could meet such criteria was thus launched in 2007 by Consejería de Innovación and in March 2008 Vodafone was selected as the winner of the contract for the years 2008-2009. The annual value of the contract is 15 Meuro.

³⁸ This price is of course subject to quantitative limitations on downloads. This was accepted given that the administration is willing to subsidize the cost of private connectivity for accessing eGovernment and other useful online services, but not the free download/exchange of digital content for entertainment (music, films etc.).

The initiative is planned in two phases: the first one will cover 60% of all municipalities by November 2008; the second phase should reach 100% coverage by the end of 2009. At this stage, Andalusia will have one of the densest networks providing mobile connectivity on such a large geographic scale. Given the low population density in most of the region, the actual bandwidth available to individual users is likely to be higher than in urban areas.

Thanks to Portico, all Guadalinfo centres will be able to enrich their activities with demonstrations, courses, information days etc. carried out in nearby locations and in the open space ("showing that also the square of the village is connected to the internet"). For this purpose, in the renovation of existing centres and in the new centres, mostly portable computers will be made available, rather than desktop PCs on fixed lines.