



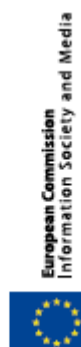
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ePractice and eInclusion

Sharing of eInclusion good practices

15 November 2008

*A special report prepared for the eInclusion Ministerial Conference
30 November - 2 December 2008, Vienna, Austria*



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I. Introduction

eInclusion...

eInclusion ('e' standing for electronic) aims to prevent social and economic exclusion, especially of already disadvantaged people, due to divergences in knowledge and use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), notably internet-allowed services. eInclusion also means tapping new 'digital opportunities' for the participation of less-favored people and areas.

The fact that more than 40% of the European population still makes little or no use of the internet and other ICT is becoming an increasing obstacle to well-being and progress for individuals and society as a whole. For this reason, many initiatives to fight digital exclusion are taking place all around Europe, from local to national level, with a significant involvement of civil society organizations, along with public administrations, private companies and others. More than 30 European States have agreed through the Riga declaration on six major areas for action.

In 2008 a broad campaign "eInclusion: Be part of it!" promoted by the European Commission aims at accelerating progress in the priorities of the Riga Declaration and other possible issues relating to eInclusion, overcoming fragmentation of efforts and insufficient awareness.¹

...and ePractice

ePractice.eu is the one stop place for the exchange of advice, experiences and events on practices of eGovernment, eHealth and eInclusion, offering the most complete information and exchange opportunities for these areas in Europe. Real life cases, insight and lessons learnt are shared.

Thus, ePractice.eu represents a real bridge between these communities, as there is a high potential of interesting lessons to be learnt on all sides. There is a growing presence of eInclusion practical cases in the portal, and our aim is to contribute to the eInclusion community actively.

ePractice.eu has been instrumental to the European Commission's eInclusion initiative from the very beginning. To celebrate the important occasion of the eInclusion Ministerial Conference this report presents the current state-of-art of eInclusion at ePractice.eu providing an insight into a relevant statistical data and highlighted items such as cases and workshops.

The report provides a snapshot and illustrations of the activities and the outputs associated with the ePractice initiative. It is set out as follows:

- **Section II** presents an overview of the ePractice portal and what it contains.
- **Section III** provides a summary of the ePractice 'cases' that constitute an 'evolving knowledge base' for sharing experiences and good practices in the field, together with some illustrations of cases.
- **Section IV** covers the ePractice workshops that are held regularly to further promote collaboration and knowledge sharing between members of the ePractice community. It provides summary reports of the main workshops that have been held.
- **Section V** introduces the 'European Journal of ePractice' which is sponsored by the European Commission as part of its good practice exchange activity.

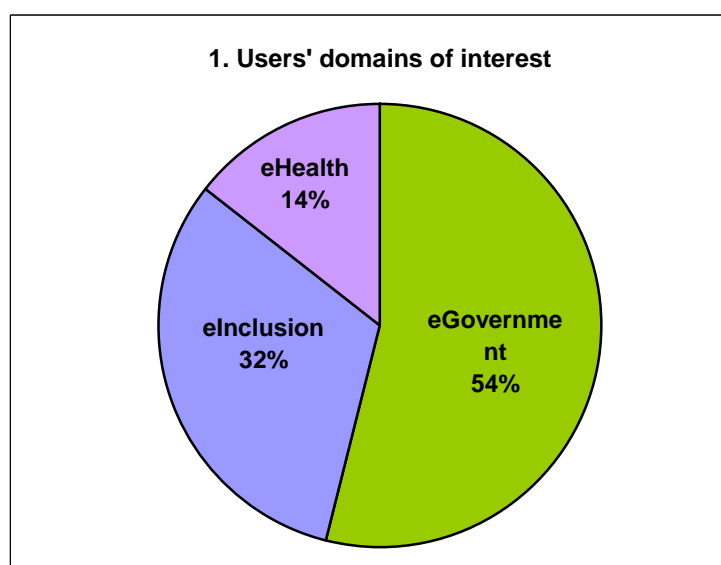
¹ http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/einclusion/bepartofit/index_en.htm

II. eInclusion at ePractice.eu

Currently the eInclusion domain is one of the three on the ePractice.eu portal; the other two domains are eGovernment and eHealth. In the following table can be seen the number of the members and published items in the eInclusion domain.

Items in the eInclusion domain (Sept 2008)	Nº	% of total
Users	230	6.7% (out of indexed users)
Cases	255	26.3%
News	87	2.9%
Events	16 / 87 ²	21.6%
Library items	86	10.5%
TV	5	7.2%

According to a user survey³ 32% of the users belong to the eInclusion domain. The difference to the actual situation may be explained by the fact that the portal allows members to select only one domain of interest, while in the user survey it was possible to select multiple domains.



The **i2010 eInclusion Subgroup National Reports** are downloadable at the portal.⁴ These National Reports are aimed at assessing the status and exchanging practices of eInclusion policy approaches across the diversified European context. Currently 27 country specific reports are available. The reports provide information in the following sections:

- Country Profile: Information Society Indicators
- eInclusion History
- eInclusion Strategy
- eInclusion Legal Framework
- Research in Practice
- eInclusion Actors
- eInclusion Who is Who

² 16 = forthcoming eInclusion events; 87 = total number of published events in the eInclusion domain

³ The user survey was carried out from February until July 2008 with 268 replies in total. The user contributions were collected in paper and by an online form.

⁴ http://www.epractice.eu/files/download/i2010_eInclusion_Reports.pdf

- eInclusion Progress by Riga Areas (ICT & Ageing; Geographic digital divide; e-Accessibility; Digital Literacy and Competences; eInclusion and Cultural Diversity; Inclusive eGovernment)
- Challenges

The ePractice.eu also hosts an array of different **communities** which gather members with common interests, offering messaging, blogging, calendar and document sharing tools as well as networking opportunities. Communities are open and help ePractice.eu users to connect even better with other peers to share knowledge and news. There are currently two communities centred in inclusion: "Inclusive eGovernment Forum" and "Cities working on eInclusion".

Inclusive eGovernment Forum

URL: <http://www.epractice.eu/community/InclusiveeGovernment>

Members: 10

Facilitator: Rasa Juciute

The main aim of the Community is to initiate discussions, raise questions and search for solutions concerning new ways in which public services can be delivered so that they contribute towards building and maintaining more inclusive societies. The Community is initiated by the research study 'MC-eGov: Study on Multi-channel Delivery Strategies and Sustainable Business Models for Public Services Addressing Socially Disadvantaged Groups' commissioned by the EC.

Cities working on eInclusion

URL: <http://www.epractice.eu/community/eInclusion>

Members: 29

Facilitators: Maurice Paulissen and Marten Buschman

This community is linked to the EUROCITIES Knowledge Society Forum, a network with more than 130 cities in over 30 European counties working together with private business and other actors on the development of an inclusive knowledge society. The community is intended to support the cooperation between practitioners working on the development of an inclusive Knowledge Society.

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Learn more about this community

Domain: eInclusion
 Topic: eAccessibility ICT and Ageing ICT and Marginalised youth ICT and community development Digital literacy and competences Broadband ICT and Cultural diversity Geographical eInclusion (public) e-services for disadvantaged people
 Tags: EUROCITIES, Bologna, Knowledge Society Forum, Telecities, Policy, eInclusion, ageing, eAccessibility
 Facilitators : Maurice Paulissen Marten Buschman

Highlighted Workshops View All (8)

Date: 13 November 2008 | 35 Participants

eInclusion, immigrant and ethnic minority groups

Latest Blog Posts View All (0)
 There are no blog posts in this community.

Highlighted News View All (1)

Subscribe to the community RSS feed.

Join this community

Latest Members to join

Massimo Zancanaro, Popescu Beatrice, Jose Angel Martinez Usero, Gustavo Julio Garcia, Kolbrun Karlsdottir, Christophe Strobbe

Most Popular Tags
 knowledge municipal eInclusion eAccessibility eProcurement ICT Italy

Picture of the "Cities working on eInclusion" Community

III. eInclusion cases

The ePractice.eu portal contains currently over 260 eInclusion cases of total 1000 cases (30 October 2008).

The ePractice.eu cases⁵ are written summaries of real-life eGovernment, eHealth and eInclusion projects or business solutions developed by public administrations, entrepreneurs and corporations. Case studies included in the portal are based on actual experiences, and reading them provides a picture of the challenges and dilemmas faced by the professionals working in the new ePractice domains.

In the following we present 10 eInclusion cases that have been valued by the editorial team and/or external experts. The 10 cases have either received a Good Practice or Best Practice label or they have been selected as Editor's Choice. The cases awarded in the European eGovernment and eInclusion Awards and cases presented at the ePractice.eu workshops receive the best practice label. Other exceptional cases, such as the European Awards finalists or national awards scheme winners, are awarded with a good practice label. In order to be selected as Editor's Choice the cases must show originality and different insights, providing good examples through complete and actual information.

The full descriptions are available at ePractice.eu at the link indicated. The cases and their merit are as follows:

- The National Bank of Poland Economics Education Portal *Editor's Choice 2007*
- The Pocket Interpreter *Editor's Choice 2007*
- Sámi Network Connectivity *Editor's Choice 2008*
- Carta-IN, A credit card to combat youth unemployment through eLearning *Editor's Choice 2008*
- RoboBraille – automated translation of documents into Braille and speech *Editor's Choice 2008*
- The Danish digital library service for the blind *Good Practice Label 2007*
- e@SY Connects – Transformational Petitioning *Best Practice and Good Practice Labels 2007*
- UK online centres & myguide *Good Practice Label 2007*
- PloneGov *Good Practice Label 2007*
- Besancon.clic *Best Practice Label 2007*

The National Bank of Poland Economics Education Portal

Acronym of the case: NBPortal

Country of the case: Poland

URL: <http://www.epractice.eu/cases/nbportal>

Case abstract

The National Bank of Poland Economics Education Portal was launched in 2003 to disseminate and broaden the knowledge about economics and economy, and to support other educational activities of the NBP. Access to the resources of the portal is free, and they include information on current developments in the Polish economy, macroeconomic analyses and expert assessments, multimedia e-learning courses, teaching aids, decision quizzes and games related to the subject of economics, as well as a virtual library including electronic versions of scientific publications and a dictionary of economic terms.

⁵ www.epractice.eu/cases

Lessons learnt

- Lesson 1. The most relevant learning point is that our portal proved that there is a handful of citizen who follow with great attention the processes taking place in economy. Moreover they want to understand the impact on their private lives of the various macroeconomic processes taking place in Poland and in the EU. However, people need a reliable source of information and education, both professional and comprehensive for the average citizen.
- Lesson 2. The second point is that people are using IT and internet solutions in the process of searching for and gathering information and education.
- Lesson 3. Every education initiative must include evaluation mechanisms. This is very difficult when it comes to e-learning. However our team of tutors has paid great attention to the process of controlling our users study path. On the other hand it is even more difficult to measure the impact of this education process on the overall state of the economy, yet it surely must be done since not doing it at all could be followed by negative consequences on the marco and microeconomic level.

The Pocket Interpreter

Acronym of the case: TPI

Country of the case: Sweden

URL: <http://www.epractice.eu/cases/pocketinterpreter>

Case Abstract

The Pocket Interpreter is a part of the video relay service in Sweden. It is a national communication service that makes it possible for deaf people using sign language to communicate with hearing people. Either person can free of charge call the service which is manned by several sign language interpreters located in different studios geographically spread around Sweden. The users can get a relay phone call or a distance interpretation. In the latter case both users are in the same place and the interpreter is present via a videophone. A 3G-phone is frequently used for this.

Lessons learnt

- Lesson 1. The service has made a huge impact for the user group and has made it possible for sign users and hearing people to communicate in an easy accessible way.
- Lesson 2. The use of interpreters are much more efficient.
- Lesson 3. The solution can easily be adopted for other call centre operations. Medical, customs and police institutions in Sweden have all shown interest in the technical and operational solution used in the service.

Sámi Network Connectivity

Acronym of the case: SNC

Country of the case: Sweden

URL: <http://www.epractice.eu/cases/sametwork>

Case Abstract

The Sámi Network Connectivity (SNC) process began with a project for the promotion of gender equality and women's entrepreneurial capacities within the Sámi villages and reindeer husbandry. In key Sámi areas access is limited and unpredictable, as there is no wired infrastructure, only inconsistent wireless infrastructure and low telecom coverage; satellite coverage is expensive and intermittent. A solution has to address topographic circumstances (mountains), the fact that major areas are environmentally protected (which puts constraints on installing fixed infrastructure such as antenna towers and limits the availability of power sources), and the semi-nomadic nature of reindeer herding. It must also be accessible at an

affordable and maintainable cost. The SNC approach is based on Delay Tolerant Networks (DTN), realized by an Opportunistic Routing system using a mix of 802.11 hotspots and mobile relays. The basic premise is that, in a solution that includes a hybrid of the SNC realization of DTN and current Internet technologies, basic access to Internet communication services can be delivered to remote and nomadic communities. This is technically challenging as semi nomadism brings the notion of probability to the design.

Lessons learnt

- Lesson 1. For providing connectivity to the challenging settings and have-not populations it is not necessary to make variants on mainstream broadband solutions for urban areas and wealthy or highly subsidised users. Creative solutions are perhaps the better choice. SNC, for instance, combines a technology originally developed at NASA for space communications, with elements of an ad-hoc peer-to-peer solution which very advanced urban users originally developed to cut their networking costs.
- Lesson 2. Our experience is that the above in fact makes these challenging scenarios excellent venues for innovation, and cooperating with have-not user groups in addressing their genuine access needs a most worthwhile effort for advancement of the European technical level.
- Lesson 3. To achieve eInclusion in areas where standard solutions do not function, more research is the key issue. But this need to be combined with development of the citizen's competences, including that of local entrepreneurs and SME owners, so people can develop own applications and thus fully benefit from the Information Society.

Carta-IN, A credit card to combat youth unemployment through eLearning

Acronym of the case: Carta-IN

Country of the case: Italy

URL: <http://www.epractice.eu/cases/CartaIN>

Case Abstract

Italy's Campania region is still experiencing an unemployment rate much higher than other areas in Europe, especially among young people looking for a first job. The knowledge of ICT and of foreign languages is becoming increasingly important for employability, and the diffusion of such skills is still inadequate in the area. Regione Campania has therefore started the Carta-IN project, aimed at raising the prospects of employment. The project is based on a credit card aimed at people aged 18-24: the card can be used to acquire ICT hardware, software and services at special prices on credit, which will be paid back at favourable interest rates, and to acquire eLearning courses financed by public funds.

Lessons learnt

- Lesson 1. The response to the program was very slow in the first phase because a large group of young people didn't know eLearning and its advantages. The youth participating in the program has a high level of instruction and is looking for new opportunities of specialization. Therefore a high level of penetration of the program in a larger group must be viewed as a medium term objective.
- Lesson 2. The second recommendation is connected to the development of specific methodology to enhance quality in eLearning. The experience of our administration gives an idea about the level of concentration of the eLearning sector.

RoboBraille - automated translation of documents into Braille and speech

Acronym of the case: RoboBraille

Country of the case: Denmark, Pan European

URL: <http://www.epractice.eu/cases/robobraille>

Case Abstract

RoboBraille is an email-based service capable of translating electronic documents into either synthetic speech or contracted Braille. The service is available free of charge to all non-commercial users, and there is no need to register before using it. RoboBraille seeks to solve a universal problem – making otherwise inaccessible electronic documents accessible to people with visual or reading impairments.

Lessons learnt

- Lesson 1. The RoboBraille does make a difference for people with reading difficulties such as the blind, partially sighted, dyslexic and peer readers.
- Lesson 2. Although the value and potential of the RoboBraille service is significant in Europe and the rest of the developed world, the potential of a centralised, easy-to-use translation service is even bigger in the developing world where illiteracy is an important issue.
- Lesson 3. It will take at least 3-5 years until the RoboBraille service is financially sustainable and not relying on public grants.

The Danish digital library service for the blind

Acronym of the case: DLS

Country of the case: Denmark

URL: <http://www.epractice.eu/cases/dls>

Case Abstract

The Danish National Library for The Blind (DBB) provides a digital library service for the visually impaired and dyslexic in the form of eBooks, digital talking books (DTB) and Braille materials. The process from when library users order material via the E17 Internet portal to the production of the media (CD or Braille paper - eBooks are downloaded instantly) is fully automated and the material arrives at the designated address within a day or two. This 24/7 service allows for the speedy delivery of library material that enables users equal access to information and, hence, social inclusion.

Lessons learnt

- Lesson 1. A governmental institution responsible for an apparent niche production can develop bleeding edge technology and support solutions to provide a superior library service for people who are dependent on special access to information.
- Lesson 2. The attainment of a digital mindset brings about a full rethinking of the organisational processes and to a concomitant restructuring of the government appointed task. E.g., conventional circulation of library materials does not make sense when the material is an e-book. This is achieved by effectuating a change in legislation and collaborating with copyright holders. The material can then be distributed instead of circulated, in return the DBB complies with the demands of the copyright holders by implementing a unique technology that allows for the insertion of watermarks into speech audio files.
- Lesson 3. Technology supported innovation provided the necessary scalability of services that enabled the inclusion of dyslexic people in the DBB user group, ensuring equal access to information for these people. This inclusion also means a manyfold increase in the number of potential users at the DBB. Servicing this number of users would have

demanded radical rise of the budget in the analogue era, where now it is within reach for a moderate extra investment.

e@SY Connects - Transformational Petitioning

Acronym of the case: e@SYConnects

Country of the case: United Kingdom

URL: <http://www.epractice.eu/cases/easy>

Case Abstract

e@SY Connects delivers true citizen and business-centric services whilst simultaneously reducing the demand on providers of the service (a partnership of public, private and voluntary sector providers) - a true win-win scenario. e@SY has now taken a previously recognised European award petitioning system to another level by making it more accessible for all, regardless of socio-economic group or computing skills, through the delivery of the enhanced service over a wide range of access channels (Internet, digital interactive television, mobile telephones, kiosks, gaming stations, etc.) with a new generic replicable interface, used in the UK as well as in Europe.

Lessons learnt

- Lesson 1. No matter how comprehensive and intuitive the solution/service may be then it has still to be marketed - traditional techniques are fine (but often expensive) but there are other very effective ways to get the message out there and take-up assured. For example the use of intermediaries are so often over-looked.
- Lesson 2. The desire to involve and empower the citizen, in whatever guise, is seen across Europe as a way to improve ownership and in the end provide better and used services.
- Lesson 3. Working across Europe has not only assisted in developing this module within the e@SY Connects service catalogue and its partners, it has in fact open many other avenues to work on a wide range of essential elements, user authentication and authorisation being an example, with colleagues across Europe who bring interesting experiences, views and skills to any new development.

UK online centres & myguide

Acronym of the case: UKOLM

Country of the case: United Kingdom

URL: <http://www.epractice.eu/cases/ukolm>

Case Abstract

The 6,000-strong network of UK Online Centres is a unique public asset in England, and could be a model for other EU states and regions. UK online centres support communities and regions in economic development and regeneration and provide outreach to the socially excluded providing them with support and skills that build independence. The network improves lives and life chances by opening up ICT skills, the internet and online government services to people who are not online at home or at work or who need support in using computers. The network provides community ICT access to close the 'digital divide'.

Lessons learnt

- Lesson 1. The power of community-based solutions and sense of ownership is critical to the sustainability of the network. The Voluntary and Community centres have an entrepreneurial spark that differentiates them from the Local Authority Library or Education sector centres. It is a powerful example of the benefit of trust in the capacity of the third sector to deliver a sustainable service. However it is only when that network encompasses

the diversity of Local Authority, Education and Third Sector that it can become truly inclusive.

- Lesson 2. The importance of central facilitation, support and knowledge transfer is essential to the coherence and impact of the network. Recognition of the significant role that centres play in building social justice is only possible because the network has been systematically managed and resourced. Ongoing management and resource is critical to the scale of impact of the initiative.
- Lesson 3. Ultimately, assuming that groups like older or disabled people can be full 'e-citizens', benefiting and contributing to society both online and in their communities, is crucial to the realisation of transformational benefits. The impact on citizens is only beneficial to them, their communities and the state if they are helped across the two main barriers to ICT; fear and confidence.

PloneGov

Acronym of the case: PloneGov

Country of the case: Pan European, North America, Central and South America, Africa

URL: <http://www.epractice.eu/cases/plonegov>

Case Abstract

More than 75 Belgian, French, Spanish and Swiss cities and regions participate in the CommunesPlone project, renamed PloneGov on 1 June 2007. In doing so, they aim to gain independence from IT service providers by developing, essentially by themselves and in a cooperative manner, applications and websites for their own use as well as for their citizens. The PloneGov strategy relies primarily on open source tools: Zope and Plone. The expected benefits of PloneGov include the enhancement of the consistency of applications in relation to user needs, the promotion of collaborative websites, the use of the most recent technologies while avoiding licence fees, and the guaranteed publication of sources with GPL.

Lessons learnt

- Lesson 1. Benefits of a close collaboration between public sector, OS community and SME. Plonegov is the base of the development of an innovative economic ecosystem including several actors as local governments, SME and an open source community. Together with SME, the community assumes part of the initial investment in term of free promotion, community events to build up confidence, coaching, transfer of knowledge, etc. Local governments on their part open a new, potentially important market to SME.
- Lesson 2. A good knowledge of existing solutions avoids the duplication of efforts. By pooling efforts, the technical coordination enables a better use of resources; reduce costs and speeds up results. The potential to attract new towns is big because over 100,000 EU towns and regions nearly all have the same needs.
- Lesson 3. The difficulty to develop an innovative approach within the public sector. The open source software model of development is new and often misunderstood. A risk would be to under evaluate the work required to sustain and manage a growing mutualisation project. Some activities as coordination, information, training, etc. should ideally be taken in charge by a central body. A bottom-up project may raise concerns within the traditional top-down administrative structure.

Besancon.clic

Acronym of the case: Besac.clic

Country of the case: France

URL: <http://www.epractice.eu/cases/besaclic>

Case Abstract

Since 1999, the city of Besançon and the Greater Besançon Community have been reducing the digital gap by financing IT equipment for primary schools in Besançon and the Greater Besançon Area, primary schools and hospitals, associations, retirement homes and, since 2006, some schools in Senegal, through the distribution of an eBook pack to all of the pupils in the CE2 class (third year of primary school), comprising a computer with a digital workspace and the installation of public multimedia access points in every neighbourhood. The computers were donated by firms and rebuilt in a centre for disabled workers.

Lessons learnt

- Lesson 1. Besançon.clic encourages the mastery of I.T. tools by a whole generation of young people and more largely also takes into account the training of their parents who are thus more able to oversee their children's learning. Above and beyond this, Besançon.clic facilitates this apprenticeship through the use of public multimedia access points, associations, retirement homes, etc.
- Lesson 2. Besançon.clic is part of a virtuous circle, the guarantee of the usefulness of the project and the possibility of putting into place other projects like it: the partnership between the private and the state sectors, the promoting of the work of handicapped people, respecting the environment through the recycling and extending the useful life of the equipment concerned, developing the economy (attracting families to I.T. equipment and associated products, internet connections...)
- Lesson 3. Besançon.clic is a project that can be put into place elsewhere without the need for large investments: this has been proven by "Seneclic".

IV. eInclusion workshops

The ePractice.eu Workshops are being held regularly, reflecting current topics and offering a platform on which participants will be able to discuss the latest issues and cases face-to-face. The cycle of workshops includes several ones specialised in various topics of eInclusion.

The eInclusion workshops are:

- The users' voice, Brussels, 21 February 2008
- Ageing well in the Knowledge Society, Brussels, 14 April 2008
- Digital literacy, El Prat de Llobregat (Barcelona), 16 June 2008
- People with disabilities, Brussels, 25 September 2008
- eInclusion of immigrants and ethnic minorities, Brussels, 13 November 2008

Below is offered information of each of the organised workshop.

The users' voice

Brussels, Belgium

Date: 21 February 2008

Participants: 45

URL: <http://www.epractice.eu/workshop/usersvoice>

Summary

Although significant progress is being made towards realizing the objective of an 'inclusive knowledge society' – through the 'Riga Ministerial Declaration; the 'eInclusion: be part of it' initiative, and the Ministerial Conference on eInclusion in Lisbon - there is still a significant proportion of EU citizens – over 40% - who are not actively engaged in using ICTs. The reasons for this are complex, encompassing factors such as lack of access; cost; cultural and family circumstances and lack of motivation. Against this background, there is a view that industry and government simply don't listen to the user view – or the 'untapped' user view - enough. There is a prevailing argument that so-called 'Web 2.0' technologies will change this situation. Social networking technologies make culture less monolithic and more diverse, allowing the 'user voice' to be heard, and allowing an unprecedented role for the 'consumer voice'. However, there is also evidence to suggest that significant numbers of people remain at the margins of the 'knowledge society' – not least because the complexity and diversity of their lives, and their roles in a 'technologically rich' society, remain poorly understood. This workshop explored these and other issues that lie at the heart of engaging users in the evolving knowledge society. Three themes were covered by the workshop:

Theme 1: Articulating the voice of the vulnerable – focused on how to represent the interests and needs of vulnerable people and those on the margins in developing and delivering eInclusion policy and practice.

Theme 2: Putting the 'participation' in partnerships - focused on the industry perspective, and how, for example, new kinds of partnerships involving telecoms and software companies are developing innovations aimed at allowing citizens more say in how welfare budgets are spent.

Theme 3: User-driven technologies for eInclusion - focused on the potential of emerging technologies to enlarge the representation and engagement of more citizens and user groups in building the knowledge society, including how community-based projects are providing opportunities to engage citizens in developing social capital.

These 'integrating themes' were touched on both in the keynote speech and case presentations, and in the ensuing parallel working sessions that explored the issues raised by the cases.

Following a welcome and introduction by Baudouin de Sonis, Dr Paul Timmers, Head of Unit H3, DG Information Society, ICT for Inclusion outlined some of the key policy agendas and Commission initiatives within the current 'eInclusion: be part of it' initiative that are relevant to the workshop themes, and introduced some of the key issues – including the need for new financial and partnership models capable of delivering large scale public sector eInclusion programmes. The keynote speech, delivered by Dr John Boyle, Managing Director of Oxford Computer Consultants, presented a new platform for social care being piloted by the UK Government, called 'InControl'. The success of this will rely heavily on creating the conditions in which citizens are empowered to actively take part in shaping decisions that affect their social and health care. Three additional case study presentations provided further insights into the complex factors affecting how the 'user voice' can be articulated in the Knowledge Society. Dr Helen McQuillan, of the Dublin Institute of Technology, presented the 'Digital Communities Project' – a joint initiative of Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) and Hewlett Packard, who with government and private sector partners, provide community ICT centres in some of the most deprived areas of the city. This was complemented by Mrs Else Kuiper's case on 'Web in the Neighbourhood'. (WiN) is an initiative launched in 2002, which employs trained professionals ("animators") to assist inhabitants of a neighbourhood to use ICT strategically in their everyday lives. It enables people to experience the potential benefits ICT can add to the "daily business", including fun: communicating with others nearby. In contrast, the third presentation, by Antoine Bidegain, of the French 'agence publique', 'Numerique 64', showed how a small scale, low-cost innovation, using MP3 players, could be used to reduce the educational isolation of young people suffering from dyslexia.

The subsequent parallel working session, based on the three cases, and reflecting the three workshop themes, explored the key issues raised by the keynote speeches and case presentations. In particular, the three working groups were tasked with identifying, elaborating and finding solutions to the eInclusion challenges raised by the workshop presentations, within the context of the over-arching 'user voice' theme.

Workshop conclusions

- It confirmed the need for inclusion policies aimed at representing the user voice to broaden beyond a narrow horizon of 'consumerism'. On the one hand, this implies a more 'holistic' conceptualisation of who the user is, taking into account the active engagement of citizens in public services delivery, for example. On the other, it reinforces an increasing call for more effort to engage those at the outer margins of society – the dispossessed; the socially and economically marginalised and the vulnerable.
- In searching for ways of engaging the 'hard to reach', the workshop noted that promising results are beginning to be realised, through initiatives like the Digital Communities Programme and Web in the Neighbourhood, through the use of 'intermediaries' and 'peer mentors' that act as a credible and trustworthy bridge between the community and the 'outside'. This in turn highlighted the claims for the 'non-user voice' to be included in initiatives like 'be part of it'.
- More sophisticated organisational, institutional and socio-cultural frameworks and models are required to support technological innovation. The example of the use of MP3 players to address problems faced by dyslexics in schools is a good example of an innovative 'low cost' financial model, supported by an innovative 'peer-led' organisational framework. At the other end of the scale, the 'InControl' case is an example of substantial financial investment in user-led inclusive technologies. Yet, like

the MP3 example, it cannot work without an innovative social, cultural and organisational support environment.

- The cases show that conventional formats are to some extent failing to serve several social groups. In response, technology is beginning to enable a range of new channels as suitable means to remove barriers in education and other social activity. In particular, bottom-up approaches that build on local community ties, programmes tailored to serve their target groups and the innovating use of existing technology were key messages communicated during the workshop.
- The workshop demonstrated and endorsed the continuing need for and value of good practice exchange. The European Commission's fundamental role in building a platform for stakeholders to exchange opinions and influence policy. was acknowledged. However, the workshop also drew attention to the continuing problems faced in motivating people to join and contribute to 'communities of practice' – particularly those from outside practitioner and academic circles. A number of possible ways of addressing this problem, for example awards and certificates, were mentioned

The full report of the workshop is available at:

<http://www.epractice.eu/files/upload/workshop/1618-1205313511.pdf>

Ageing well in the Knowledge Society

Brussels, Belgium

Date: 14 April 2008

Participants: 50

URL: <http://www.epractice.eu/workshop/Ageingwell>

Summary

The 'Ageing Well' workshop took place against a background of a number of issues and concerns around 'ageing'. These include:

- increasing pressures on health and welfare budgets
- the 'pensions crisis'
- labour market skills shortages, and ways of engaging the skills of retired workers
- the significant, and potentially untapped, consumer power of older people

By 2050 the share of the above 60 age-group will be around 37% in Europe. By 2030 the working age population could be reduced to 280 million for the EU (compared with the current 303 million). Based on present trends, the EU working age population will fall by approximately 40 million people from 2000 to 2050 and the old age dependency ratio in the EU will double from 24% to 49%. An increasingly older population, it is argued, creates considerable pressure on pensions and threatens their sustainability. Experts argue that the pension systems will face financing problems as early as 2010. Similar concerns are raised around pressures on health and welfare resources. Currently the cost of healthcare in the EU is around 9% of GDP. It is estimated to reach 16% of GDP by 2020. The potential for ICTs to help alleviate these pressures and reduce prevailing concerns has long been recognized. For example it is argued that innovative solutions are emerging that are helping to counteract conditions related to memory, vision, hearing, and mobility, helping older people to live independently for longer and overcoming social isolation by staying in touch with family and friends. This too contributes to their overall well-being. In turn, e-learning and e-skills programmes – including 'inter-generational learning' approaches – can have a beneficial impact on involving older people more actively in the knowledge society and in addressing skills gaps.

In response to these dynamics, and concerns, a range of important policy initiatives have evolved, focusing on things like employment, health and lifelong learning, and, more recently,

on inclusion. More recent initiatives have focused explicitly on the role of ICTs in supporting 'active ageing', notably the Commission's Action Plan on "Ageing well in the Information Society" and the new Ambient Assisted Living (AAL) programme, partially funded by the EU's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7), under Article 169 of the EU treaty. However, not everyone agrees with current policy agendas or with the role attributed to ICTs. For example, the European Parliament, reviewing proposals for the new Ambient Assisted Living (AAL) programme, has raised concerns about cost effectiveness and respect of privacy. Other voices have expressed doubts over the underlying ethos of EU policy on active ageing. For example Dede Kasneci (2007) argues that the general weakness of the EU 'active ageing' policy is that 'ageing' is approached only as a challenge. EU policies, it is suggested, make older workers a special group for whom special solutions need to be proposed. This contributes to stigmatizing them and reinforces existing attitudes and negative perceptions towards older people. Against this background, the ePractice workshop 'Ageing well in the Knowledge Society' covered three themes:

Theme 1 - Independent Living: This reviewed current state of the art in ambient assisted living, for example developments in 'smart home' technologies and similar initiatives aimed at helping older people to live independently for longer and aimed at supporting a more active social life for older people. It will include examples of innovative research and technology development funded under recent EU 'Framework' programmes.

Theme 2 - Jobs for the old boys: This theme explored the role ICTs are playing in supporting older people to learn new skills, to apply their existing skills to new employment challenges and to help older people play a more active economic role in the knowledge society, against the policy backdrop of the renewed 'Lisbon agenda'.

Theme 3 - The economics of ageing well: This theme focused on the economic aspects of ageing well. On the one hand, it will consider emerging new 'technological supply chains' associated with new developments like independent living. On the other hand, it will explore broader issues associated with the changing economic position of older people within the knowledge economy, with particular reference to debates around whether policy on active ageing is too 'dependency focused'.

Workshop conclusions

- Issues around 'ageing' bring into the spotlight a number of cross-cutting themes that bring together different strands of eInclusion, including health, employment, digital literacy and e-government. This reflects the need to bring inter-disciplinary and integrated policy thinking to bear with regard to the ICT needs of older people.
- Telehealth and tele-monitoring tools and services are beginning to have a significant impact on supporting older people who have health and disability problems. However, such services require a holistic and integrated approach that involves a range of different stakeholders and providers – for example ambulance, health and social services – and there is a need for better cross-boundary working between different agencies.
- To some extent insufficient attention has been devoted to the 'positive' aspects of ageing – notably the skills that older people can bring to support social and economic agendas like the renewed Lisbon goals. This is why the 'active ageing' agenda needs to be supported.
- Against this background, inter-generational learning is increasingly being seen as important within the context of increasing e-accessibility and promoting digital literacy.

- The main barriers to the more extensive and more active engagement of older people within the 'Knowledge Society' include: low confidence and motivation; the lack of appropriate user interfaces; lack of funding and making the 'business case' for assistive technologies.

The full report of the workshop is available at:

<http://www.epractice.eu/files/upload/workshop/13771-1213093237.pdf>

Digital literacy

El Prat de Llobregat (Barcelona), Spain

Date: 16 June 2008

Participants: 42

URL: <http://www.epractice.eu/workshop/digitalliteracy>

Summary

This ePractice workshop took place against a background of intensified effort by European institutions and member states to address issues around digital literacy and e-competences. A key element of the 'Riga Ministerial Declaration' approved in June 2006 involved setting agendas and targets to reduce by half gaps between the EU average population and certain groups at risk of exclusion due to factors like accessibility and lack of skills. In particular the Riga Declaration highlighted not only the fact that a significant proportion – some 41% of citizens - were below the minimum digital literacy level but also the fact that certain groups showed much lower than average levels of literacy, notably people older than 65 (only 17% digitally literate), economically inactive (27% digitally literate), and people with low education (35% digitally literate). Initiatives set up to support these policy agendas on digital literacy have involved both the public sector – for example the European Commission-backed European e-skills Forum – and the private sector – for example the eSkills Certification Consortium which promotes accredited training and certification in EU Member States. In turn, the Commission's adoption in late 2007 of the Communication "European i2010 initiative on eInclusion - to be part of the information society" is promoting awareness-raising and connecting actions, together with a strategic framework for action to implement the Riga Ministerial Declaration, that reflect a particular emphasis on tackling competences gaps. In line with the Riga Declaration, the Commission is also carrying out an EU-wide review on digital competences with advice from a Digital Literacy Expert Group, and will provide guidance on digital competences policy for vulnerable groups by the end of 2008.

This workshop therefore provided a timely opportunity to bring together policy-makers, experts and practitioners in the field of digital literacy in order to explore key issues and problems, share information and experiences and contribute to ongoing intellectual, policy and practice agendas. Three themes of particular relevance to digital literacy were selected to provide a platform for discussion:

- Content and delivery, focusing on questions like: which organization and institutional structures – for example telecentres; schools – best support different kinds of digital literacy needs and learning scenarios? what kinds of pedagogic models and approaches best support the different needs and scenarios? what kind of partnerships are necessary to support digital learning initiatives? how can e-competences be assessed and accredited?
- Usability and accessibility, focusing on questions like: how can technology design be effectively adapted to support different learning capacities? what kind of user involvement in technology design is desirable and how can it be supported? what cost-effective issues need to be considered?

- Motivation and sustainability, focusing on questions like: what motivational barriers are inhibiting the acquisition of e-competences for 'hard to reach' groups and how can they be overcome? what is the role of 'intermediaries' in reaching the 'hard to reach'? how can digital literacy connect with, and be supported by, initiatives in other 'e-sectors' like health, employment, lifelong learning and government e-services? how can communities of users be created and supported?

Workshop conclusions

- A wide variety of programmes and initiatives have developed within the EU over the past few years to support digital literacy. Their focus has evolved from an initial preoccupation with increasing accessibility to ICTs to more complex 'holistic' approaches that include integrated community services. However, most of the digital literacy programmes involve 'standard' computer courses providing training on things like keyboard skills and basic desktop software use.
- Many 'hard to reach' groups are reluctant to participate in training that improves their e-skills because of things like fear of failure, negative previous experiences of education and lack of motivation.
- Digital literacy programmes and initiatives need to be shaped by more carefully considered frameworks and models that avoid 'over homogenising' target groups and recognise the complex ways in which culture, context and personality shape digital literacy needs and learning outcomes. Digital literacy content needs to be adapted to suit the profiles, needs and lifeworlds of different user groups in different digital literacy scenarios. Content needs to be consistent with their daily lives and preoccupations.
- Cost is a major obstacle to realising digital literacy policy objectives like the Lisbon goals and the 'Riga Declaration'. One of the key financial problems encountered is training the trainers. Web 2.0 applications may offer opportunities to improve cost-effectiveness by creating spaces to enable more effective sharing of knowledge and skills. More broadly, there is a need to develop more innovative business models to fund digital literacy programmes, for example through tax incentives and levies on companies.

The full report of the workshop is available at:

<http://www.epractice.eu/files/upload/workshop/13771-1218202493.pdf>

People with disabilities

Brussels, Belgium

Date: 25 September 2008

Participants: 43

URL: <http://www.epractice.eu/workshop/specialneeds>

Summary

The growing ubiquity of ICTs has offered the potential to help reduce discrimination and promote more opportunities to engage people with disabilities more fully in economic, social and cultural life. Successive research and technology development programmes funded by the EU have channelled significant resources into realizing this potential, for example, through promoting the development and use of 'assistive technologies'. Underpinning these efforts has been a commitment to implementing a 'design for all' philosophy, reflecting successive EC communications like the "Towards a Barrier Free Europe for People with Disabilities" and the "Communication on eAccessibility" that highlighted the need for a 'Design-for-All' curriculum on ICT.

However, in common with other aspects of the policy landscape on eInclusion, reality has not fully met intentions and expectations. According to a report released by the UK EU presidency in 2005, the vast majority of public service websites in Europe were failing to meet international e-accessibility standards, and only 3% of public service websites were fully meeting the terms of the minimum accessibility requirements as stated by World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) guidelines. There is also evidence to suggest that many governments have 'watered down' their legislation and directives on e-accessibility. In turn, research, such as that undertaken by the Disability Rights Commission in the UK, has suggested that even those organisations that believe they have applied accessibility guidelines when designing their sites are not always producing websites that disabled people can use with sufficient degrees of success. These trends reflect a broader set of issues around the role of ICTs in supporting legislation and policies on disability that go beyond e-accessibility. Although most EU countries have Disability Discrimination Legislation that puts some pressure on employers to make assistive technologies and services available to employees with disabilities, the practical application of such instruments is fragmented and uneven compared with other countries.

This eInclusion workshop provided a platform to explore these and other issues of relevance to ICTs and disability. In keeping with the current debates, the workshop explored three themes:

- **e-accessibility: bridging the gap between policy and practice.** This focused on state of the art in current policy, legislation and standardization aimed at delivering 'design for all'. It considered to what extent key stakeholders such as public authorities and commercial enterprises have delivered on key policy agendas, and how they might do so more effectively in the future.
- **Designing for employability.** This theme covered issues around utilizing ICTs not only to support the more effective engagement of workers with disabilities in the workplace, but how new technologies can open up more labour market opportunities for people with disabilities.
- **Design for living.** This theme explored broader issues around 'disability, participation and community'. It will evaluate examples of good practices that aim to improve quality of life for people with disabilities; support their social, cultural and leisure activities and provide opportunities for developing community capacity. It considered in particular the opportunities provided by 'Web 2.0' and social networking applications to support participation.

Workshop conclusions

- Government needs to be perceived as leading by example, in order to promote awareness-raising and reduce negative attitudes. This should be underpinned by compliance with relevant legislation and standards in all aspects of government activity, particularly the procurement process.
- Government needs to support and motivate disabled people themselves to want to use ICTs rather than be forced to use them. However, this requires a combination of 'stick and carrot' – for example combining delivery of benefit funding through ICTs with providing incentives to train people with disabilities.
- Government needs to develop strategies to support the wider dissemination of low cost solutions, including solutions to overcome barriers around interoperability.
- Workers across the entire spectrum of commercial sectors that involve accessibility issues, including ICT design, development and manufacturing; e-government and similar occupational sectors – should have some degree of training, and accreditation, in accessibility, for example 'design for all'. This should be supported by the introduction of teaching on the subject within the school curriculum.

The full report of the workshop is available at:

<http://www.epractice.eu/files/upload/workshop/13771-1223653003.pdf>

Immigrant and Ethnic Minority Groups

Brussels, Belgium

Date: 13 November 2008

Participants: 43

URL: <http://www.epractice.eu/workshop/einclusionresults>

Summary

The Riga Declaration suggested that it is important to support greater participation by immigrants and ethnic minorities in the European information society, in order to improve their opportunities for economic and social participation and integration, creativity and entrepreneurship. Subsequent initiatives, like the European Commission's European i2010 initiative on eInclusion, which was adopted in November 2007, have re-iterated this position, asserting that immigrant users are as confronted by barriers in accessing services as other disadvantaged groups, due to lack of technical and language skills or due to digital technologies which are difficult to use. As part of the i2010 initiative, actions like the ICT Policy Support Programme - a thematic network on inclusion that examines the best use of ICT for social integration and diversity - the Seventh Framework Programme for Research to promote Accessible and Inclusive ICT, and the 'ICT for All' project all include provision to support immigrants, along with other excluded groups like older people, disabled people and the unemployed, in accessing digital technologies.

Against this background, however, the knowledge base on immigrant and ethnic minority use of ICTs is poorly developed, and also portrays different pictures. Although, as observed above, there is a prevailing view that immigrants and ethnic minorities face particular problems in accessing and using ICTs, this assertion is by no means supported by the evidence. For example, the 'SOCQUIT' project (Social Capital, Quality of Life and Information Society Technologies) found that there is no difference in the levels of Internet access between migrants and non-migrants in Europe. Indeed, a 'media literacy audit' just published in the UK by Ofcom (the independent regulator and competition authority for the UK communications industries) revealed that ethnic minority groups are at the forefront of digital communications in the UK, with high levels of mobile phone, internet and multichannel television take-up. However, the audit also concluded that many people from ethnic minority groups lack confidence finding content online and are concerned about content delivered on digital communications.

In short, the picture is complex. What is clear is that eInclusion policies tend to 'homogenise' immigrant and ethnic minorities as one single 'excluded' target group. In fact, there are significant differences in profiles, behaviour and needs both between and within immigrant communities and ethnic minorities. For example, newly-arrived migrants coming to the EU from 'external' countries have very different eInclusion needs - typically based around things like support on legal, administration and employment issues - than second or third generation members of established ethnic minority communities. In turn, factors like age, economic position and cultural background will further differentiate immigrant and ethnic minority experiences of eInclusion.

This e-practice workshop explored these and related issues in relation to three key themes:

- **Theme 1: Local community development and entrepreneurship.** This focused on how ICTs are being used to support challenges that are faced by some communities with regard to poor economic opportunities; low levels of digital literacy and e-skills and issues around social cohesion. It explored in particular how ICTs are being used to

develop individual and social capital and community capacity, and to support entrepreneurship.

- **Theme 2: Language and identity in a culturally diverse Europe.** Language is a complex and contested issue in eInclusion. On the one hand, ICTs are being deployed to promote 'multi-lingualism' – for example to help new immigrants improve their job opportunities by learning the language of the 'host' country'. On the other, they are being used to promote a different inclusion agenda – that of promoting cultural diversity by preserving the culture and language of 'minority' and therefore excluded cultures. This theme reflected on these issues as well as related issues around 'identity' within a European society, and how identity is itself being re-shaped through ICTs.
- **Theme 3: Introduction initiatives and services, inclusive e-government and participation.** This theme focused particularly on the problems faced by newly-arrived immigrants and how ICTs can be used to better support their integration

Workshop conclusions

The key conclusions emerging from the workshop were as follows:

- The knowledge base on ICTs and IEMs is still under-developed and the landscape is changing rapidly. Whilst the evidence shows that IEMs overall show higher ICT utilisation rates than non-IEM groups, there are significant differences both between and within different minorities – particularly with regard to age, gender and origin.
- Changes in ICT innovation and diffusion – particularly with Web 2.0 tools – are precipitating radical changes in how minority groups create and use networks globally. A new pattern is emerging of the 'connected migrant'.
- A range of initiatives has developed within the EU to promote access and usage of ICTs by IEMs. These broadly can be divided into two main types: ICTs that are used by IEMs themselves to promote interaction and ICTs used to address problems – like language, inclusion and employment issues – commonly experienced by IEMs.
- Initiatives like TRIO have had positive results in providing e-learning to break cycles of exclusion for IEMs. A key motivation for IEMs to engage with these kinds of initiatives is to promote better opportunities for their children.
- The media is instrumental in re-inforcing barriers to inclusion for IEMs – directly contributing to changing stereotypes by engaging IEMs in media production and knowledge industry skills – can help reduce stereotyping and discrimination.
- But the bigger picture is not about direct provision of jobs in the knowledge industries for IEMs. It is about utilising ICTs to enable opportunities for 'self-promotion', self-valorisation and self-actualisation.

The full report of the workshop is available at:

<http://www.epractice.eu/files/upload/workshop/13771-1227179395.pdf>

V. Themed issue of European Journal of ePractice: Inclusive e-Services

The European Journal of ePractice is a peer-reviewed online publication on eTransformation, launched in November 2007. The Journal belongs to the ePractice.eu community, is sponsored by the European Commission as part of its good practice exchange activity and is run by an independent Editorial Board.

The publication will promote the diffusion and exchange of good practice in eGovernment, eHealth and eInclusion and is open access, free of charge to all readers. In May 2008 the Journal published a themed issue on inclusive e-services⁶. The issue's invited editor was professor Sally Wyatt⁷ who is a senior research fellow at the Maastricht University and Virtual Knowledge Studio for the Humanities and Social Sciences of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences.

The issue included the following articles on inclusive e-services:

Creating a regional agency to foster eInclusion: the case of South Yorkshire, UK

Bridgette Wessels, Lecturer in Sociology, University of Sheffield

The eHungary Program 2.0 - Building an Army of eCounsellors to fight against digital illiteracy

Andrea Fejer, International Relations – Communication, eHungary Project

Marianna Posfai, Leader, eHungary Project

Methodologies to identify best practice in barrier-free web design

Beate Schulte, Senior-researcher, Institut for Information Management (ifib)

Ulrike Peter, Scientist, Institut for Information Management (ifib)

Jutta Croll, Managing Director, Digital Opportunities Foundation

Iris Cornelssen, Project leader of the team "Internet", Aktion Mensch

The 'relative utility' approach for stimulating ICT acceptance: profiling the non-user

Pieter Verdegem, Researcher, Research Group for Media & ICT (MICT) – Ghent University (UGent) – Interdisciplinary Institute for Broadband Technology (IBBT)

Pascal Verhoest, PhD, eSociety Programme Manager, The Federal Public Agency for Information and Communication Technology (FEDICT)

In the following are presented the executive summaries of each article and a link to the full text.

Creating a regional agency to foster eInclusion: the case of South Yorkshire, UK

Bridgette Wessels, Lecturer in Sociology, University of Sheffield (UK)

Full article: <http://www.epracticejournal.eu/document/4714>

The focus within regions in Europe, in line with the Riga Ministerial Declaration (2006), is to foster eInclusion by providing access for all, building e-skills and e-literacy, providing broadband infrastructures and inclusive eGovernment. Regional partnerships are emerging as

⁶ <http://www.epracticejournal.eu/volume/3>

⁷ <http://www.epractice.eu/people/11859>

agents in creating innovative use of information and communication technology (ICT) for eInclusion in relation to local needs, contexts and aspirations. The British region of South Yorkshire is a microcosm of barriers to eInclusion, with many of its citizens having low levels of ICT access, which interacts with factors such as older age, unemployment and low levels of education to produce risks of a digital divide building on existing inequalities.

The case of South Yorkshire shows how a regional partnership seeks to build ICT capacity from low levels of ICT knowledge in the community. It aims to achieve this through outreach teams that educate individuals to use ICT in their homes or in various community-based locations supported structurally by a social delivery model. Its innovative approach links community facilities and actors to foster eInclusion within the everyday life of individuals who may experience aspects of a digital divide. The strategy involves the development of 'Digital Outreach Teams' and a 'Digital Directory' that integrates the use of ICT in everyday settings with service providers and businesses. The aim is to generate a public agency in the community to build ICT capacity in developing an inclusive information society region.

This South Yorkshire Public Sector e-Forum agency for the regional partnership is important in enabling the transformation, because it can link the everyday lives of citizens with services and businesses through an ICT infrastructure and a clear strategy for eInclusion.

The eHungary Program 2.0 - Building an Army of eCounsellors to fight against digital illiteracy

Andrea Fejer, International Relations – Communication, eHungary Project
Marianna Posfai, Leader, eHungary Project

Full article: <http://www.epracticejournal.eu/document/4715>

The target group of the eHungary Project of the Hungarian Ministry of Economy and Transport are citizens living in underdeveloped regions and the members of lower social classes. For these people it would be a huge opportunity to be able to compete on the various fields of life by having access to the eWorld through outstanding community access points. Approximately 80% of the general population in Hungary does not possess even the most basic digital knowledge. For these citizens, the only way to be able to compete in the various fields of life is to have access to public digital learning points, where they can approach ICT guided by committed professionals.

The eHungary Program is addressing this situation with the introduction of the eCounsellor network, a service through which professionals provide personalized assistance to citizens in the effective usage of electronic information, services and knowledge. Another step taken for the realization of the program has been the successful establishment of 1,500 Internet community access points, the so called eHungary points, in community locations such as libraries, telecentres and cultural venues.

One of the main goals of the program is to decrease the digital divide of disadvantaged groups, to assist underdeveloped communities, and to strengthen the economic competitiveness of Hungarian regions.

Methodologies to identify best practice in barrier-free web design

Beate Schulte, Senior-researcher, Institut for Information Management (ifib)
Ulrike Peter, Scientist, Institut for Information Management (ifib)
Jutta Croll, Managing Director, Digital Opportunities Foundation
Iris Cornelissen, Project leader of the team "Internet", Aktion Mensch

Full article: <http://www.epracticejournal.eu/document/4716>

Results from Germany's BIENE-Wettbewerb with a special focus on accessible e-services amongst the winners of the competition. The BIENE-Wettbewerb, the best-known accessibility contest in Germany, started in 2003, the European Year of People with Disabilities. Organised by the German social organisation Aktion Mensch (German Association for the Care of the Disabled) and the Stiftung Digitale Chancen (Digital Opportunities Foundation), the BIENE-Award is meant to honour the best barrier-free web sites in German language and to present them as excellent best practice examples. BIENE emphasizes the objectives of promoting communication, joint action and productive cooperation. Therefore, a unique study was carried out by the promoters of the contest during 2007 in order to ensure that the evaluation procedure measures the accessibility of Web 2.0 tools as well as classical websites. From the study it became very clear that people with disabilities may especially benefit from the opportunities Web 2.0 provides - nevertheless it has to be ensured that quality standards are matched.

The BIENE competition aims at improving the quality of websites in general and thus enable people with disabilities to take part in the information society. Only those websites that match the criteria for accessibility and also fit the expectations of the users as well as of the initiators of the competition will be awarded a prize. This article refers to the methodological approach underlying the evaluation of contributions to the competition and shows how best practice examples of accessible web sites can be identified with a special focus on the identification of accessible e-services.

The 'relative utility' approach for stimulating ICT acceptance: profiling the non-user

Pieter Verdegem, Researcher, Research Group for Media & ICT (MICT) – Ghent University (UGent) – Interdisciplinary Institute for Broadband Technology (IBBT)

Pascal Verhoest, PhD, eSociety Programme Manager, The Federal Public Agency for Information and Communication Technology (FEDICT)

Full article: <http://www.epracticejournal.eu/document/4717>

Business strategies and policies that were successful in increasing internet penetration in the early days may no longer be appropriate. This is most probably in countries where a majority of people is already connected to the internet. As more people are online, it becomes more likely that the remaining fraction of non-adopters is either hard to convince, under-skilled or simply lacking the financial resources to afford a connection.

In view of this problem, this paper proposes a policy approach to increase personal computer and internet acceptance in collaboration with the industry. The measures developed within this approach are based on strategies of segmentation and differentiation. This entails that product offerings are specifically targeted towards different socio-demographic groups in the population. In addition, our approach does not only concentrate on removing barriers, as most eInclusion policies do, but also at increasing the value of ICT for end-users.

This approach is based on a project that applied both qualitative and quantitative research methods to investigate the relation between the socio-demographic and socio-economic characteristics of non-users, and on the other hand, their profile in terms of access levels, ICT skills and attitudes towards ICT and their needs and expectations (if any) about ICT. In this paper we show, firstly, that members of homogeneous socio-demographic and socio-economic groups indeed share similar characteristics in terms of access, skills and attitudes and, secondly, that these groups can be effectively reached by policy makers and businesses with specific product offerings.