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Measure 2.2 Improved access to the Information Society



Project Number: E091

Regional Test-Beds

Citizen First Trials: City of Kortrijk

The City of Kortrijk

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1.1. Context of the Region

1.1.1. The City's Global ICT-GIS Policy Plan

Governments can play a fundamental role in bridging the digital divide and in stimulating e-government. Therefore, the city of Kortrijk provides local government services to the 75,000 citizens of the city. The City's Global ICT-GIS Policy plan (2002-2006) aims to (a) Improve city governance using ICT, (b) Customer friendly approach of the citizens and (c) Bridging the digital divide in the city.

In order to realise this three main objectives, 55 actions were described in the policy plan:

Internal e-services:

- cooperation with ICT company, delivering the soft and hardware and know-how
- the training of the ICT-team of the city of Kortrijk and the organisation of trouble-shooters for internal problems
- delivering new and qualitative hard- and software within the city organisation.
- internet for all the city organisations and employees within the city organisation
- the organisation of a ICT-Helpdesk for all complaints and problems
- every computer in the city hall as in organisations of the city is connected to the intranet and the city-network
- monitoring by the ICT-experts of the hard -and software (technical and security reasons)
- offering new applications and specific computer programmes for every service
- GIS-applications (Geographic Information System) and CAD (Computer Aided Design)
- Meldpunt: a centralized point for all the complaints, suggestions, demands of the citizens of Kortrijk

External e- services:

- reorganisation of the website of the city,
- website of the city with blind surfer label
- certipost (secured e-mail platform); e-form project
- the ICT-teams visit all the organisation of the city on regular basis
- bridging the digital divide, installation of PIAP's

The two objectives, as improving the city governance using ICT and the customer friendly approach of the citizens, are concretised. The city has put a lot of effort in the enhancement of the back office of the city and thus providing better city governance. Improved internal governance makes it possible to implement citizens centric services.

1.1.2. Main objectives of the implementation of the PIAP's

In order to bridge the digital divide, the Kortrijk Action Pilot will be focused on three operational objectives: a good awareness campaign to promote the use of internet and ICT, the offering of free training facilities and the provision of community ICT.

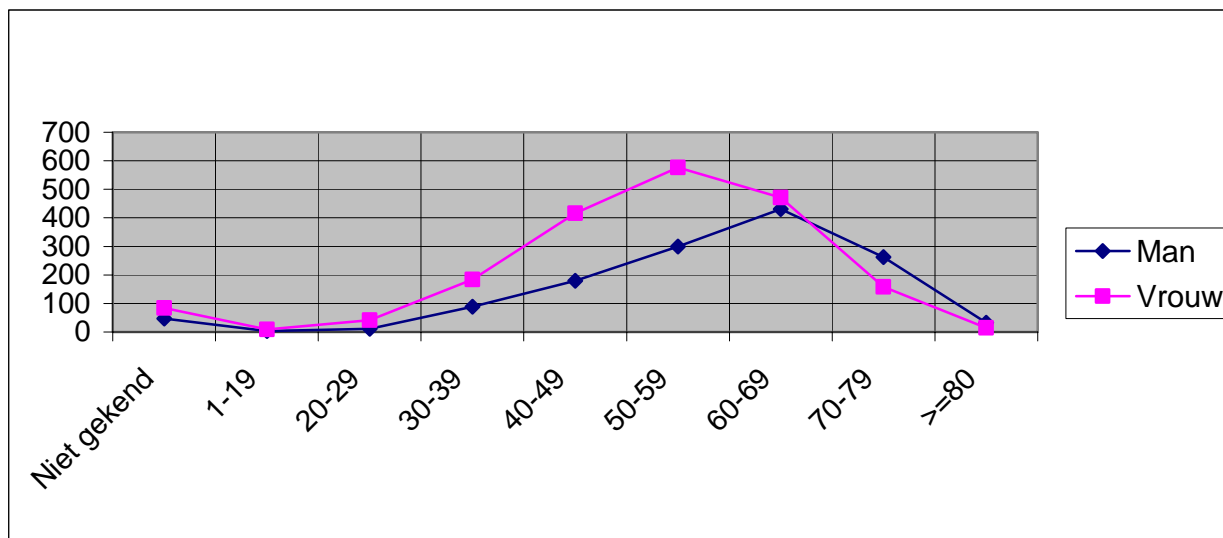
The applications offered on the secured platform of the internet kiosk are more accessible and have applications that bring more information than was provided through the traditional communication channels of the city, like the website of the city. The different applications are foreseen to strengthen the citizen's participation, stimulating e-government and to bring the e-services closer to the citizens.

In Belgium, Kortrijk is, like Gent and Hasselt, one of the first cities that started with the implementation of PIAP's. Together with Gent and Hasselt, Kortrijk is a pilot in self-service online/virtual transactional applications to raise and promote customer oriented city information and secured digital city services, like the implementation of the electronic identity card. The city of Kortrijk is investigation the possibility to introduce an identity e-cardreader in the internetkiosks. The city of Kortrijk is convinced, what is confirmed by scientific studies, that the services deployed on the internetkiosks have to be relevant for the users in their community and private life.

1.1.3. Research

The main objective of the report "Provision of Community ICT and Training Facilities" was to establish a baseline of the provision of citizens centric access and training facilities in the different regions of the partners involved in the Interreg IIIBNWE-region. The outcomes of the report show us that the physical access issues, such as insufficient computing and telecommunications infrastructure, high costs or poor or unreliable services are an important cause of the existence of the digital divide. The City of Kortrijk is providing the infrastructure, training facilities, PIAP's and as thus connectivity for everyone. These are bottom-line requirements to bridge the digital divide.

One of the main objectives is to stimulate also e-government. In the report of Cambridgeshire "E-government for All" we learned that people under the 55 years old use more e-government applications than the elder ones. The last one is a target group that is very important. The following results shows us that the most of the people who come to the free training facilities organised by the City of Kortrijk are between the 50 and 80 years old. The City of Kortrijk tries to stimulate this target group to use the e-government applications.



WP B.3.2. thought us that the situation regarding broadband seems to be getting more complex and there is a great difference between several regions. In this report the Belgian situation is scanned. In Belgium an intervention of local, regional and national authorities is needed on broadband aggregations. Broadband aggregations, so is concluded, are contributing to the widening of the digital divide in Europe between urban and rural communities. Therefore the City of Kortrijk has a great attention for the more rural communities. The installation of the PIAP's and the idea of installing similar ICT access points in every local rural borough is one of the main objectives of the action plan, this in order to raise and facilitate access to ICT to overcome isolation (social, cultural, educational and spatial) and to support community cohesion. The local as the regional and national

governments are working on the governmental intervention regarding the access of broadband for every citizen.

1.2. Objectives of the Regional Test-Beds

The main objectives of the implementation of the PIAP's are thus to overcome social, cultural, educational and spatial isolation. The target group of the Kortrijk Action Pilot are especially the "have nots", those who do not have ICT, who can't use ICT (accessibility), who don't use ICT and who don't use ICT to interact. In order to raise and facilitate access to ICT to overcome isolation and to support community cohesion, the PIAP's are approachable for everyone. The city of Kortrijk has also special attention for people with special needs. The internet kiosks are/will be thus designed in order to increase the accessibility for elder people and people with mobility problems. E-community, e-government services and e-learning for all the citizens is as thus stimulated. The importance of a citizen centric approach is underlined in the following operational objectives:

a) The implementation of the PIAP's.

Physical access issues, such as insufficient computing and telecommunications infrastructure, high costs or poor or unreliable services are an important cause of the existence of the digital divide. Providing the infrastructure, hardware and connectivity for everyone is a bottom-line requirement to bridge the digital divide in the city of Kortrijk. The city of Kortrijk implanted 8 internet kiosks in public and semi-public places, spread in the city and the more rural communities. So the citizens in the more rural areas don't have to come to the city centre to find information or to communicate with the city. Internet and other citizens centric information is offered nearby.

The city of Kortrijk preferred public/semi-public places for the placement of PIAP's for different reasons. Community halls, library, and community work for youth will support community cohesion and will create new interactions between different groups of citizens. On these locations there will be support and help nearby from the city workers but also from the visitors. That can lead to a sustainable network of volunteers who are able to introduce newcomers to the use of the kiosks and its possibilities and interactive means of communication with the city and other organisations. These locations attract lots of people, so there is already some social control from the citizens themselves and the city workers.

b) The knowledge of the citizens

Most of the time, the use of computer and internet is inherent to the individual capability issues, such as limited literacy or technology skills. It is not because the technology is available, that it is accessible. Therefore the city of Kortrijk wanted to stimulate the knowledge of the citizens. First of all the city of Kortrijk engages the citizens who do not have ICT, who can't use ICT (accessibility), who don't use ICT and who don't use ICT to interact (target groups) to come to the training lessons. The city of Kortrijk has more than 75,000 inhabitants; 3700 citizens attain the training courses. In the training courses the use of the PIAP's is taught. Since the placement of the 8 kiosk, the city of Kortrijk also promotes the use of the PIAP's by organising training courses for the city-workers. Most of the time the users of the kiosks introduce newcomers. The City of Kortrijk is busy to stimulate volunteers and to build out a sustainable network of volunteers through an awareness and communication strategy.

c) The content

The results of previous studies learns us that most of the e-community e-government services are not accessible for everyone. One of the priorities is to implement a user friendly

system that guides the citizens through the mass of information, regulations and services. Therefore the city of Kortrijk installed the following citizen-centric applications on the PIAP's:

- Internet. The users can consult the internet. There is a link to Google, a search engine and the users can check their e-mail. The search for information is made user-friendly.
- A link to the city website. The content was evaluated and the website is being adapted in order to make it more accessible for the users. The content management system is simplified. The city website obtained the Blind Surfer Label.
- A link to book cultural events.
- Certipost (a secured e-mail platform). This application makes it possible that communication between citizens/organisations, between citizens/organisations and the city services, between all partners is secured and interactive. The secured platform brings more than just information to the citizens, it creates the opportunity to deliver digital city certificates and makes secured and authenticated communication with city services possible.
- The secured platform has a lot of advantages and possibilities for further e-government applications. Particularly in combination with the electronic identity card. The placement of an electronic identity card reader is foreseen. The study of possible applications is started.
- An online centralized point for all the complaints, suggestions, demands of the citizens of Kortrijk. In the future adaptations will be made to increase the efficiency of the back office.
- A link to the website of the VDAB, a website which guides job-seekers in their search for employment and career possibilities.

d) The communication

The awareness campaign to promote the ICT-outlets started with the kick-off of the training facilities in September 2004. In the folder a picture and a description of the internet kiosks showed the possibilities of the kiosks. The participants are, before the lessons start, invited to an info-session. During the session the objectives of the project, the training facilities and the installation of the internet kiosks are described. During the lessons the citizens not only learn to work with the PC and internet, but they also get a description of the possibilities of the internet kiosk and the use of these kiosks is totally integrated in the work-package. The people who come to these lessons know at the end where these internet kiosks are located and how they can work with them. Most of the people already visited one of the kiosks. When the visitors are satisfied they mobilise friends and family to visit the internet kiosks. A communication was set up to recruit volunteers to engage themselves to keep an eye on the kiosks and to introduce newcomers. To stimulate awareness a lot of promotion is also made by the press.

1.3. Requirements of the Citizens/Communities

a) Acces

The city of Kortrijk wants to stimulate the participation and e-government of all its citizens. Therefore the city of Kortrijk decided to spread the PIAPs over the city and its surrounding municipalities, in order to overcome spatial isolation and to stimulate spatial cohesion between the city and the surrounding communities. The people of the surrounding communities will be able to find information about the city, the surrounding communities and its services and activities through kiosks near their own home, without needing to come to the city centre. The city of Kortrijk preferred public/semi-public places for the placement of PIAP's for different reasons. Community halls, library, and community work for youth will support community cohesion and will create new interactions between different groups of citizens. In every location there is a connection with the network of the city and the internet. On these locations there will be support and help nearby from the city workers but also from the visitors. That can lead to a sustainable network of volunteers who are able to introduce newcomers to the use of the kiosks and its possibilities and interactive means of communication with the city and other organisations. The library and different community halls are open and accessible for everyone. There are no barriers to visit those places and to use the internet. Younger and elder people come to these places. The library in the city of Kortrijk and the different community halls are accessible for elder people, people with mobility problems and people with special needs.

b) Knowledge

Improving access to the information society can sometimes result in isolation of citizens. Most of the time, the use of computer and internet is inherent to the individual capability issues. Individual capability issues include limited literacy or technology skills. People who don't have access to PC's and the internet and don't have the skills. Just because the technology is available does not mean it is accessible.

The city of Kortrijk launched a big awareness campaign to stimulate citizens who never worked with a computer and do not have a computer to come to the free training courses. Of the 75000 inhabitants, 3700 will attain the courses. The 3700 people are also trained to use the internet kiosks.

The database of all the people who will attain the lessons (3700) learns us the following:

- 1531 people have little experience in using ICT, computer and internet
- 1429 people have never worked with a PC and internet
- the rest didn't filled in their experience.

The results learns that the training facilities and the implementation of public access points is needed. Most of the people in the city of Kortrijk never worked with a computer. The group of people that are attaining the courses are between the 40-80 years.

c) Contents

A lot of people have no access to e-government service. The people in the boroughs had to come to the city centre for their information. Therefore the city of Kortrijk installed accessible and e-government applications on the kiosks. The citizens can consult the internet, the website of the local news, the different online centralized points of the city for all the complaints, suggestions,... the city website, the website to book cultural events, a website to find work.

All these applications are accessible for everyone, young and elderly people.

d) Communication

The City of Kortrijk wanted to reach all the citizens to come to the lessons and to promote the use of the PIAP's. The channels had to be accessible for everyone. Therefore the city of Kortrijk launched an awareness campaign. The results show that the lessons and the use of the kiosk are a great success, 3700 people would like to attend the courses, 75.000 inhabitants are reached.

1.4. Description of the Pilots

The Demonstration Action Pilot

The Demonstration Action Pilot of the City of Kortrijk will be focused on reaching the citizens who do not have ICT, who can't use ICT (accessibility), who don't use ICT and who don't use ICT to interact (target groups) in order to facilitate access to ICT to overcome isolation (social, cultural, educational and spatial) and to support community cohesion.

The Kortrijk Action Pilot will be focused on three operational objectives in order to bridge the digital divide:

- The provision of community ICT. The city of Kortrijk integrates a secured digital platform of PIAP's and PC's in the city and the boroughs. The main objectives of the implanting of PIAP's are thus to overcome social, spatial, cultural, educational and spatial isolation in the city and the surrounding communities.
- Offering training facilities. PC-initiation will be offered in the city centre and the boroughs, free and adjusted to the contents and the target group.
- A good awareness campaign to promote the use of internet and ICT.

The Kortrijk Action Pilot will consist of:

- Establishing a campaign to raise awareness and to promote the use of the internet and PC's possibilities, by December 2004.
- Documenting citizens and communities' needs by working in cooperation with the citizens and local service centres to define the needs and possibilities for content, training, self-sustainability and community cohesion by March 2005.
- Raising and promoting the normal use of internet and PC possibilities in target communities by
 - Installing PC's and 15 PIAP's in public and semi-public places
 - With a secured platform for the citizens and an accessible interface
 - Linked to the content of the website for some online/virtual applications
 - The website will be revised in order to get the blind surfer label which means the website is translated in a text-only format.
 - Pilot self-service online/virtual transactional applications to raise and promote customer oriented city information and secured digital city services (as pilot examples: the implementation of the electronic identity card, the interactive making of the incident management system, GIS applications in combination with content,...)
- Ensuring integrity, identity and time of delivery by offering free use of the secured digital platform that is a product of the cooperation between the Belgian postal office and the Belgian telephone company. Kortrijk will pilot the implementation of this system in interaction with the delivery of city services and information by September 2005.
- Raising ICT-skills, through free and low threshold PC and Internet initiation adjusted to learning, city information and digital services, by September 2005.
- Evaluation of citizen & community use of PIAP's and online services with special attention to the target groups by September 2005.