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Regional Test-Beds

Citizen First Trials: City of leper

The City of Ieper

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1.1. Context of the Region

2.1.1. Frame of reference

The aim of the CitizenFirst project is to deploy e-government services based on the needs and wishes of the citizen. Especially people who are living in rural areas and people with special needs tend to be the least eager to adopt e-government services. In order to link the targets of the local government with the needs and wishes of the citizen, research is needed. In fact, we think that two principle target group researches ought to be done, before action can be taken.

On the one hand, we should carefully do some preliminary research with several target groups before even designing our e-government applications. Indeed, before designing the new leper city-portal website, we'll need two sorts of information from the target groups:

- conceptual pre-testing of needs, wishes, cognitive and emotional motivations towards the local government in general and the city portal in particular. This will give us a lot of information about how to structure the information, about which information and services citizens value the most, etc...
- usability testing of the graphical interface: this research will teach us about all the graphical and infographical weaknesses, inconsistencies, paradoxes or mistakes. If we want the portal to be in conformation with the aims of the CitizenFirst project, then it is crucial that the city portal is "granny proof" before launching it.

On the other hand, once the city portal is launched, it is our task to not only find out what people think about it or do with it. The way people perceive the e-government services spontaneously is one thing, but the way they respond to the awareness campaigns, the training programme or the ICT-outlets is far more important, because these CitizenFirst actions are precisely aiming at convincing people to become aware of the added value of e-government. In this second research phase, we'll have to evaluate every step we take through pre-testing and post-testing the campaign material. That's the only way to make sure that in the end the Citizen will indeed be First.

2.1.2. Six task domains

The city of leper is coordinator for the work package on communication and awareness. This implies two things: The main focus of the leper pilot projects will exactly be on this subject and leper will be responsible for sharing knowledge on this issue with the other project partners and other stakeholders.

We reformulated this task into 6 task domains. These domains can be seen as six paths towards the realisation of the CitizenFirst project targets. These domains are:

Task 1: Target group Research

As mentioned above, we attach great importance to questioning the different target groups and their needs, wants, fears,... on technology and e-government. Several of the steps in our project plan (cf. infra) will be within the context of this first task domain.

Task 2: Preparing and setting up actions for local target groups who are not familiar with ICT

The actions that are to be taken within this second task domain are all aimed at breaking through the citizen isolation or detachment through the networking capabilities of ICT. Furthermore, these actions have to bridge the digital gap with target groups with special needs and people in rural areas. This includes the installation of PIAPs and PCs at local

service centres. This installation of infrastructure in turn opens up the possibility for target group specific training in association with intermediaries and other private partners.

Task 3: Organizing citizen participation in government policy

The city of Leper wants to involve a representative population of citizens with the local policy. CitizenFirst opens up a great opportunity to organize this in an ICT-supported way. In particular, we have to look at the lessons that are learned within Demos, a European research project on participation and involvement.

(<http://www.demosproject.org/>).

Task 4: Organizing training

Training citizens with no or few ICT-competencies is only one of the possible educational tracks. Another track is the training of trainers, who act as trusted intermediaries for these target groups. Course material needs to be developed in order to allow voluntary associations or other social-profit organizations to organize education programmes themselves. A third educational path is setting up an internal training for city personnel. When they are fully aware of the e-government benefits, they will not only use it for their own sake, but will also be able to act as “opinion leader” towards other citizens.

Task 5: Communication and marketing plan for different target groups

The city of Leper has several issues to take into account when developing and implementing a communication strategy. On the one hand, there are several target groups and stakeholders to communicate with: citizen, associations, press, local profit and non-profit organizations, other governments, project partners, etc... On the other hand, there are different topics to communicate about, such as: the portal, the research results, the outlets, the educational programmes, etc... The development and deployment of the communication and marketing plan will take into account these different target groups and subjects. In order to cut costs for buying media space, we'll have to use our traditional online and offline channels as much as possible.

Task 6: Knowledge sharing

There has to be an optimal transference of knowledge between the project partners. This knowledge transference can take place through several formats, such as whitepapers and a seminar towards the end of the project. Several actions and approaches that foster knowledge sharing on different levels are to be undertaken (cf. infra). The six task domains we defined here all require concrete actions, strategies and deliverables. Some of the actions that we'll take will be very specific for one task domain. Other actions provide added value and create knowledge on more than one task domain. There is also a certain chronological logic to be respected. For instance, knowledge sharing cannot be a task domain to work on in the very beginning of the project, and no training, nor communication or marketing planning can be done before we have collected sufficient research knowledge in order to optimize these actions for every target group. However, the research task domain and the knowledge sharing task domain don't follow the chronological order of the project, because we'll be working on these domains during the whole course of the project. A project plan that is based on these task domains is still too vague and too overlapping. Therefore, we developed an action plan in 13 concrete steps towards the realisation of the aims of the CitizenFirst Project. There are several advantages of making this translation:

- These 13 steps respect a more chronological order
- They are a translation of the task domains into concrete actions
- Every step involves one or more task domains
- Every step has a clear subject and offers clear deliverables

2.1.3. Representative citizen measurement

The city of leper would like to collect basic information about the inhabitants of leper on issues like the accessibility, their opinions, motivations and desires concerning e-government and electronic service delivery. This information will be collected by means of a representatively written questionnaire. This questionnaire is to be based on two sorts of information: data based on general empirical research in Flanders about citizens and ICT, citizens and local government and citizens and participation and data based on the knowledge we collected through the research which was done during the previous phase. The questionnaire will provide a baseline and a benchmark on issues such as target groups and ICTs, accessibility, knowledge, boundaries and limitations, attitudes towards ICT, e-government and the government in leper, usage of media, etc.... Special attention will be paid in the questionnaire to actions that will increase the probabilities of participation.

Development of a communication plan and communication strategy for specific target groups

The city of leper wants to organize a continuous and frequent communication about the project towards all its stakeholders. These stakeholders are citizen, local businesses, social profit organizations, other service providers within the region and the CitizenFirst Partners. An integrated and cost-efficient way of communicating is to be thoroughly planned and thought through in advance. All the work that is done during the previous work packages next to desk research about similar projects in other regions, is basic material for this thorough approach. The very heart of this communication plan is threefold. It includes a clear description of target groups, message (clarity, key messages, different messages per target group) and means (which media for which message and which target group).

General awareness and initiation actions on the internet and e-government, with a focus on specific target groups

This work package is a direct result of the second work package in which we prepared actions for target groups who are not acquainted with ICT. Through the focus group interviews, we will have learned a lot about these target groups. This will allow us to develop specific actions for them. The target of this phase is to lower the barriers through awareness and initiation. This has to lead eventually to a greater acceptance of the ICT-training programme. Cooperation with other stakeholders and train-the-trainer course material will be an important part of this work package. Recruitment of volunteers in order to create a sustainable (post-Interreg) network of ICT-initiators is another issue.

Organizing a digital participation platform/city panel

The city of leper wants to involve its citizens into its policy deliberation process. The CitizenFirst project provides us with an excellent opportunity to experiment with ICT-supported methods to do this. In this phase of the project, we want to keep our options open about which concrete methodology we'll use. The project team has got a lot of experience on the level of digital participation, but the concrete choice for a specific format will depend on knowledge that we gathered in previous work packages. Indeed, the focus groups, the desk research and the representative measurement will provide us with sufficient insight in the specific context for the city of leper. A seminar will be organized in which the project steering committee and other stakeholders will be invited for an overview on all the possible options and for working out a concrete method for a digital participation platform in leper. We're very aware of the fact that digital participation is not an aim in itself. It has to support offline participation channels, moments and activities. We'll have to make sure that also ICT-illiterates can participate in this city panel.

Training action plan on e-government, the portal and the digital participation platform

The combination of a profound insight in the target groups, an optimized web portal that has taken into account the expectations of the citizen and the takeoff of a digital participation platform, allows us, at the start of the third project year, to set up a more profound training programme. In this programme there will be not only space for ICT and e-government in general, but also for endorsing the e-government services of leper and its products. In this work package we'll develop a very basic and low-level training package that will be given at different target groups: schools, SMEs, social-profit organizations, etc... The key success factor of this package will of course be its entertaining and didactic value and the way it connects with the real life context of the target groups.. The training material will of course be tested in pilot training sessions.

Research on effects and reach

This work package consists of three parts:

1. In general: testing of the graphical and infographical interface of the new portal website. This will be done partly with citizen and partly with (local) professionals. The aim of this research is to improve the portal so that it places the citizen first.
2. Specifically: we will evaluate the conceptual strength, technical requirements, strategic pitfalls and usefulness of every pilot project through specific interview and observation techniques.
3. Monitoring: we have to set up several indicators through which we can measure the effect and the progress of the project and the actions that are to be taken in the project.

The focus of this work package will therefore be the learning process through which we can remediate our actions (if necessary) and through which we can inform the CitizenFirst partners.

Remediation of pilot projects (where necessary)

Based on the results of work package 10, we'll have to take time to remediate several actions during the course of their action. The precise impact of each of these adjustments can only be understood after a couple of months of usage. That's why we think that this work package will gain in importance during the third year of the project.

Feedback and fine-tuning with other CitizenFirst Partners

In this work package, the project team will make sure that the representatives who attend the European meetings have all the necessary input for a presentation on the status of the project. Next to this, the project team will also set up communication channels to keep the CitizenFirst members informed in between the meetings. This will be done through a mailing list, a newsletter, or via the www.citizen-first.net website.

Knowledge exchange, including an international project seminar

The project will be rounded off with an international congress somewhere in 2007. The programme of this congress will be a presentation of the most important results of the project in leper and in other cities. This congress will have a general, theoretical part and a more practical part (interactive workshops). The utility of the lessons learned in the CitizenFirst project has to be the main focus of this congress. The project team will also take care of publishing results on a regular basis and make sure that these result have sufficient attention in both national and international press.

1.2. Objectives of the Regional Test-Beds

The above mentioned action plan implies a very ambitious project. The backbone of our project is off course the launch of the state-of-the art fully integrated city portal. This launch is delayed till September 2005, which has it's benefits, because this allows us to integrate all the lessons that we learned during the preliminary research track that we've undertaking in the context of CitizenFirst.

Our Test-beds are being deployed in three phases.

1. Research phase: we've had a thorough qualitative research with all stakeholders in leper and based on the outcomes of this research, we've developed a quantitative citizen questionnaire. This questionnaire is currently in analytic phase.
2. Implementation phase. The results from this first phase are now being used as a guideline for the development of the new city portal. There's a main focus on "target group design" and on delivering content and services towards special target groups such as teenagers, senior citizen and people with disabilities
3. The launch of PIAPS, the organization of training facilities and train-the-trainer sessions, etc... all are a logical third phase within the leper pilot projects. This will start of somewhere in fall 2005.

Our research revealed that – in order to reach our target groups – we should not only focus on delivering content and services through PIAPs. Instead we've broadened our technological approach:

1. Location based virtual community for teens: the research phase showed that teens want a platform of their own, in which they can talk and read about the things that happen in their city.
2. Portal for people with disabilities, based on the CMS of the city. The local task force for people with disabilities will deliver the content for this portal AND since this content will be in our backoffice, we'll reuse it at relevant other places in the website
3. Portal for each of the surrounding villages, on the leper CMS. These pages will consist of very local information and services, combined with all content and services of the leper portal. Our research clearly indicated that this would be a much more "natural" one-stop-shop interface for people that live in rural areas.
4. Installing PIAPs and public computers
5. Organizing a communication campaign, training sessions, targetgroup-oriented road-shows

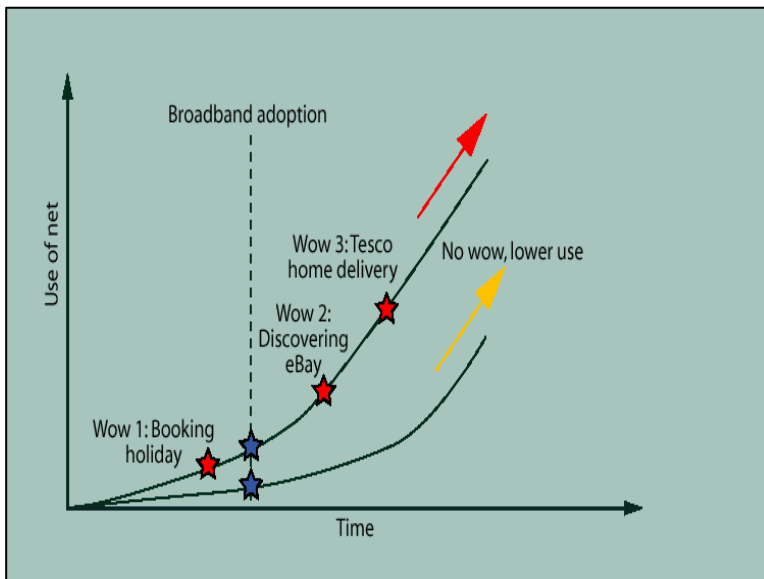
Since all of these platforms and portals operate on the same infrastructure, they will all serve as front-offices for service and content delivery towards these target groups. This should stimulate an increased take-up of these services within each of the selected target groups. The action plan that we've proposed above, will step by step result in the release of all of these channels. Furthermore: all of these channels in their turn, will enrich the city portal with content and services.

All the information and training campaigns will put a heavy focus on intermediaries.

1.3. Requirements of the Citizens/Communities

a) Access

Off course people should have access on the internet in order to benefit from the content and the services at home. There are no action plans at a local level in order to promote the uptake of PC infrastructure and/or broadband. However there are national programmes (such as the pc-privé initiatives) that can be promoted locally. Furthermore: most of the time, it's the teenagers within the family who are the opinion leaders for investing in pc infrastructure. Ieper is carefully considering it's investments in PIAPs and in public PC's (such as in libraries or in service centers. There are two reasons for this: 1) Ieper wants to



learn from the lessons that are to be learned in the Kortrijk Pilots 2) Ieper has decided to prioritize the rollout of the city portal (September 2005) and the uptake of it within the city and the surrounding communities. Once this target is being met, then a logical second phase will be the instalment of PCs and PIAPS that contain the relevant services and that are to be used for training programmes. Pc's and PIAPs will be placed in three locations: 1) rural service centers 2) external services such as sports centers, libraries, cultural centra 3) on strategic places within the city.

We're convinced that providing ICT-and Internet training is only relevant if the participants have a clear conception of the relevance for their family and community functioning. Recent work from the British Knowledge Center *The Work Foundation* in their report "Fat Pipes" on the social characteristics of broadband uptake. People need concrete Wow-experiences (see picture above).

b) Taking care of the digital gap

Our target group research taught us that a significant part of the population will never use the internet. Mainly because they don't have the resources for buying a PC with broadband access. This lack of resources can be financial as intellectual as educational as emotional. We should be aware of the fact that we can't afford creating a digital gap. We're working on 3 issues in order to avoid this digital gap

- **Focus on social capital in communication:** We're trying to convince people to make use of their social network in order to reap the benefits of the content and service delivery. Everybody has got someone in his intimate social network that can help. People need to be aware of using this social capital around them.
- **E-gov benefits for all through backoffice integration:** Our biggest investment is not only in service delivery through the portals, but also in connecting the back-office systems, so that people that still have to come to the townhall, also enjoy the benefits of e-government, through increased G2G connectivity.

- **Multi-channel communication:** interesting content from the website will be communicated through offline channels and the online calendar will also be shown through a screen on the market place. In this way we hope to avoid knowledge exclusion.

c) *Commoditization of broadband*

People should consider broadband as a commodity. It should evolve into a family hub. Our communication efforts should precisely aim at a change in perception. Internet should evolve from a technology for task-oriented behaviour towards an “always on medium” that can support all family and household processes

d) *partnerships with stakeholders*

Our focus groups showed us that we should work with opinion leaders. Each target group in ieper has its own opinion leaders, its own networks and its own organisations. If we can convince these organisations into helping us to promote the benefits of the digital city, than we have a very powerfull persuasive backbone for our campaign. If the opinion leaders are in, than the rest will follow.

1.4. Description of the Pilots

The Demonstration Action Pilot

The Demonstration Action Pilots of the City of Leper 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 Leper Action Pilot will be focused on several operational objectives in order to bridge the digital divide:

- The provision of community ICT. Although this provision of access through public PCs and through a small amount of PIAPS is not the main focus of the Leper Pilots, it certainly forms an important part of the project mix. The rollout of this provision is to be planned in 2006, after the launch of the portals and simultaneous with the provision of training.
- The provision of a digital one-stop-shop through the city portal. This state-of-the-art portal will be launched in September 2005 and will take all our research results into account. This one-stop-shop will be fully integrated with the digital ID, so that 100% secure transactions can be done through this portal. This will result in applications for citizen as well as for local businesses.
- The provision of specific virtual community portals on the same CMS: the portal for teenagers is to be launched in June and the portals for each one of the villages in rural areas are to be launched during fall 2005.
- The provision of a digital citizen panel through which the local government and the local stakeholders periodically test their policy-related themes with a representative panel of citizen.
- 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. We'll put a lot of effort on train-the-trainer sessions and on an internet roadshow.
- A communication campaign to promote the use of internet and ICT.