

Regions

Information Society and the Regions: Linking European Policies

European Commission
Information Society and Media



Linking European Policies

This brochure has been produced by Information Society Policy Link (ISPL), an initiative of DG Information Society and Media that aims to link information society projects with European policy-makers across a wide range of policy domains.

More than 3000 projects from information society programmes are being analysed, identifying a wealth of concrete results that support EU policies across all of the principal policy areas. By exchanging information and experiences, the Information Society Policy Link initiative helps to leverage the benefits of these activities for European policies. We are here to make the link.

For Project Consortia, we can help you to:

- ❖ Organise policy workshops and events targeted at the European policy community.
- ❖ Make introductions to policy-makers in European institutions and national administrations.
- ❖ Make contact with relevant and complementary projects and initiatives funded under other European programmes.
- ❖ Identify means to further exploit policy aspects of your results, including through further research, deployment and regulation.

For Policy-makers in the EU institutions and Member States, we can help you to:

- ❖ Maintain awareness of information society activities relevant to your policy domain.
- ❖ Identify promising projects and results within DG Information Society and Media's portfolio.
- ❖ Explore ways in which Information Society developments can support the implementation and monitoring of European and national policies.
- ❖ Build a dialogue with DG Information Society and Media on future needs and research requirements.

This brochure is one of a series describing projects' policy contributions and achievements covering around 20 policy areas. A separate series focuses on policy initiatives under i2010, the European Information Society for Growth and Employment. In addition, the initiative organises workshops to stimulate dialogue between researchers and policy-makers on key policy issues.

All publications plus information on policy workshops and other news are available via the ISPL website at:

http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/policy_link/

A great deal of additional information on the European Union is available on the Internet. It can be accessed through the Europa server (<http://europa.eu>).

Cataloguing data can be found at the end of this publication.

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> Foreword

The renewed Lisbon Strategy aims to build a cohesive Europe, one where the opportunities and benefits of a modern knowledge-based economy and society are open to all citizens, no matter where they live. Information and communication technologies (ICT) are central to this agenda.

The wider uptake of ICT across the EU is a major lever for improving both the productivity and the competitiveness of regions, breathing new life into existing production methods and encouraging new businesses to emerge. ICT also generate positive side effects in the economy through learning-by-doing, faster transfer of know-how and increased transparency. These aspects are at the heart of the synergy between the action plan of the i2010 policy initiative – A European Information Society for Growth and Jobs – and the new regional policy for 2007-2013, that will support these goals.

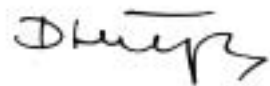
While ICT help in overcoming existing regional disparities, there is also a risk of a 'digital divide' between those that have access to the technologies – and the services they offer – and those that do not. Broadband internet connections are essential for eBusiness and a vibrant economy. Competition and open markets are certainly the best drivers of broadband in the EU. However, broadband connections must not be limited to large cities or wealthier regions and countries. Bridging this broadband gap is an i2010 priority. It commits to mobilising all policy instruments – EU telecoms legislation, regional policy and the Rural Development Fund – to bring high-speed internet access to all citizens throughout Europe.

Where there are genuine market failures, the EU regional policy plays a vital role in stimulating investments in broadband infrastructure and services, boosting competitiveness and innovation, and enabling all regions and cities of Europe to participate fully in the knowledge economy. ICT, including broadband, are also being supported under the Rural Development Fund. Regions are being urged to use all these programmes to tap the potential of broadband in their sustainable development strategies.

We welcome this brochure as an illustration of how innovation in ICT is contributing to a competitive and inclusive knowledge-based society in Europe's regions.



Viviane Reding
European Commissioner for
Information Society and Media



Danuta Hübner
European Commissioner for
Regional Policy



> Challenges for Regional Development

The European Union is one of the world's most prosperous economic zones. It now has the power of an internal market and the human potential of more than 450 million citizens. But economic and social disparities among its Member States and among its regions weaken its overall dynamism, and these disparities have become greater as a result of enlargement.

Inequalities have various causes. They may result from longstanding handicaps imposed by geographic remoteness or by more recent social and economic change, or a combination of both. The impact of these disadvantages is frequently evident in social deprivation, poor quality schools, higher unemployment and inadequate infrastructures.

The challenge to policymakers is to make sure that

Europe's regions are able to overcome these disparities and make the most of the emerging opportunities to foster growth and competitiveness.

Information and communication technologies (ICT) can help all of the regions of Europe improve their economic performance and the quality

of life of the people who live in them.

But to achieve this we have to guard against opening up a 'digital divide' between those with access to ICT and the ability to use it, and those without.

Employment, training, the competitiveness of firms, investment in infrastructure, the information society, research, and the quality of the environment are all primarily the responsibility of authorities and economic operators in each Member State and region. But there is also a key role for the Union in strengthening its economic and social cohesion and reducing the gaps among levels of development in the various regions.

European regional policy is a fully-fledged policy promoting the attractiveness of regions and unleashing the potential of the less favoured regions. It allocates more than a third of the EU budget to reducing the gaps in development among the regions and disparities among citizens in terms of well-being.

The renewed Cohesion policy for 2007-2013

encompasses a more strategic approach aimed at

boosting and integrating growth strategies at European, regional and local level, considering the territorial dimension and specificity of regions. It is the main financial instrument to implement the Lisbon strategy goals of growth and employment in a regional context.



> Regional Policy

The EU's regional policy over the programming period 2000-2006 encompassed four Structural Funds:

- ❖ the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF);
- ❖ the European Social Fund (ESF);
- ❖ the part of the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF - Guidance Section), which contributes to rural development;
- ❖ the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIFG), the specific Fund for the structural reform of the fisheries sector.

These funds have paid out around €213 billion, or roughly one third of total EU spending. A further €16 billion for 2004-2006 was allocated to the Cohesion Fund, set up in 1993 to help reduce economic and social disparities in the least prosperous Member States. More than half of this funding (€8.49 billion) was reserved for the 10 new Member States. Other initiatives addressed specific regional circumstances, such as cross-border and inter-regional cooperation, sustainable urban and rural development, and combating inequalities and discrimination in access to the labour market.

The previous Structural Funds programmes and instruments ran out in December 2006 and have been replaced by a new-look and more integrated regional policy for the period 2007-2013. The Commission's proposals aim to increase coherence between cohesion policy and the Lisbon agenda and between cohesion policy and other Community policies.

Innovation and competitiveness are the cornerstones of this new approach. By giving ownership to regional and local actors, it promotes the capacity building for innovation. Currently about €7 billion is planned to be invested on ICT, with approximately half of this amount allocated to infrastructure and the rest to services for citizens and enterprises. Cohesion policy is thus a key driver in the implementation of the Lisbon strategy.

The Community Strategic Guidelines set out the principles and priorities of cohesion policy and suggest ways the European regions can take full advantage of the €308 billion that has been made available for national and regional aid programmes over the next seven years. National authorities will use the guidelines as the basis for drafting their national strategic priorities and planning for 2007-2013, the so called National Strategic Reference Frameworks (NSRFs).

According to the Guidelines, and in line with the Lisbon goals, programmes co-financed through the cohesion policy should seek to target resources on the following three priorities:

- ❖ Improving the attractiveness of Member States, regions and cities by improving accessibility, ensuring adequate quality and level of services, and preserving their environmental potential;
- ❖ Encouraging innovation, entrepreneurship and the growth of the knowledge economy by strengthening research and innovation capacities, including new information and communication technologies; and
- ❖ Creating more and better jobs by attracting more people into employment, boosting entrepreneurial activity, improving adaptability of workers and enterprises, and increasing investment in human capital.

The Guidelines seek to provide a balance between the twin objectives of the growth and jobs agenda and territorial cohesion. Thus, it is recognised that there can be no question of a "one size fits all" approach to the new programmes.



> Where the Information Society Meets the Regions

New information and communication technologies (ICT) have an important part to play in realising the vision of a more competitive and inclusive Europe.

By bringing people together regardless of the distance between them, the information society brings new social and economic opportunities to Europe's regions. It can result in a more balanced development between urban and rural areas. For European citizens, this means that everyone is far less dependent on their location.

ICT and Regional Policy

The dissemination of ICT across the EU economy is a major lever for improving both the productivity levels and the competitiveness of regions, whilst encouraging the re-organisation of production methods and the emergence of new businesses. ICT also generate positive side-effects in the economy through learning-by-doing, faster transfer of know-how and increased transparency.

Cohesion policy supports the provision of telecommunications infrastructure, particularly in those cases where market conditions do not allow sufficient investment which is mostly the case of rural and peripheral areas. In these

and in all other regions EU regional policy aims to stimulate new electronic services and innovative ICT applications in areas such as eBusiness and eGovernment. In addition, policy seeks to ensure that people have the necessary skills and capabilities to make the most of the opportunities created by a knowledge-based society.

Regional development depends very much on the capacity to innovate, and a spirit of entrepreneurship in realising the benefits of ICT. The Regional Innovative Actions Programmes were launched in 2000, within the EU regional policy framework, experimentation with ICT for regional development being one of their areas. They enable regional authorities to test strategies involving innovation in processes, products and services so as to improve their regional economies. Such experimentation is likely to continue in the future within the mainstream funds.

ICT is one of the priorities for the next Structural Funds (2007-2013) within the three objectives: 'Convergence', 'Regional Competitiveness and

Employment' and 'European Territorial Cooperation'. Member States and regions are encouraged to focus on developing ICT products and services, but also to develop infrastructure platforms relevant for their situation and needs. They are also encouraged to experiment in their new Operational Programmes to feed their innovation strategies.

The eEurope Action Plan identified broadband access as a particularly important issue. Several of eEurope's other priority themes also have a regional dimension, including those on eGovernment, eHealth, eBusiness and SMEs.

The eEurope 2005 Action Plan has now been superseded by the i2010 strategy, which forms the information society component of the renewed Lisbon strategy to

boost European competitiveness. Inclusion is one of the three pillars of the i2010 initiative, with the aim of building an information society that is inclusive, provides high quality public services and promotes quality of life.

i2010 proposes various actions to tackle the 'digital divide', including for those living in less favoured areas. It will continue and intensify eEurope efforts to bridge the broadband gap. A Communication issued in March 2006 commits to mobilise all policy instruments – EU telecoms legislation, structural and rural funds – to bring high-speed internet access to all Europeans, in particular to the EU's less-developed areas.





The regional context may also be addressed through the proposed European Network of Living Labs, an action under i2010's innovation pillar. Living Labs are large-scale regional testbeds – formed as public-private partnerships – that focus on user-driven innovation within 'real-life' settings.

The i2010 eGovernment Action Plan, adopted in April 2006, and the i2010 flagship initiative on ICT for Sustainable Growth proposed for 2007, also have a regional dimension.

Information Society Activities

Research and Development

Building on work under previous programmes, in the Sixth Framework Programme (FP6) the IST Programme addressed the regional dimension through a variety of research projects and take-up actions. Many of these had a strong synergy with the eEurope Action Plan.

Relevant projects were supported under, among others, the Strategic Objectives on:

- ❖ Access to and preservation of cultural and scientific resources.
- ❖ Applications and services for the mobile user and worker.
- ❖ Broadband for all.
- ❖ ICT research for innovative government.
- ❖ ICT for networked businesses.

Many of the activities were undertaken in partnership with established regional networks. These included: the Local Authorities Telematic Network Initiative (ELANET), the European Association of Development Agencies (EURADA), the European Information Society Conference (EISCO), the European Regional Information Society Association (eris@), Telecities, and the Tele Regions Network).

Other Activities

The **eTEN** Programme is concerned with the large-scale roll-out of public interest services, primarily in support of the i2010 initiative. Although not specifically a regional programme, eTEN's activities have a strong regional dimension. By strengthening economic and social cohesion in Europe, eTEN aims to reduce disparities between the levels of development of European regions. Activities focus on the practical realisation of the i2010 objectives on eServices, in areas such as eGovernment, eHealth, eInclusion, eLearning and trust and confidence.

The **eContentplus** Programme (2005-2008) supports the production, use and distribution of European digital content and promotes linguistic and cultural diversity on the global networks. These activities are relevant to regional policy due to the large contribution they can bring to regional development, particularly regarding access to and re-use of public sector information, and promoting multilinguality in eContent and eService markets.

For the future, and with particular reference to the i2010 strategy, the main initiative will be the **ICT Policy Support Programme**, which is part of the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP). With a budget of €728 million, it will stimulate converging markets for electronic networks, media content and digital technologies, test new solutions to speed up the deployment of electronic services, and support modernisation of the European public sector.

> Benchmarking the Regional Information Society

As the impacts of digital technologies become transformational and more widespread, we need better ways of monitoring the progress of Information Society policies at regional level.

Policy Context

The Commission's i2010 Strategy, a European Information Society for Growth and Employment, aims to exploit opportunities for economic growth and jobs in Europe by promoting an open and competitive digital economy. It is a key element of the renewed Lisbon strategy and offers a comprehensive approach for boosting the ICT and media sector.

As with the eEurope initiative before it, benchmarking will play a central role in monitoring progress in achieving these i2010 priorities. In each case, a mix of indicators is needed to measure the different aspects of the objectives that are to be achieved.

Policy emphasis now focuses more on complex issues of impact and usage of technologies in the wider economy and benchmarking must become more sophisticated. It is necessary to build on existing work and continue to track some indicators consistently, but monitoring of

progress now requires indicators that are flexible and timely.

The Commission monitors progress through an annual European Information Society Progress Report. The report assesses developments and impacts and indicates where additional measures may be needed. It broadly follows the framework for benchmarking proposed by the i2010 High-Level Group in February 2006. Given the tight link between i2010 and the Lisbon process, the Group noted that it is important to establish a correspondence between benchmarking and i2010 indicators and the integrated guidelines relevant to ICT.

As large shares of regional investments are being spent on ICT in all regions of the EU, it has become more and more important to measure the spread and use of ICT, as well as its impact, at the level of individual regions. Unfortunately, available statistical indicators are not able to capture in full differences between regions in the effectiveness with which ICT is applied and used. Efforts should focus on providing better insight into the full effects of ICT at regional level, as well as tried and tested statistical indicators to measure it.

Understanding the Regional Information Society

A number of EU-funded projects have sought to benchmark the growth and impact of the information society at regional level, either as an input to policy development or to improve take-up of research results.

UNDERSTAND was an Interreg IIIc project that compared and evaluated regional development of the information society. The project defined and applied a set of common regional indicators on internet usage by citizens and businesses, eGovernment and broadband infrastructure. It produced a shared methodology, made a set of indicators and guidelines for sampling and surveying, and undertook two rounds of surveys

in the 12 participating regions to produce comparable sets of data. Its results have been used in regional evaluation and policy-making, and have enabled policy-makers to better understand the impact of information society investment. The data and methodology are also of interest to other EU-funded projects.

Regional policy-makers and key local actors are the focus of **PEARDROP**, a new FP6 project which aims to speed the take-up of results from EU-funded research on digital business ecosystems. It will draw together some first regional deployment experiences and results, converting these where necessary into layman's terms, with a view to making them more accessible and of more practicable use to regional policy makers, especially those concerned with regional operational programming and with eBusiness development.



PEARDROP expects to increase significantly the number of regions that are interested to adopt, actively participate in, or consider deployment of, innovation and digital business ecosystem research and models. It will seek to better understand critical success factors in terms of the behaviour of regional development agents, and will propose systems (tools, methodologies and models) for assessing the risks and barriers, as well as the benefits and effectiveness of such approaches and related policy interventions.

OPAALS, an IST network of excellence, recognises that to achieve sustainable digital business ecosystems we need to understand in depth the way in which SMEs collaborate to create and share knowledge, including their regional context. It plans to develop an integrated theoretical foundation for research on the subject and is the first step towards a strong research community on open knowledge and open innovation. The resulting research community will bridge the social science, computer science, and natural science domains.

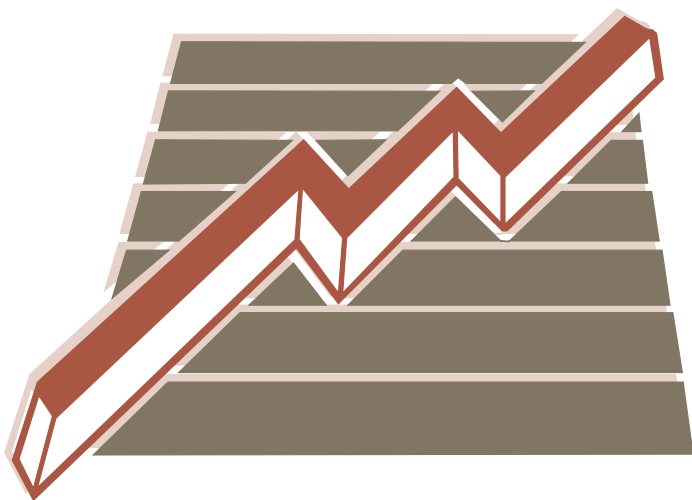
Benchmarking the Transformative Use of ICT in EU Regions

To date most work on benchmarking ICT in Europe has concentrated on the relative prevalence of individual technologies in nation states. Given the complex substitution opportunities ICT offers, this provides little insight into developments of far greater importance: the transformational impact of ICT on the economy and society. It also ignores the fact that ICT innovation and impacts are best observed at regional rather than national level. Thirdly, the role of regional culture in influencing knowledge society related policies in a given regional setting has generally been overlooked.

These transformational effects of ICT can be at the level of the individual, of a company, or of the regional public sector. In all of these domains, networks (social, institutional and organisational) and networking processes play a key role. This means the utilisation of ICT by regional agents to exchange knowledge and information, or to collaborate with other agents within the region or beyond.

To meet the needs of evidence-based policy, the **TRANSFORM** project will deliver tested methods for benchmarking 'transformative' use of ICT in European regions. It will carry out in-depth primary research in 16 case study regions across Europe and construct and test a set of indicators on ICT-related transformative change at regional level. Analytical tools will be applied to understand why in some regions, despite high rates of adoption of ICT, transformative change does not occur. A second strand will develop and refine methods for benchmarking European regions with respect to the transformative use of ICT. The resulting framework will help describe what it is about regional cultures and regional institutional capacities that lead to the observed, widely varying outcomes.

The outputs are expected to contribute to i2010 and wider policy development.



> PROJECT DETAILS

OPAALS - Open Philosophies for Associative Autopoietic Digital Ecosystems

✉ p.dini@lse.ac.uk • 🌐 www.opaals.org

PEARDROP - Promoting Ecosystems and Regional Development in Support of Regional Operational Programming

✉ ghughes@irisi.u-net.com • 🌐 www.digital-ecosystems.org/de/refs/ref_proj.html

TRANSFORM - Benchmarking and Fostering Transformative Use of ICT in EU Regions

✉ transform@empirica.com • 🌐 www.transform-eu.org

UNDERSTAND - European Regions Underway towards Standard Indicators for Benchmarking the Information Society

✉ info@understand-eu.net • 🌐 www.understand-eu.net

> Rural Broadband for All

Research is one of many policy instruments being mobilised to accelerate the roll-out of advanced broadband communications infrastructure in Europe's less developed regions.

Policy Context

High-speed – or ‘broadband’ – internet access is essential to the prosperity and future development of Europe's regions. Broadband services are a prerequisite for eBusiness, and for the growth and jobs on which regional economies depend. Broadband allows individuals and organisations to communicate and access services regardless of their geographical location. By its very nature, broadband bridges distances and is particularly beneficial to the development and attractiveness of remote and rural areas.

Nevertheless, broadband roll-out has been concentrated in more populated areas. Commercial deployment in remote and scarcely populated regions has generally been slower than in urban areas. At the end of 2005 an estimated 13% of the EU population, or about 25% of households, had broadband access. In the EU-15 this increased to 90% of the urban population but only around 60% of businesses and households in remote and rural areas. Broadband speeds are often lower in the countryside too, which makes it difficult to carry the large volumes of data needed for eBusiness, eGovernment, eHealth and multimedia content applications.

Market dynamics suggest that commercial forces will drive further deployment, although some areas of the EU will suffer delayed coverage or will be excluded altogether from broadband rollout. Under these circumstances, public intervention may be considered desirable or necessary. The scope for public intervention in under-served areas was addressed in eEurope 2005. The recent European initiative for the Information Society, i2010, addresses the broadband territorial digital divide within the wider framework of elclusion.

A Communication issued by the European Commission in March 2006 commits to mobilise all policy instruments – EU telecoms legislation, structural and rural funds – to accelerate the roll-out of advanced broadband communications in Europe's less-developed areas.

The Communication proposes action on two fronts. Firstly, it urges Member States to strengthen national broadband strategies. These should set clear targets and reflect regional needs, including a strategic approach to making use of EU and national funding in less-developed or rural areas. Secondly, it steps up the exchange of best practices. A website will be set up to act as a single meeting point for local authorities and industry players to exchange information and gather experience, and a large ‘Broadband for All’ conference will be held at the start of 2007 to showcase the benefits of broadband services to the rural communities.

In addition, efforts will be made to mainstream experiences on broadband and rural ICT under rural development programmes. The EU's Rural Development fund is worth €70 billion for 2007-2013, with national funding on top. Member States are being encouraged to use this fund to tap the potential of broadband in their national rural development strategies.



Innovation in Broadband Communications Infrastructure

A number of EU-funded research projects have addressed the technical and economic obstacles involved in rural broadband access.

For instance **RURAL WINS**, a thematic network under IST-FP5, brought together players from all over Europe to chart a roadmap towards Broadband for All. The roadmap sets specific targets for the next five and ten years, and recommends the gradual introduction of broadband to rural regions, starting with fixed-line services in integrated areas and satellite-based systems in more remote regions. It makes clear that the more isolated an area, the more public involvement will be needed to bridge the technology divide, since in many rural areas commercial interest may be insufficient to set up broadband infrastructures.

BEACON, an IST-FP6 project, is conducting a socio-economic impact assessment of broadband access and use on eGovernment, eBusiness, eWork and the Single European Electronic Market (SEEM) Initiative. It is analysing the impact of broadband on the most relevant socio-economic issues, including the facilitation of new business models, content development drivers and obstacles, market and work organisation, and the creation of an inclusive, sustainable knowledge economy. The results will assist policy-makers when monitoring policies related to broadband-enabled services in rural and other areas.

One of the barriers to the roll-out of rural broadband is a shortage of quantitative data showing the positive impact of digital services on rural economies.

A-BARD, an IST-FP6 coordination action, is studying all the factors affecting rural broadband, including technology, applications and commercial and political issues. It emphasises that usability and acceptability issues are critical to the widespread deployment and use of ICT in rural areas. Without understanding this, the possible impact of information technology as an external driver of change is significantly reduced.

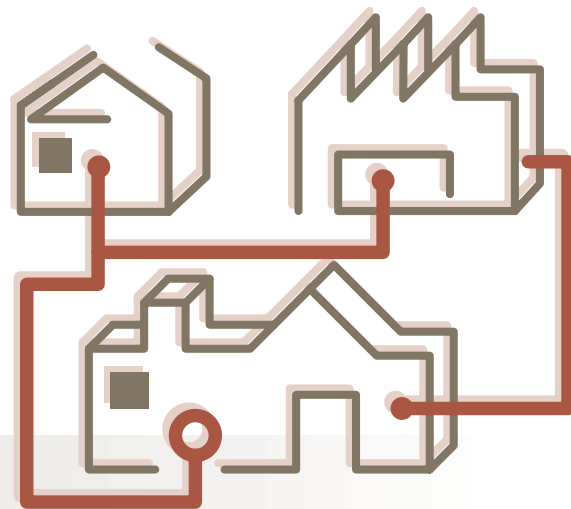
A-BARD analysed various technical solutions to broadband deployment, including technologies like ADSL, cable, satellite, WiMAX and even the promising powerline broadband system that could supply internet access via the electricity grid. Its case studies show that many applications like eGovernment, eHealth, eEducation and eCommerce would have an enormous impact on rural areas. Even when the application is compelling, however, the business case may still be unproven and issues may remain on how to develop the public-private partnership for broadband provision. The project will culminate in a set of recommendations to act as a basis for policy decisions.

High Altitude Platforms for Rural Broadband

Today's users of broadband are generally dependent upon either wired or satellite technologies for their connection to home or office. Cable, particularly fibre, provides excellent capacity, but tends to be viable only in higher density areas. Satellite provides widespread coverage, though with limited capability and capacity. Could high altitude platforms (HAPs) provide a cost-effective alternative?

CAPANINA, a project under IST-FP6, is looking to provide broadband capability from aerial platforms. It aims to deliver cost-effective broadband solutions as a viable alternative to cable and satellite, with the potential to reach rural, urban and travelling users. Examples of HAPs include airships and solar-powered aeroplanes operating at altitudes of around 20 km, well above any other air traffic. It builds on results from the IST-FP5 project HeliNet, which illustrated the potential of the HAP concept and developed an outline system design.

CAPANINA technology will deliver data at rates up to 120 Mbit/s within a 60 km diameter coverage area, both to static users and users moving at speeds up to 500 km/h. Demonstrations took place in the UK and Sweden in 2005 and a global trial of unmanned, solar-powered aircraft is planned.



> PROJECT DETAILS

A-BARD - Analysing Broadband Access for Rural Development

✉ j.oflaherty@mac.ie • 🌐 www.a-bard.org

BEACON - The Potential Socio-Economic Impact of Broadband Access and Use on New Forms of Pan-European Trading, Collaborative Work and Advanced Public Service Provision

✉ susan.sweet@ovum.com • 🌐 www.ovum.com/beatcon

CAPANINA - Communications from Aerial Platform Networks Delivering Broadband Communications for All

✉ info@capanina.org • 🌐 www.capanina.org

RURAL WINS - Roadmap for ICT Solutions for Rural Areas and Maritime Regions

✉ laginako@euskaltel.es • 🌐 www.ruralwins.org

> High Impact Regional Government Services

Regional, local and municipal administrations are at the forefront of efforts to modernise public services through eGovernment.

Policy Context

Regional and local administrations are essential to modern and efficient public services. They are in the front line of major challenges such as ageing, climate change and terrorism. They are also the first port of call for citizens, who are demanding better services and more responsive democracy, and businesses which are demanding less bureaucracy and more efficiency. As the European Union continues to enlarge and embrace greater diversity, regional and local administrations face new needs and demands, such as the seamless cross-border services necessary to increase opportunities for citizens' mobility and for business in Europe.

Countries and regions that score high on public sector openness and efficiency and eGovernment readiness also top the economic performance and competitiveness scoreboards.

This strong link between economic growth and the quality of public administrations means that in the global economy better government – including at regional and local level – is a competitive must. With eGovernment, regional public administrations can make a major contribution to the Lisbon agenda.

These challenges and demands are reflected in the i2010 eGovernment Action Plan, adopted in April 2006.

This seeks to accelerate the delivery of tangible benefits for all citizens and businesses, and to ensure that eGovernment at national level does not lead to new barriers on the single market due to fragmentation and lack of interoperability. The Plan also aims to extend the benefits of eGovernment at EU level by allowing economies of scale in Member States' initiatives and cooperating on common European challenges. Finally, it aims to ensure cooperation of all stakeholders in the EU in designing and delivering eGovernment.

Measures under the Action Plan which will impact particularly on local and regional administrations include: strengthening key enablers of eGovernment services, such as electronic identification and interoperability; use of electronic public procurement to leverage innovation and accelerate the take-up of eProcurement; and intensifying efforts to share resources, good practices and experiences on innovative public services.

Sharing Good Practices for Regional eGovernment

The **Good Practice Framework** provides a platform for inter-administration exchanges. It facilitates the exchange of good practices, their transfer when appropriate, and learning from experiences at local, regional, national, European and international levels.

This helps foster strong commitment and continuity in the practical implementation of eGovernment, makes transfer and learning easier, and maximises the benefits obtained. Different target audiences are identified and their specific needs addressed, with regional and local administrations being a key constituency.

The framework addresses critical issues that might hamper the transfer of good experiences. Differences in legal processes and procedures between administrations is one example. Others include ownership of the systems and their relationship with administrations' public tendering procedures, and aspects of public-private partnerships. These are all considerations

that can hamper full dissemination and transfer of good practices.

eParticipation – the use of ICT to support the democratic process – is an increasingly important topic in national political agendas. A number of countries have already launched initiatives in this field that cover a variety of areas like e-deliberation, e-voting, e-consultation, etc. Diffusion of best practice and support to experience sharing can be important catalysts in the development of eParticipation, and hence actions launched by national, regional and local authorities in this field are among many examples found in the eGovernment Good Practice Framework portal (see www.egov-goodpractice.org).



Innovative Solutions for Municipal eGovernment

Citizens interact frequently with municipalities for everyday necessities such as paying taxes, requesting certificates and obtaining information. Therefore such services should be offered in the quickest, most secure way possible. However, municipalities face difficulties in taking the jump towards delivering online services to citizens. **eMayor** looked into the main barriers to progress. As well as security and technical issues, these included low financial resources, lack of political support and incomplete legal knowledge.

The project developed a new platform to help small and medium-sized government organisations implement eGovernment strategies, with the emphasis on cross-border cooperation. The platform can be used to provide different types of security measures, for example through the use of municipal smart cards. Other applications for eMayor include preventing fraud (a problem in border areas), and cross-border policing where there is already a legal basis for exchanging information. Another important area for the future looks to be e-procurement; this offers great savings, but will need safeguards in the form of access to all available legal information about companies.

TERREGOV addresses the issue of interoperability of eGovernment services at local and regional levels. It has set up a series of four pilots focusing specifically on social care. Each has many different actors involved in the decision-making process and delivering the service (municipalities, national agencies, associations and NGOs, private suppliers, etc.). This makes the process very complex, as the citizen has to deal with different organisations. It is also slow and inefficient for the administrations involved, which are not necessarily well interlinked. TERREGOV will link administrations together to deliver public services in a smart and transparent manner.

Sustainable Cities for the 21st Century

Developing intelligent and sustainable cities for the 21st century is a strategic priority for city administrations, citizens and businesses. **IntelCities**, a project under IST-FP6, provides the tools and expertise to enable decision-makers and citizens to transform public services and create intelligent urban environments. Improving quality of life, inclusion and diversity requires new and imaginative solutions.

IntelCities has developed the eCity Platform to provide easy-to-access and easy-to-use eGovernment services and urban information within any city. Cities can exploit IntelCities' innovative e-services through a unique set of e-learning tools, handbooks and assessment and benchmarking tools. The services will benefit employment and training, media services (via PC and digital TV), transport and mobility, planning, and environmental simulation and regeneration.

The project involved a partnership of 22 European cities, 20 ICT companies, and over 30 research bodies. With support from Eurocities, their partnership is continuing through the IntelCities Alliance which will disseminate the project findings and deploy the results.



> PROJECT DETAILS

eGovernment Good Practice Framework

✉ info@egov-goodpractice.org • 🌐 www.egov-goodpractice.org

eMayor - Electronic and Secure Municipal Administration for European Citizens

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IntelCities - Intelligent Cities

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