

Editorial

As new Director of the Mid-West Regional Authority Ireland I am delighted to welcome you to this edition of the CitizenFirst Newsletter.



eInclusion aims to prevent the risks of 'digital exclusion', that is to ensure that people in less advantaged areas of the participating regions and those of our communities with special needs are not left behind and also to avoid new forms of exclusion due to lack of digital literacy or of Internet access.

The CitizenFirst Project will undertake a number of exciting eInclusion Initiatives in 2008, the final year of the project. The aims of these initiatives will make a difference in our communities, to enable younger, older and people with special needs to access the public services of regional and local government easier.

eInclusion is a very important focus within the European Commission & Commissioner Reding formally launched the "e-Inclusion: be part of it!" Campaign in 2007. The four NWE Regions of CitizenFirst, Mid-West Ireland, Cambridgeshire UK, Eindhoven The Netherlands & West Flanders Belgium will be very active in 2008 with various dissemination events and promotion within the regions. I would like to thank all of the partners for their enthusiastic participation in this worthwhile initiative. For further information on these please visit the CitizenFirst Website www.citizen-first.net

Liam Conneally,
Project Manager, CitizenFirst Director,
Mid-West Regional Authority, Ireland

Launch of the Citizen First for e-Inclusion phase of the project

The Citizen First project has been extended. This 13 month extension will run until October 2008 and is called Citizen First for e-Inclusion. In this second phase of the project the Citizen First local e-Government citizen-centric services will be built on, broadened and extended to the next stage of socially inclusive citizen-centric e-Government services. This is done in preparation for Interreg IV, with its wider social inclusion and participation issues. Four of the original five Citizen First partners aim to go beyond the results already achieved and to enhance, demonstrate and disseminate the best practices of the Citizen First project to all NWE regions. This includes making available key practical guidelines. Citizen First for e-Inclusion will in this way extend the work of the original project, thus making local ICT e-Government services more citizen-centric as well as socially inclusive.



The partners intend to achieve this by firstly building on what has been learned in the current project, secondly by extending each region's suite of citizen-centric services within their local context and thirdly by disseminating the experiences and results to all NWE regions. Building on what has already been learned will be done through transnational cooperation, the sharing of experiences and best practices and the production of practical guidelines. The extension of local citizen-centric services will be accompanied by objectives to deliver best practices in e-Inclusion public services. The dissemination of experiences and results will be done in a proactive manner in the form of a series of booklets that will be made freely available on the Citizen First website, www.citizen-first.net. This will all culminate in major, NWE-wide conference in September 2008.



Citizen First for e-Inclusion aims to secure fair access to the data, communications and knowledge infrastructure of the Information Society, thereby addressing priority 2 of Interreg IIIB: External and Internal Accessibility. By promoting (all types of) IT-based networks, services and applications with a territorial relevance and by contributing to services in less well-equipped regions this can be beneficial to all NWE regions. Citizen First for e-Inclusion also hopes to improve territorial development and cohesion by building on the already successful Citizen First project. Furthermore, it addresses upcoming priorities from the draft operational programme 3, Transnational Territorial Cooperation 2007-2013 and issues such as the lack of transnational governance relations. ○

eInclusion Workshop

Themes: eAging & Hard to reach groups
19 March 2008 - 1.30pm – 4.30pm,
Templegate Hotel, Ennis, Co. Clare,
MidWest Ireland

This workshop will form part one of two workshop sessions on eInclusion. The workshops are aimed at

public, local & voluntary stakeholders working on providing solutions to social exclusion in our communities by exploring the benefits of Information Communications Technologies.

Second International CitizenFirst Conference

26 September 2008. MidWest Ireland,
More information soon.

Focus Ieper Conference

Putting the Citizen First – How Technology can help

The Citizen First Conference was held in the City of Ieper (Belgium), on 13 and 14 September 2007. This major dissemination milestone coincided with the start of the extension phase of the project. This conference was held to share the experiences and best practices of the three years the project had been running and was aimed at regional and local authority officers and politicians.

Day 1

On the first day of the conference workshops with visits to four subprojects were held:

1 – The Argos Training Centre

Argos provides basic ICT training, primarily aimed at the elderly. Argos director Anita Gillis explained how they have provided free training for 240 people, 73% of which had never worked on a computer before, with an average age of 57. Argos teaches in a very individual and interactive manner and has developed this computer course itself especially for Citizen First. Keys to success were a large PR and media campaign and an enthusiastic team of tutors. >



2 – The Youth Club

Jimmy Vancalbergh (social welfare, City of Ieper) gave a presentation about a platform he developed for the City of Ieper's website. This platform was meant for citizens and social organisations to participate with and give input to the Ieper Commission for developing the Ieper Social Plan. The platform ran for 6 months and was intended not only for providing information, but primarily for interactive dialogue and discussion. In that respect, it was Ieper's first step in e-Participation. Jimmy was very honest in saying this didn't work out the way they had hoped, very little interactive dialogue and discussion took place. He reflected extensively on the possible explanations for this, which provided the participants of the workshop with a lot of valuable information.



3 – The Library PIAP

During a visit to the tourist information centre/library a presentation was given about the PIAP and its use. There are more PIAP's in Ieper, for example in City Hall, that are very successful (over 4000 sessions since installation), but this particular PIAP is special because it caters primarily to foreign visitors. Recent usage figures show an average of 33 sessions per day, with checking e-mail via webmail as most popular use. This in itself is a major lesson learned, because initially this was not envisioned as the primary use of the PIAP. Hotspots are a feature which allow details to be added to images and for images to be linked together – for instance – an individual can be traced through different photographs.

4 – De Spiegel (the Mirror)

De Spiegel is a pub for people with special needs, for example disabled people and the homeless. Apart from being a meeting place, social profit organisation de Spiegel provides people with special needs with PIAP's and ICT aides (for example Braille readers and voice output for the blind). They also provide training courses and individual support for people with special needs. Wim Moeyaert from working group Vorming en Actie (Education and Action) explained how the Spiegel started in the Citizen First project with a survey amongst disabled people. This survey, that was meant to find out the needs and desires of disabled people, was carried out by several organisations from the City's of Ieper and Kortrijk as part of the Citizen First project. v

The rest of the programme for the first day included a nocturne in Flanders Field Museum, a reception in City Hall and the witnessing of the Last Post Ceremony, which takes part every evening at 20.00 in the City of Ieper.

Day 2

The second day of the conference started with addresses by Mr. Luc Dehaene, City Mayor of Ieper, Mr. Olivier Baudalet, DG Regio Territorial Cooperation, European Commission and Mr. Jan Deprest, Chairman of FOD ICT, the Federal Public Service for Communication and Information. These addresses were followed by a presentation by Mr. Micheal Mulquin from the Citizen First project and a panel discussion. Cllr. Lilly Wallace from the Mid-West Regional Authority, Ireland, introduced the parallel workshop sessions. These workshop sessions had introduction presentations by moderators that addressed specific projects and group discussions on the experiences and suggestions from the participants.

In the first round there were workshops called Empowering Communities and Engaging Young People. The former workshop considered empowering citizens in their communities to use ICT more frequently as a tool to interact with the public service providers and the needs of communities in this respect. The latter tried to answer the question how ICT can increase the interaction of young people with local and regional authorities. The workshops in the second round were called Inclusion of People with Special Needs and Training and e-Learning. They respectively addressed the issues of the needs of disabled people and how ICT can improve their quality of life (including a presentation about the website www.icthelp.be) and the training of >



From left to right: Michael Mulquin, Citizen-First Project; Luc Dehaene, City Mayor of Ieper; Cllr. Lilly Wallace, Mid-West Regional Authority Ireland; Olivier Baudalet, Territorial Cooperation, DG Regio; Jan Deprest, Chairman fedICT, Belgium; Joseph Verschoore, Schepen stad Ieper.

citizens (especially the elderly) and community groups in ICT, e-Learning tools and the question how communities can obtain the maximum potential from e-Learning.

In conclusion, we can reflect on a very successful conference. There has been enthusiastic interaction by all participants in the visits, the panel discussion and the workshops. There was plenty of opportunity for everybody to share their experiences and best practices. Everybody left with a lot of valuable information, very satisfied by the excellent organisation of the conference by the City of Ieper. ○



Citizen First for e-Inclusion – Kortrijk

Kortrijk is very happy with the extension of the Citizen First project. Firstly because Kortrijk is very satisfied with the results that up till now have been achieved in the original project. Secondly because this extension will make it possible for Kortrijk to realise several new initiatives in the field of e-Inclusion.

Thirdly because Kortrijk can learn more and further from her partners in the project this way. This is why Kortrijk is entering the second phase of the project with the fullest of confidence. This feeling is intensified by the fact that Kortrijk has a new sub partner in the extension of the project. HOWEST school of higher education of West-Flanders, department HIEPSO will join the City of Kortrijk, Mentor VZW and KATHO school higher education, department IPSOC.

Kortrijk is proud of the results of the Citizen First project up till now. Besides eight internet kiosks a network of PIAP's has been built up. Almost 4000 citizens have been educated in the basics of computer use and the internet. Also, several computer courses for people with special needs have already been organised. These are beginner courses for adults and children with a light mental handicap and people with an auditory handicap, organised by Mentor VZW.



It is exactly these types of courses that Kortrijk will extend in the extension of the project. Mentor VZW will continue to organise these types of courses in the extension, hereby catering to the needs that obviously exists. In the second phase, KATHO will concentrate on those senior citizens that have not been previously reached in the first phase of the project, the vulnerable senior citizens (those who do not have knowledge of computers or access to the internet). New sub partner HOWEST will reach out to young, unemployed people with a low education. ○



Computer course Diploma event at Mentor Nov07



Cambridgeshire Citizen First for e-Inclusion initiatives

Good progress has been made on Citizen First for e-Inclusion initiatives across Cambridgeshire. A targeted approach to work with partner agencies across the county's network of community access points (CAPs) has been developed, aiming to reach key hard to reach community groups.



New links have been made with multi-cultural communities in Cambridge city through the Cambridgeshire Community Archive Network (CCAN). Volunteers from the city's Untold Stories project will become part of CCAN, encouraging a wide range of multi-cultural communities to share their memories and improve access to online information and services.

In Fenland work with migrant worker families is being developed in partnership with the Youthoria project, aiming to work with the children of migrant workers in CAPs – also improving access for their parents to online services. Youthoria workers will also be focusing work with young people in Fenland on CAPs, running internet and multimedia sessions.

Two strands of work will also build key links to the county's traveller community. The CCAN project has agreed a partnership with the Romany Theatre Company in Cambridge, encouraging members of the traveller community to use CAPs to add their valuable oral histories to the online CCAN collection. Once introduced to CAPs, travellers will be able to make wider use of online access to information and services. Similarly, new links with the Traveller Liaison team in Cambridge have been made and planned work will include the use of an innovative multimedia minibus equipped with PCs and audio/visual recording equipment, ideal for offering information and services to hard to reach younger people.

Cambridgeshire has also been incorporating cross-border working into its Citizen First for e-Inclusion initiatives, establishing links with the neighbouring county of Norfolk where the Archiving Rural Community History (ARCH) project has been created – drawing on the experience gained in Cambridgeshire in working successfully with hard to reach communities. ○

Development of Virtual Square (Virtueel Plein)

The Virtual Square concept is based upon the added value of clusters and human networks. The concept has been developed from investigations into the possibilities of ICT as network and cluster technology to improve the liveability of small communities and to offer citizens the possibility to shape their own live (empowering by using ICT).



The initial Virtual Square in the village of Hoogeloon (The Netherlands) consists of a community portal and a number of interactive services, such as repair services, driver services and dinner services. The second phase of this Interreg project, which is a part of Citizen First, will be used to add a number of interactive services to the existing base and to promote the use of these services by the community. An addi- >

tional effect of this action will be the stimulation and the improvement the technical skills of the users, which are mainly elderly people.

An actual portal needs the involvement and active participation of organisations in and outside the village, such as the regional newspaper. Organisations and clubs will get access to the portal and are responsible for their own content. The development of these digital services will be the main goal of the extension of Citizen First. Additionally a PIAP will be installed in Hoogeloon in order to improve the access to the information. Additionally support will be given to the citizens if they like to prove their computer skills. In this way the project will stimulate the community feeling in Hoogeloon. ○



eAging – eInclusion Initiative in Mid-West Ireland

Recent research in Clare County Council has shown that older people experience difficulty in relating to their natural/built environment and neighbourhood; their family and their community of origin. This has resulted from increased mobility of older people, their offspring and extended family. As a result they often live at a distance from both their immediate and their extended family. In addition, many older people in the urban RAPID area originated in rural areas as a result of which their relationship to their present environment/neighbourhood is very different from that of their early formative years. Their sense of belonging still rests with their community of origin. Their consequent feelings of being 'cut-off', 'a burden', 'remote', 'isolated', 'not-belonging', 'fearful' and 'not cared-about' seriously diminish the quality of their lives.

The aim for Mid-West in 2008 through CitizenFirst is to enhance the quality of Older Peoples' lives through strengthening their relationships to their neighbourhood, family and community of origin by the use of ICT. ICT has the capacity to compress time and space. It can facilitate bringing closer the past and the future as well those at a distance - family, friends and community.

Other eInclusion Initiatives in Mid-West will concentrate on people with special needs, disadvantaged communities and how ICT can address issues of eAccessibility in the Mid-West Region of Ireland. ○



The e-Inclusion: be part of it! campaign is aimed towards improving the awareness of digital exclusion problems (the digital divide) and digital inclusion opportunities. The website offers the opportunity to improve the visibility of e-Inclusion good practices and planned initiatives. It also establishes a platform for networking and the joining up of actions by civil society, industry and public authorities.

Anyone who has experience or information to share which is relevant to e-Inclusion in Europe can participate in this initiative. By participating, one becomes associated with the efforts of the Commission and many others to promote e-Inclusion. On the website, cases can be contributed and become part of the "e-Inclusion Call for Contributions". The Citizen First project is one of many (800) cases currently contributed. You are kindly invited to become a member of the e-Inclusion: be part of it! initiative by registering yourself on the website www.epractice.eu ○



The European Commission has launched a new e-Inclusion initiative. It is a call for public and private organisations and individuals to share their initiatives,

knowledge and experiences on e-Inclusion. Pivotal in the Commission's 2008 e-Inclusion initiative is the website www.epractice.eu. In the extension of the Citizen First project, the Citizen First partners intend to actively participate in this initiative and to contribute their initiatives to the website.

e-Inclusion is the use of ICT to overcome social and economic disadvantages and exclusion, especially for already disadvantaged people. The idea is to create new opportunities by connecting people to jobs, new forms of communication and participation and to public services. >

The CitizenFirst project is a project funded by the INTERREG IIIB North West Europe Programme.
 More information on the CitizenFirst project: www.citizen-first.net
 More information on the INTERREG IIIB NWE-ENO Programme: www.nweurope.org

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