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	Roadmap for ICT solutions for Rural Areas and Maritime Regions		Workshop Report
	Version	Date	Author
	<i>1.3</i>	<i>17/12/02</i>	<i>EUSKALTEL</i>

ICT Solutions for rural areas Information Society and Rural Development. Evolution Scenarios

Brussels, 11st December 2002

Rural Wins Workshop report



Find updated information in the web site of the project:
<http://www.ruralwins.org>





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Annex: List of participants

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Introduction


This document presents the discussions developed during the Workshop held in Brussels (Dec, 11th 2002) to present the progress of Rural Wins project and to form the basis for the elaboration of a strategy for the participation in the Sixth Framework Programme of projects dealing with the Information and Communications Technologies and Rural Development issues. The contents of the document have been drawn from those presented in the workshop and from the Feedback forms handed in.

The registration for the meeting (189 registrations) exceeded the room capacity and some registered persons were requested not to attend the meeting with the organisation compromise to send the Workshop Report and additional Rural Wins information. The final attendance was of 108 persons representing 88 organisations, out of them 43 regional representatives from 23 different countries. (a list of workshop participants and registrations may be found in annex).

The workshop was divided in three sessions:

- the first one for institutional presentations from the European Commission and the Basque Government Agriculture Department
- the second one with technical presentation from different rural development and information technology projects, including Rural Wins
- the third one, an open discussion session with discussion of ideas for future development.

This report presents the conclusions from the third session, and includes as annexes the presentations from the first two ones, and some of the electronic files of the presentations of the third.

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Rural Wins Workshop

The ICT and Rural development Paradox

One of the conclusions from the consultation work in Rural Wins has been the identification of the Rural ICT Paradox:

while ICT should contribute to the reduction of gaps in quality of life standards between urban and remote rural citizens, the lack of broadband access has increased this gap (now the rural citizen has the additional need to go to the city to have full access to global Information Society)

One of the reason for this seems to be that left to market forces alone, society has not been able to find solvent business models for rural broadband. Public-Private partnerships may be the short term solution to this.

Technology alone will not provide the solution to Rural Development

ICT do have the power to contribute to eliminate the quality of life gap between rural and urban citizens, but it was widely agreed that information technology solely cannot be proposed as the solution for Rural Development. Several other issues must be closely considered: environment (impact on and opportunities from), sustainable development, cultural diversity, socio-economic differences. The regional approach, as justified in the first session by the institutional speakers Mr. Salmelin and Mr. Albizu, was agreed as the most adequate.


The floor discussed several of these issues and their impact on the deployment of ICT applications in Rural Areas.

The more accepted idea was that for the implementation of ICT in rural areas those issues need to be analysed jointly with more technology ones, being these last ones the core component of IST projects in FP6.

In this sense, the dilemma between technological or sectorial focused projects was not seen as such. The rural component of the problem is of a magnitude enough to prepare proposals (for Integrated Projects and for Network of Excellences) focused on the development of technology solutions specifically addressed to it - as opposed to address more general problems which could eventually solve some rural problems-.

Some of the non technological issues to tackle will be:

- social capital metrics
- geographical sustainability. Rural-urban cooperation.

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- impact on the environment (let the rural world keep the positive rural characteristics while satisfying their citizens)
- feasible business models


Looking for the most successful technology

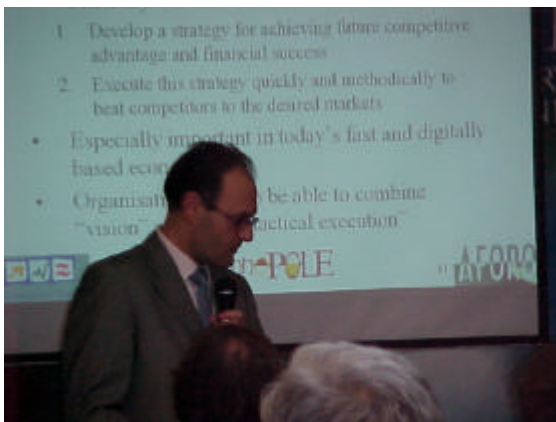
Even though it is widely accepted that finding a killer application for the rural world would help to eliminate the existing gap, no methodology has been proposed to identify it, probably because there is not, and there will not be, a single one.

The technology solution will be a complex one formed by different solutions at different levels (access, network, application, user interface,..), customised for different locations and sectors, and which do interoperate. The project to be designed should take into consideration all the components. Besides it should make use of the currently existing infrastructure technologies.

The development of a set of technologies to allow a user friendly and affordable access could be the basis of one Integrated Project. Rural Wins partners have presented a technology solution based on a cost effective **Multi-Service platform** which will provide the same services through the same interfaces anywhere, including in remote areas, using the best device for each application. The platform will be based on a mixed centralized/distributed IP architecture. A condition for acceptance will be that it is able to interoperate with the different available broadband networks and to that integrates the vertical industry and horizontal standards and other initiatives (e.g. SEEM, ebXML, SOAP, OASIS, RosettaNet, SWIFT, W3C,). The objective of the platform is to provide **location based services** for the **mobile worker** and **the rural citizen** through their **wearable interfaces**.



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The rural project in FP6

The deployment of ICT in Rural Environments requires more resources and of a more varied nature than those covered by FP6, which are mostly oriented to Research and Technology Development. Additional funds need to be collected from local institutions and from European funds devoted to the Rural Development.

Different types of measures complementary to each other will have to coexist: socioeconomic studies, technology development projects, networks of excellence, and Europe wide demonstrators.

IP project organigram

The Integrated Project could be seen as a subprogramme for rural technology solutions, with cuasi-independent but highly interconnected technology development projects. Demonstration projects have to be part of the project.


Following EC orientations, the project could focus on effectively and efficiently integrating existing solutions into the rural environment.

The Basic **Strategy** for the IP must be: *“**Mobile** worker and people should be broadband connected to their **personal services** independently of its location through their **own wearable interfaces**”.*

Therefore, the main objectives of the IP project would be focussed on **developing** a cost effective **Multi-Service platform**:

- which provides the same services through the same interfaces anywhere, including in remote areas
- using the best device for each applicaton,
- interoperates with the different available broadband networks



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- and integrates the vertical industry and horizontal standards and other initiatives (e.g. SEEM, ebXML, SOAP, OASIS, RosettaNet, SWIFT, W3C,)

Evaluation activities must be embedded in the project from the beginning. Dissemination and Awareness activities do not necessarily need to be considered if all stakeholders participate in the solutions design.

Coordination of large and complex group of organisations requires strong project management. Professional Project Management is seen as a necessary component of the Consortium.


Regional governments participants have to be an important part of the consortium.

Network of Excellence

Such a large constituency of excellent partners (regions, academy and technologists) is calling for the establishment of a organised structure to facilitate exchange of Best and Worse practices and of statistics and indicators of the different regions. This could possibly be structured in the form of a Network of Excellence.

Other activities could include ICT training of rural development practitioners.



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Next steps

The participants in the workshop showed their interest of continuing in the elaboration of the eRural policy. Consortium design, document writing and stakeholders awareness building are some of the tasks to be developed during the next busy months, the goal being to deploy a complete set of initiatives to increase the momentum created by this first workshop. The meetings in Valence and Brussels in the first quarter of 2003 will be the cornerstone for the creation of such initiatives.

Valence conference

Valence conference (Feb,3-4, 2003) will be the following major event in the project preparation.

Regional players should be invited to this conference. Some of the participants agreed to personally invite their local authorities.


Preparation work will be divided among participants. Euskaltel proposes itself to coordinate the work from now to Valence conference:

- this report and presentation slides will be accessible in Rural Wins web page - www.ruralwins.org -
- profiles of WorkPackages managers -for pre-selection- will be requested
- requests additional invitees contacts for Rural Wins and Valence conference
- with the results of the workshop and the feedback forms, an IP draft idea will be built and sent to interested parties before the end of Dec, and eventually a Noe and/or STRP ideas¹.
- during Valence conference, a workshop will be held to decide the core content of the project(s), including the consortium composition.

Institutional introduction


A strategic workshop will be organised in Brussels in March 2003 to introduce the Integrated Projects and other initiatives to European Commission officers and Head of Units, regional governments and major technology players.

¹ Non-disclosure agreement and compromise letters will be requested to eventual participants in IP preparation.

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Annex : List of participants

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