

UNDP AND ICT IN BULGARIA



UNDP – Bulgaria maintains a strong information and communication technologies (ICT) portfolio in line with its global mandate to assist bridging the digital divide and help people in underdeveloped regions in the country prepare to face the difficulties and challenges of knowledge-based society and economy.

In cooperation with national and international partners UNDP initiates, supports, implements or assists the implementation of the following projects:

e-Government in Bulgaria

The project facilitated the setup and currently assists the functioning of a Coordination Center on Information, Communication and Management Technologies (CCICMT) under the auspices of the Council of Ministers. The CCICMT focuses on providing operational, analytical and methodological support to the Coordination Council for Information Society (CCIS) at the Council of Ministers. It works in cooperation with the Ministry of State Administration and Administrative Reform, the State Agency for Information Technology and Communications (SAITC) and other administrative institutions and bodies, as well as with non-governmental organizations and civil society representatives. The Council coordinates the activities of the state bodies in charge of applying the strategies in the information and communication technologies (ICT) sector as well as the program for their implementation, analyzes problems related to strategy implementation in the ICT sector, seeks to provide administrative and technological support to ICT projects, studies possibilities to establish public-private partnerships in the ICT sector, assesses the efficiency of activities in the ICT sector. More information is available at the web-site of the Center: www.ccit.government.bg

T-Centres / i-Centres

Under the project, a broad-base nationwide network of public telecenters is established to provide services to the widest possible range of users in small or economically underdeveloped communities. Key services include Internet access, different types of computer-based training with computer literacy being the most popular.

In 2008 the telecentres are envisaged to start more intensively offering access to electronic services on national and local level. Plans are for the network to gradually turn into a front office of the e-government. Presently, Bulgaria boasts more than 105 telecentres. More information is available at: www.icentres.net

ICT IN BULGARIA

„In the last few years a tendency of increased penetration of Information and Communication Technologies in the Bulgarian society has been observed. In comparison to 2006, the number of households possessing a personal computer (including a laptop or a pocket PC) has increased by 2.0%. Internet is used mostly by young people in Bulgaria: 32.0% of people who enter the network almost on a daily basis are aged between 16 and 24, followed by the age group 25-34 (27.0%). Despite the dynamic development of Internet technologies in Bulgaria, this country is ranked at one of the last places in Europe on use of the Net for E-trade, education or other more specific activities. Data from surveys reveal that 70.0% of people using a computer did not pass any training in computer literacy or have completed such a training more than 3 years ago.

From "Using Information and Communications Technologies in Household" Survey, NSI 2007

i-Government

The project kicked off in early 2006 as a joint initiative of UNDP, the Ministry of State Administration and Administrative Reform, the Institute of Public Administration and European Integration (IPAEI) and the State Agency for Information Technology and Communications (SAITC). The project's key task is to organize computer literacy training for civil servants, magistrates and Ministry of Interior employees throughout the country. More than 43,000 people were trained during the three phases of the project. Another 15,000 state employees are expected to go through specialized training until the end of 2008. The telecentres network and its respective instructors are instrumental for the success of the training process. The project facilitated the certification process for 11 000 employees who got the internationally recognized IT card certificate.

National Research Network (NRN)

The primary task of the Network is to provide fast and high-quality access to the Internet for the Bulgarian universities and research institutes and to connect all to the European Research Network in particular. The European Research Network encompasses more than 26 research networks in 30 European countries. The key target of the NRN is to provide a hi-tech environment for students, teachers and scientists in Bulgaria thus enabling them to more effectively participate in Pan-European scientific and research projects. In 2008 Bulgarian high schools are expected to join the network as well. More information is available at: <http://www.ist.bg>

AT START-UP

New partnership project **Bulgarian Libraries – Access Points to Information and Communication for All** kicks off in April 2008 with a grant of USD 606 000 provided by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The funding is from a special initiative of the foundation's Global Development Program, *Global Libraries*, which seeks to open a world of information and knowledge to more people by helping public libraries provide free access to computers, the Internet, and training. The Ministry of Culture is the lead organization and the United Nations Development programme (UNDP) will act as implementing agency. After the planning process in March 2009, the Ministry and UNDP will present the foundation with a three- to five-year plan to help nearly 1,200 public libraries provide free computer and Internet access, as well as computer training. A potential grant from the foundation would provide funding for computers, training programs, technical assistance, advocacy, evaluation, and project management. Upon request, Microsoft would make a substantial software donation as a part of its partnership with Global Libraries.

GOOD PRACTICES

ESI Center Bulgaria

ESI Center Bulgaria is a branch of the European Software Institute, whose main task is to disseminate and promote good practices in the software industry. The Center was established within an UNDP supported partnership project. The Center provides guidance on strategic and quality management, applying an integrated approach to settle these issues in compliance with the best European practices. ESI Center Bulgaria is part of the network of 7 centers of excellences based in Latin America, Asia and Australia. Since 2006 ESI Center Bulgaria offers services and certification to clients from the region of South East Europe. UNDP and the ESI Center Bulgaria signed Memorandum of Understanding to maintain strategic partnership relations in the future. More information is available at: www.esicenter.bg

Support to e-Government Initiatives Based on Free/Open Source Software (FOSS) at the Local Level in South-Eastern Europe

UNDP and Internet Society – Bulgaria (ISOC-Bulgaria) implemented a project to support municipal authorities in South-eastern Europe in using the Internet to more adequately meet citizen needs. This was the first e-government project in the region using free and open source software (FOSS) to improve transparency in management and citizens' access to municipal services. This project was implemented as part of a large-scale global UNDP programme targeted at building national capacity through the establishment of a host of regional centers using FOSS. More information at www.foss.bg

Support to entrepreneurship

Job Opportunities through Business Support – the JOBS project assists the economic development of underdeveloped areas in the country. Its 43 business centres and business incubators throughout Bulgaria support micro and small business development. The centres offer Internet access, information on domestic and international markets and assist the establishment of business contacts in Bulgaria and abroad. Often the JOBS centres are used for computer-based training. In some municipalities the JOBS centres are the only ones offering access to the Internet and new technologies as a whole. Most of the companies working with JOBS now have their own Internet pages. JOBS also helps Bulgarian crafts set foot on the world market by maintaining two Internet sites that offer articles made by Bulgarian craftsmen and products of local companies: www.madeinbulgaria.bg and www.craftcenter.bg. More information is available at: www.jobs-bg.org

Bridging the Digital Divide – the Experience of Bulgarian Chitalishta

Within the framework of the "Community Development and Participation through the Chitalishte Network" project, Internet centres were set up in 25 Chitalishta in remote or underdeveloped municipalities in the period 2001-2004. The centres hold mainly computer literacy courses, offering other IT services as well. Under the "Chitalishte" project an Internet portal site of the Chitalishta and a digital library were developed. Some 500 Bulgarian Chitalishta are connected among themselves and with the world through their portal site and network www.chitalishte.bg

UNDP Partners

National: Council of Ministers, Ministry of State Administration and Administrative Reform, State Agency for Information Technology and Communications (SAITC), Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education and Science, Center for the Study of Democracy, Center for Economic Development.

International: Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Internet Society, Bulgarian-American Fund for Business Initiative, Cisco Systems, GIPI, Microsoft Bulgaria, USAID.

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