The development of a network to foster digital democracy.

Name :   Network for Union Democracy

Acronym :   NetUnion

Number   97147

Schedule :   1/1/98-30/9/99

Funding :   325.000€

Geographical coverage : CGIL Lombardia (Italy), CC.OO. Catalunya (Spain), several trade unions from Rhone-Alpes (France).

Contact

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Aims and Objectives

Aims

The idea for starting the NetUnion project was to facilitate the dialogue between EU socio-economic representatives' structures and Institutions and to support the cooperation between them at European level. Another goal was to develop already existing tools for the European Union democracy and to create new ones.

Objectives

- To accelerate the distribution and popularity of Internet access and stimulate its use by trade union members, workers and managers;

- To develop Web interactivity by creating possibilities to communicate with EU representatives and institutions;
- To use technological opportunities to create contacts with EU Institutions, thus fostering a process of understanding the role played by EU Institutions after the start of the Monetary Union;.
- To create a common management culture between EU Institutions from different member states

Target group(s)

The main target groups of the project were trade union members, workers from Lombardia and Catalunya, EU representatives and the general public.

Main Activities

- creation of a multilingual project Web site;
- organisation of several chat sessions and online thematic fora (both at local and European level);
- creation of a public Java-based database on EWC agreements;
- organisation of a teleconference (the first Union experience in this field) in concomitance with the final meeting in Barcelona.

Outcome

Results

- We created and consolidated a common management culture both in our organisation and between the different partners of the project. This was an important achievement, since all partners mean to continue the creation of Internet environments and services in the path traced by NetUnion.
- We experimented and used a set of tools to support management activities.
- We built a mechanism, a set of rules and specific tools for the Quality Management of complex projects in non-profit organisations.
- We realized a service environment which matches with the demands expressed by the target group of the project.
- The environment was built with the direct involvement of users.
- We organised training activities for more than 150 people in our partner organisations. The people involved in the training sessions have been immediately involved in project activities, i.e. chat sessions and the final videoconference.

- Technology experimentation activities were successful and they offered useful hints to improve the use and diffusion of the experiences.
- We organised meaningful opportunities of interaction between representatives of the Institutions and people involved in local activities. This interaction would have been impossible if they were still using traditional communication tools and if they were not convinced of the benefits offered by new technologies.
- Partner organisations mean to continue on the basis of this experience, developing and keeping active the environment and services that are already existing.
- All partners decided to organise permanent services to satisfy the demands which emerged during project experimentation; as for the EWC members, services will focus on the following areas:

  ❍ training and assistance for access to digital and Internet technologies,
  ❍ demand monitoring, organisation and production of Web environments,
  ❍ support to research and organisation of institutional contacts in Europe

  ❍ support to the solution of linguistic problems
  ❍ research and support to the solution of other specific problems

Lessons learned

- given the opportunity, people who would normally not use the Internet can be stimulated to participate in a chat session or a forum discussion;
- Internet is the strongest tool to share information and experience: people should be given more chances to use it;
- trade unions (and social institutions in general) should realize the enormous impact that Internet will have on social and political issues;
- linguistic problems can seriously hinder communication patterns: this is a topic that should be addressed at European level.

Feedback

El País, 25th June 1998 "Tres sindicatos lanzan NetUnion, un proyecto de coordinación en la red - La iniciativa está subvencionada por la Unión Europea"

The article presents the project and its importance, since it is one of the first experiences for European trade unions.

Future Perspectives

The Web site and the on-line fora are still active; EWC members and the public at large will be able to use and implement the EWC agreements database; CGIL Lombardia and CC.OO. Catalunya will continue their collaboration on technological and Web-related issues.