



**Digital Opportunities for Central and Eastern Europe
Community Multimedia Centres**

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FOREWORD

The hundreds of radio stations and telecentres serving the needs of local communities across Central and Eastern Europe offer a solid foundation for new initiatives to bring digital opportunities to those who most need them. The Bucharest Seminar "***Digital Opportunities for Central and Eastern Europe: Community Multimedia Centres***" will explore the possibilities of convergence between radio stations and telecentre facilities as an effective strategy for harnessing information and communication for the development and empowerment of communities.

This document offers an overview of some of the community telecentre and radio projects currently underway in the region. It has not been possible to produce a complete picture of what is in fact a constantly evolving situation country by country and locality by locality. That is why this document has been prepared as an open-ended set of data: its databases, case studies and links are designed to evolve as an interactive resource, created for and enriched by people developing community broadcasting or telecentres in Central and Eastern Europe and their project partners.

Contributions to this document, feedback and updates are sought and can be emailed to bucharest.meeting@unesco.org.

INTRODUCTION : THE COMMUNITY MULTIMEDIA CENTRE

In the era of the knowledge society and the knowledge economy, access to the infrastructure to share information is paramount for social and economic development. It is evident that the traditional forms of information and knowledge acquisition are insufficient to foster an inclusive knowledge society. People and communities need access to mechanisms that provide multiple sources of rapid information and information exchange. The Internet and associated technologies are pivotal to full and effective membership of the knowledge society. However, disparities of access, language barriers, the cost of the technologies and of connectivity, lack of awareness and motivation are creating a growing digital divide which hampers vital access to these important new resources for many.

Community Multimedia Centres are being developed in response to this situation. The CMC integrates community access to information and communication technologies (ICTs), via a telecentre or “telecottage” facility combined with the far greater outreach of local broadcasting.

A Community Multimedia Centre

Combines:

Radio, *by and for local people in local languages. Low-cost, easy to operate, it not only informs, educates and entertains but also empowers the community by giving a strong public voice to the voiceless, encouraging greater accountability in public affairs*

And

Telecentre *facilities offering access to Internet, e-mail, word processing, etc. This allows everyone within a community to communicate and exchange information both locally and globally*

The CMC, by integrating these two facilities, actively combines local contact and global contact, local content and global content, with an unbroken continuum of information and communication between all members of a community, between local, national and international languages, between the spoken and the written word.

CMCs are **cost-effective**: they use broadcasting to raise awareness of ICTs and to involve the whole community in accessing, providing and exchanging information. With training sessions and facilitators, many people and not only the best educated use the CMC's computers. In this way, collective community use of minimal equipment and connectivity offers maximum outreach and impact. The individual user model of access to ICTs in Western consumer societies is clearly inadequate for economies in transition. Even collective community ownership, management and use of these technologies is costly. Their integration with radio enables that relatively high investment to reap maximum returns by reaching the entire community and not only those who would make individual use of ICTs. This puts a different perspective on the problematic issues of sustainability and public subsidy.

CMCs are **country-differentiated**: they are adapted to individual community needs, to each local and national context. Formulated in response to differing contexts and challenges, they exploit the full range of ICTs and their convergence potential. From large-scale, fully

connected networks to local community radio with modest information centres, CMCs are fully scalable, replicable and transportable.

CMCs are **empowerment-oriented**: run by, with and for the community, the CMC overcomes barriers of educational level, language, gender, etc. through pro-active strategies for social inclusion including actively integrating broadcasting and ICTs.

(1) Radio-browsing programmes In these programmes the presenters search the web in response to listeners' queries and discuss the contents of pre-selected websites on air with studio guests. This formula offers indirect but mass access to cyberspace. It overcomes language barriers when the presenters explain the contents of – say an English-language webpage in their national language. It raises awareness of the value of on-line information and encourages listeners to come in and use the computers themselves. It bridges the generation gap by ensuring that people of all ages, whether they go online themselves or not, understand how cyberspace works.

(2) Multimedia databases for development The CMC can gradually build up its own database of materials that meet the community's information needs. Listeners to the radio-browsing programmes are aware that relevant data from the programme can be retrieved in this way. The database may contain administrative forms that can be printed out by users rather than going to an administration to collect the form.

(3) Open learning The CMC exists to meet development needs in such areas as education and training, health and income-generation. The combination of broadcasting with access to Internet and email offers an ideal facility for distance learning. In many cases, it should be possible to combine local library facilities with the CMC.

UNESCO first supported a pilot CMC project to bring new digital opportunities to the region of Kothmale in Sri Lanka. With compelling evidence of the success of the CMC strategy in the Kothmale Internet Project, a series of projects is now underway in three continents. Visit http://www.unesco.org/webworld/public_domain/kothmale.shtml for a full account of the CMC initiative.

PART ONE : AN OVERVIEW

The Seminar organized by UNESCO in Bucharest, Romania in December 2001 aims to provide the impetus for CMC projects in Central and Eastern Europe. First, at a three-day workshop, community project managers, representatives of telecentres, radios and networks will pool experience and exchange ideas on the best ways to harness information and communication for community development and empowerment. Participants will draw up a set of recommendations and guidelines for the promotion and replication of multimedia centres in Eastern Europe, for ensuring full community appropriation of ICTs, offering strategies for sustainability, networking and technical support systems.

These recommendations and guidelines will be made available for different actors in this field to draw on and apply in project development. This will offer a sound basis for the creation of a series of pilot projects in Eastern European countries, with the support of public authorities, the not-for-profit and private sectors and the international community. The technical workshop will be followed by a one-day round table bringing together international and regional donors and development partners to identify priorities and formulate partnership strategies for a regional co-operative CMC programme.

For the purposes of the Bucharest Seminar and the project for Community Multimedia Centre development, this report will look at a range of different types of radio stations – from community radio to private and public stations – which nevertheless have certain key features in common: they reach specific communities and have a sense of mission to serve these communities. The term telecentre refers to shared, community-operated facilities run on a not-for-profit basis, that provide individual access to telecommunication, telematics, computer and information services and that promote community development.

Across Central and Eastern Europe, radio stations and community telecentres or telecottages have multiplied since the transition from former communist regimes got underway. Radio stations have proliferated in most countries of the region, often leading to fierce competition for limited advertising revenue. Indeed in some of the smallest countries of the region, there are currently hundreds of radio stations and not surprisingly those responding to our questionnaire report financial difficulties. Only a minority of all the radio stations in the region however have a “community service” profile. The majority are commercial FM stations with music-based programming. Telecentres by definition have a community service profile as they are created precisely in order to offer their local communities access to ICTs. Although they are growing in number, in some cases even faster than the radio stations, they are spread far more unevenly across the region. Their growth is closely linked to the presence and vitality of national telecentre movements, which function as grass-root citizens associations and are driven by the commitment and energy of individuals within these movements. Elsewhere, a scattering of telecentres generally owe their creation to international development agencies.

Radio stations with a community mission and telecentres throughout the region share very similar general goals (see questionnaires). They report that they seek to meet the development needs of their community in the broadest sense: encouraging democratic practices, human rights, transparency and good governance; promoting inter-cultural dialogue and understanding; meeting specific information needs (e.g. for returnees in the Balkans); stimulating cultural activities and generally supporting economic and social development. Not surprisingly, such aims as these can lead to lobbying and social

campaigning. Often serving a unique role in reaching and giving a voice to local communities, these radios and telecentres seek to bridge the gap between grass-roots needs and views on the one hand, and local or national policy-makers on the other. Another unique role that some report is the identification and exploitation of hitherto unidentified resources, know-how and knowledge within the community. By taking a community out of informational isolation and creating a communication and information system, they encourage a truly community-driven form of development.

Many of the radios and telecentres also focus on specific target groups within the community: young people, women, farmers, refugees, minorities, children and so forth. Most of these say that they would like to do more to develop services and programmes for these groups but would need more funding. In cases where there is sustained funding from a development partner, outreach activities for these groups are achieving notable successes in such areas as educational projects, agricultural services for women farmers, library projects, travelling information services and refugee services. For radio programming in particular, creating contents of high information-value and closely related to the local community's needs is extremely costly compared to musical programmes.

It is clear from the questionnaire responses that most radios and telecentres take a highly proactive approach to the search for funding. The approach is entrepreneurial, with an active search for sustainability. One problem appears to be the difficulty experienced in diversifying sources of revenue, especially in the case of radio stations which have reached the limits of what they can expect from advertising and production revenue. Many report some degree of support from donor agencies or local authorities. However, limited revenue is clearly restricting the number of programmes, projects and activities as well as impacting on skills-levels and equipment needs. The need for training of radio staff is often cited as a priority requirement. Radio stations throughout the region are generally equipped with computers with access to the Internet. This offers encouraging prospects for the development of community multimedia centres. At present, the radios' computer equipment is for staff use. None as yet have walk-in telecentre facilities which could not only expand services to the community but generate revenue.

A remarkable – and encouraging - feature of radios and telecentres responding to the questionnaire is the extent to which they are networked. Not only are the overwhelming majority of respondents members of an association of some kind, but many belong to several networks, including national, regional and international associations as well as regional "networks of networks". This offers the prospect of a particularly high impact of any appropriate new initiatives to develop these radios and telecentres: news of successful strategies can be expected to spread quickly and the networks offer an invaluable framework for sharing experiences and joining forces in new projects.

As the following, detailed chapters indicate, the potential for convergence between radio and telecentre facilities and activities is high and in some places is already emerging as a natural trend.

PART 2: TELECENTRES

Telecentres, also known as Multipurpose Community Telecentres, Telecottages, Telekiosks provide communities with public access points to modern communication and information technology like computers, internet access, copy-machines and fax. Set up in response to the exceedingly high cost of individual ICT ownership and the need for a communal and public space of learning, teaching and civic activities, these centres afford all, even the poorest and least educated community members access and benefit from ICT based information and learning.

Based on the information we received from our survey and research regarding the situation of telecentres in the CEE region, a number of salient points emerge:

The heterogeneity of telecentre development across the region and its link to grassroots/civic initiatives, donor funding and government support

- Some countries display strong movements (e.g. Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia)
- Some countries are in the process of establishing telecentres (e.g. Poland, Slovakia, Lithuania)
- Some show isolated telecentres, usually established with the funding of a development partners or international agencies (e.g. Ukraine, Albania)
- Others to date seem to have no telecentre movement or strategy for implementation
- The presence and strength of telecentre movements show a direct correlation to donor funding and government support, demonstrating the essential role of international development agencies and governments (national and/or local) in enabling a large-scale telecentre start-up and ensuring its long-term sustainability

The flexibility and adaptability of telecentre aims, offers and scope, tailored to local requirements and needs

- Adaptability of the telecentre mission in regards to respective political and economic circumstances (post-conflict reconciliation, promotion of transparency and good governance, reinforcing of civic society,...) financial resources, presence of marginalised groups (refugees, Roma communities, handicapped children...)

The significance and necessity of networking among telecentres within countries/regions and of know-how transfer across borders

TELECENTRE DEVELOPMENT ACROSS THE REGION – A HETEROGENEOUS PICTURE

In examining the development and the current role of telecentres in the Central and Eastern European region, the Telecottage Association in Hungary clearly spearheaded large-scale development and displays the most and advanced and established movement. To date there are 243 telecottages (Teleház) existing, with the number expected to double by the end of 2001.

This outstanding development of telecentres can be attributed to a number of factors, or “success secrets” as Matyas Gaspar, president of the Hungarian Telecottage Association and chief initiator and architect of the movement calls them:

- Enthusiastic and dedicated support from believers in the movement (in the Hungarian case IT professionals, community workers, librarians,...)
- Political neutrality and transparency of the movement
- Effective lobbying work at the local, regional and national level

Another key factor that must be added is donor as well as governmental support. The US development agency, USAID provided the funding for the establishment of the first phase of Hungarian telecottages. The project, started in 1996 and implemented by USAID's partner organisation, the Budapest based *Foundation for Development of Democratic Rights (FDDR)*, led to the establishment of 30 telecottages.

Following this highly successful first phase implementation, the telecottage movement was able to secure financial support from the Hungarian government. Through continued policy advocacy and the demonstration of the telecentres' positive impact on development in rural communities and the fostering of an inclusive knowledge society, the telecottage movement has by now become a valuable partner in the government's efforts to bridge the digital divide. This recognition goes so far as to include a telecottage strategy in Hungary's *National Development Plan (Széchenyi Plan)*, resulting in significant funding and resources, thus ensuring long-term sustainability.

Today, the telecottage movement, united under the roof of one association has become an influential constituency, able to collaborate with the administration and with regulatory bodies to formulate policies and create an enabling environment.

Telecentre Development in Yugoslavia, Romania, Slovakia, Poland and the Baltic

Romania and Yugoslavia are the other two countries in the region with significant, albeit different, telecentre movements. In both countries, the drive to establish telecentres was domestic, originating from local NGOs, businesses and civil groups. Only after a number of telecentres had already been established independently, did the local telecentre initiatives and operators approach international donors (USAID, the Soros Open Network,...) as well as the Hungarian telecottage partners (FDDR and Telecottage Association) for funding and support.

The presence of significant Hungarian minorities in these regions had naturally enhanced the awareness regarding the Hungarian movement and consequentially facilitated cross-border

collaboration. The success of this, initially informal, co-operation demonstrates the impact of networked grass-roots collaboration, on a regional as well as international level.

Yugoslavia

Building on local initiatives, the large scale establishment of Yugoslav telecottages (link to project documentation from DemNet) was made possible through a USAID grant. In July 2000, FDDR received US\$ 692,000 to establish 30 telecottages in Yugoslavia (specifically in Serbia and Voivodina). Partners in the program include the Hungarian and Yugoslav Telecottage Associations and the Telecottage Public Benefit Company, thus directly leveraging and transferring know-how gained in Hungary. In the short time of existence, the telecottages have already achieved high levels of acceptance, being used by children and adults alike and are well on their way of becoming of becoming integral parts of the community.

Romania

The first initiatives of Romanian telecentres were also driven by local NGOs and city hall, primarily in areas with a large number of Hungarian speakers. Since then, the movement has grown significantly, and while still serving the Hungarian minority, it is now seen as a universally applicable and accepted program for rural development and community empowerment.

In Romania, two partnering local NGOs, the **Centre for Rural Assistance (CAR)** www.rural-center.org and the Hygeia Foundation through the **Resource Centre for Non-governmental Organisations (CREST)** www.crest.ro support telecentre initiatives. Through funding from international agencies (Soros Open Network , SEQUHOIA Foundation) and the UK, Dutch and Canadian embassies in Bucharest, these organisations provide financial, technical, organisational and management support to telecottages. To date 26 telecottages exist in the country, in Transilvania, the Banat and north-western Romania, with an expansion planned in the coming years, depending on available funding. Few resources are provided from the Romanian government, thus raising serious sustainability concerns for individual telecentres. In order to promote visibility and put telecentres on the national rural development agenda, CREST and CAR have joined to lobby governmental institutions and to provide a uniform internet platform www.telecentru.ro showcasing telecottages. A 2001 TeleWorkshop in Timisoara, brought together not only regional telecentre associations and development partners to exchange best practices and share know-how, but also included representatives of various Romanian ministries in an effort to enhance governmental engagement.

The survey has so far has shown quite developed telecentre movements in some countries, while many countries in the region are still at the very beginning of establishing telecentres in their communities. Grass roots support has formed, grant seeking proposals are being formulated, pilot-sites are being set-up and in some places, governments are already devising national strategies. The development of telecottages thus shows a very varied picture, not only in geographic distribution but also in the form it first manifests itself. The sheer number of efforts that are happening simultaneously across CEE, show the enormous interest in this movement and the recognition of its positive impact.

Slovakia, Poland and Lithuania are concrete examples of countries where a telecentre program is currently being launched. In Slovakia, the recently established Telecottage

Association, (with the support of the FDDR and the Hungarian Telecottage Association) provides training and advice to 14 budding telecottages which should be established by year-end.

In Poland, the telecottage movement is also in its initial expansion phase. The establishment of a pilot- telecentre is included in the government's, *Strategy for Activities for Rural Telecommunications for the years 2000 – 2004*. Currently, through a collaboration between the local telecentre association and the government, a total of 10 pilot-telecentres are being established in Poland's Gemer region to serve as a test-bed for potential further roll-out. Again the association networks with its regional counterparts to draw on experience and know-how.

Regional co-operation and knowledge transfer also characterises the telecentre development in the Baltic Region Drawing on the vast experience gained in Scandinavia, particularly in Sweden, the BITNet project aims to establish a network of over 100 BIT-Houses (Baltic IT Houses, i.e. telecentres) around the Baltic sea, around 10 in each of the 11 regions. After completing a feasibility study, the ambitious Swedish-led project to date is in the process of trying to secure funds for implementation. So far BIT-Houses only exist in Denmark and Sweden. According to the program co-ordinator, Sofia M. Westerberg, the organisation currently focuses on regional capacity building of country partners and project managers.

In addition to this concerted regional telecentre initiative, Baltic countries are launching further projects aimed at creating an inclusive information society in their communities. In Lithuania, a telecentre pilot project headed by Dr. Dangulole Rukauskiene, Head of Kaunas Regional Distance Education Centre at Kaunas University of Technology, focuses on the potential ICTs offer in combating youth-unemployment, while Estonia has already set up a telecottage association.

Isolated Telecentre Projects and Burgeoning Initiatives

In addition to the above mentioned telecentre movements, one finds individual initiatives and the very beginning of concerted telecentre initiatives in numerous other CEE countries. Individual projects are often initiated and operated by international agencies such as the UNDP, OSCE or the Soros Foundation rather than by local organisations. Local NGO support centres, like the Albanian Civil Society Foundation and the Veles NGO support centre in Macedonia, are starting to serve as access points as well, mainly used for email communication.

The following showcase a number of initiatives, currently taking place in the **Balkans**:

In **Albania**, the Soros Foundation operates an *Open Internet Centre* which offers free Internet Access for the Academic and University Networks and has opened First Cyber Cafe in Albania.

The Albanian Civil Society Foundation runs an Internet Centre, with nine computers and reduced prices for NGOs. Only 10-15% of its users are NGOs, however with the majority of the users being students. (source: OneWorld International)

In **Kosovo**, the OSCE operates NGO support centres in seven different locations which the organisation hopes to transfer to local NGOs and wants to turn into public access points.

Internet Project Kosovo (IPKO), an independent non-profit organisation based in Prishtina, with a mission "to help provide the tools, knowledge, and environment required for Kosovo to participate in the global information society" is the country's leading ISP. IPKO provides access to many of Prishtina's 35 Internet cafes, which according to them function as "mini-telecentres" " In addition, IPKO provides free service to key local civil institutions including the University of Prishtina, hospital, library, schools, local NGOs and media. www.IPKO.org

In **Macedonia** the UNDP over the past two years has opened a number of Information and Communications Technology Centres in several municipalities all over the country to raise the skills of youth, vulnerable groups (unemployed, women, refugees) and employees in private and public sector in information technologies. www.undp.org.mk

The Ukraine, Bulgaria, Croatia and Slovenia furthermore report the beginnings of grass-roots driven movements, with the first pilot-centres being established.

TELECENTRE SUSTAINABILITY

'Today the telecottages have a good business plan with their activities focusing on education, distance learning, publishing services and are negotiating with local government to provide services for them. They have a good relationship with the federal government,' says Peter Nizak, Executive Director of DemNet in Hungary.

Telecentres can only unfold their true impact and potential for community development, education and poverty reduction if their presence and functionality are ensured in the long-run. Even though, or particularly because, telecentres are not profit-driven, commercial ventures, a number of factors hold the key for ensuring long-term sustainability. Financial viability and the search of successful strategies and methods towards achieving this goal surface as a universal and fundamental challenge to the movement. Sustainability, in the long- and even immediate term is thus a challenge that echoes in discussions with telecentre association leaders, donor organisations, NGOs and telecentre managers.

The factors surrounding telecentres' financial viability can be grouped around three main groups:

the ability of the telecentres to generate revenue to support themselves
the availability of sustained support from national and international funding agencies,
development partners and the private sector
the role of national and local government in providing an enabling regulatory and fiscal
environment

Revenue generation by telecentres

In order to finance its initial establishment, a telecentre typically receives funds, gifts-in-kind (equipment from IT companies and rooms or a house provided free of charge by the local municipality) and organisational and management support (from another telecentre association or an NGO). While telecentres are not meant to be profit driven, a sound business plan must underlie their operations, with ways to generate revenue featuring as a central component. They must seek to reduce their dependence on external funding and support as much as possible and aim to find ways of creating revenue streams for themselves if they want to ensure their continued existence. (As the centre's goal remains communal, telecentres have to consider that in their search for sustainability they do not end up excluding the most vulnerable part of society, by putting services out of their financial reach.)

The range of revenue generating services offered in telecentres differ quite significantly, based on a community's needs and demands as well as on the equipment available at the telecentre (some telecentres only dispose of a few computer and a copy and fax machine, while other own tele-conferencing, video and radio facilities) Telecentres have become quite creative in devising services they can offer to the community, with the list of offers constantly expanding.

The following list outlines some services typically offered, but is by no means exhaustive:

- Office services (fax, photocopying, computer services)
- Charging for e-mail accounts and Internet use
- Printing of business cards
- Designing web-sites for local business
- Database management and general data-entry jobs
- Renting of the centre's facilities for business meetings
- Renting of equipment to local companies
- Sales of IT-equipment (at preferential rates)
- Editing and translations
- Computer training for companies
- Snack and beverage sales
- IT consultation, trade and maintenance
- Program planning and management
- Homepage design and maintenance
- Telebanking services
- Local media centre services

In order to ensure that sound financial management guides the operations of the telecentres, business models, need to be applied. In Hungary, the Telecottage Association together with its partners is devising a business model and strategies with and for its members. In Yugoslavia, the telecottage managers are undergoing operational and managerial training to ensure good business practices from the onset.

Support from funding agencies, government and the private sector

Even with the best business plan and the most creative ideas for generating revenue, telecentres will, in the foreseeable future, remain dependent on a certain level of external financial support if they are to continue serving as resource and communication centres for the whole community.

Looking at the situation of the various telecentre movements, the importance of sufficient donor as well as government support to the success and viability the centres and their potential for impact in their communities stands out clearly. In Hungary, telecottages receive a combination of, government, international agencies and private sector support. The telecottages are thus very well equipped with close to 90% having computers with internet access, copiers, fax and scanners as basic services. Many further own video cameras, sound equipment like amplifiers and speakers and flipcharts and other educational aids. (*Questioning the Hungarian Telecentre movement* p.13-14) The telecottage movement further disposes of sufficient funds to provide professional training for the telecottage managers both in managerial as well as technical fields. They are thus able to offer the community a high level of service and a great number of opportunities to benefit from ICTs for their development.

Through a significant USAID grant, the 66 Yugoslav telecottages were equipped with modern computers and internet access from the very beginning. In order to ensure sustainability, telecottage managers are trained in issues of quality management, strategic planning and operations management. They participate in study tours to Hungarian telecottages to gain know-how and strengthen cross-border network ties.

While in Hungary, the Telecottage Association has established a fund to (temporarily) support centres in financial difficulties, the issue of sustainability and the ability to provide quality service to the community appears much more acute in Romania. Telecentres received their IT equipment through CAR and CREST, which also further support them with management and operational training to increase professionalism and quality of services offered. However without equally large-scale, structured funding or governmental support at their disposal, the majority of telecentres have not been able to equip their computers with internet access. This lack of Internet access is perceived as the biggest problem by the telecottage managers and figures among their main aims for the future.

High Cost of Internet Access

In many countries in CEE, quality, stability and access costs of telephone lines remain a further big challenges.

“The problem is that telephone and Internet costs are very high and the quality of lines are bad. Because of this, many of the telecottages use satellite receivers to bridge the problem and make the communication faster” says Peter Nizak who is heading the project implementation in Yugoslavia.

The high cost of internet access and the question of renewal of technical equipment remain issues that need addressing. Internet access is very costly and in practice limits the public's usage of the internet's resources. While this makes the availability of public access point even more relevant, it also proves a burden on these projects. Deregulation of the telecommunication markets has already significantly reduced access prices in a number of countries, hopefully this trend will continue across the region, giving more people the opportunity to benefit from ICTs as a tool for improving their lives.

Telecottages as Service Providers to the Government

An active co-operation between telecentres and the local and national authorities, as is already successfully being applied in Sweden, the UK and Canada, could also mutually beneficial for CEE authorities and telecentres. CEE is characterised by a large number of dispersed small rural communities. Providing outreach to these villages and providing them with the same level and standard of services as the urban centres, is proving an increasingly difficult challenge to governments. As citizens are demanding better service and more transparency and governments are hard-pressed to reach isolated rural communities and to step-up their e-government initiatives, community telecentres could serve as ideal platforms.

While retaining their independent role, telecentres can act as contractors or service providers on behalf of the government. Employment services and information, the distribution of official forms, information on government activities and programs, or postal services are initiatives that are already applied successfully in other countries and are currently being negotiated in various CEE countries. The Polish and Hungarian government have already officially recognised the value of the telecentre movement and integrated them into their national rural development plans. Even though telecentre leaders and operators across the region see the value of a collaboration with the government as a way of achieving sustainability, they unanimously stress the utmost importance of the movement remaining civic and apolitical. The centres have to be open sources of independent information and discourse, strengthening the democratisation process and not be seen as taking political sides.

Partnerships between the IT companies and telecentres also prove mutually beneficial. By donating IT-equipment, the companies not only prove their good corporate citizenship, they further are actively investing in building future markets for their products. Microsoft in Romania and Hungary is donating software to telecottages, while the Cisco Academy is training Kosovar internet specialists.

TELECENTRE AIMS, OFFERS AND SCOPE – TAILORED TO LOCAL REQUIREMENTS AND NEEDS

Telecentres display a high level of flexibility and adaptability in response to local needs and circumstances. In their survey responses, telecentre managers from across the region defined the centres aims as follows:

'The aim of the Telecottage is to help the economical, cultural and social development of the community, through taking it out from informational isolation and creating an informing and communication system, which will facilitate the development through identification and exploitation of unidentified resources,' is how one respondent sees the mission.

Another says the aim is to ***'to promote the civic values of democracy through socio-economical and cultural development of rural communities. to be a multifunctional centre, open for everybody'.***

A third is more specific: ***'to give assistance and consulting in issues of interest for the community: economy, law, education, social, health; to organise activities for youth: courses, clubs, camps; to offer services: Internet, computers, copy machines etc.'***

While the basic mission and raison d'être - empowering people to play an active role the development of their lives and communities through the use of ICTs – remains unchanged, the focus and goals of activities and services vary depending on the local situation:

Countries in the CEE region display an extremely heterogeneous picture in terms of their political, economic, ethnic and social composition and situation. While some enjoy a stable political climate and economic growth, others were torn by war and ethnic conflict, resulting in the loss of countless human lives and a destruction of the economy. Some of these countries are in the process of rebuilding their societies, while others find themselves on the brink of renewed war. The numerous conflicts have resulted in a great number of displaced people and refugees, still living in camps away from home and being cut off from their families.

While creating a wealthy entrepreneurial class, the transition from a planned- to a market economy, has left the more vulnerable or isolated members of society at the fringes of this development. CEE is further characterised by high ethnic diversity, with most countries having numerous minorities within their borders. The presence of Roma communities further characterise the region's ethnic composition.

Telecentres focus their activities and services around these social and political issues as illustrated in the following overview:

ICT Infrastructure: provide the community with a public and open ICT access point and equipment

Education: training courses, seminars, round tables, professional qualification in the following fields: IT, foreign languages for both children and adults.

Economy: improvement of access to information, provide opportunities to develop and market products, support the establishment of new business ventures. Tapping into undiscovered resources as business opportunity (local knowledge and traditional skills)

Tourism: identification of local resources and opportunities, developing tourism offers and presenting them on the internet

Community development: serving as a meeting and communication point to initiative joint activities; bring all members of the community together across ethnic divisions;

Cross-border co-operation: identification of necessities and co-operation opportunities

Culture: protection and promotion of local cultural tradition and initiatives

NGOs/Civil sector: identification of active organisations and their potential to involve them in solving the community problems

Environment: awareness raising and protection of natural and environmental values

Democratisation and strengthening of civil society: strengthen level of local democracy through participation of better informed citizens in public policy

Social Integration: program to encourage marginalized groups to use the centre and ensure their inclusion via active outreach.

CASE STUDIES

Telecentres are demonstrating their versatility, adaptability and potential of outreach communities in a number of innovative ways. The following examples, as told by the respective project managers, give an indication of the immense possibilities ICTs offer in providing information and education to communities in adverse circumstances.

Roma Telecottages in Hungary

The integration of Roman communities, who often do not feel welcome or comfortable in using "regular" telecentres has led to the establishment of a number of Roma Telecottages in Hungary which are run by and for the Roma community.

Peter Palvolgyi, Director of the Hungarian Telecottage Public Benefit Co. outlines the programme:

*Roma Telecottages can be defined in two major ways. We consider a telecottage «Roma» if it is either **(1) managed by a Roma NGO**, or **(2) if it is located in a highly Roma populated place** where telecottage services are mostly given to the Roma.*

ad (1) There are 4 Roma Telecottages belonging to the first group. They all are located in cities (instead of villages where most telecottages are), at the following places: Debrecen, Kisköre, Ózd, Gyomaendröd (all in Eastern-Hungary). These telecottages have several common aspects:

the primary target group is the local Roma community

the Hungarian majority has limited access to the telecottages

the most important service is education, especially computer-related training for adults

they are key actors in Roma community development, regularly organising Roma cultural and other community events

they serve special functions: advocacy of the Roma, legal advice, employment programs (goat producing, social land program etc.), advice and training in employment issues etc.

The common problem is the limited access to telecottage services. The Hungarian majority does not frequently visit Roma telecottages, because either is not invited or not willing/like to enter. It raises another problem: the Roma minority itself cannot provide sufficient market for the telecottage, at the same time the services can not be sold for the majority population. Nevertheless, there are some examples where local government buys services from the Roma Telecottage (e.g. computer education) for the benefit of the non-Roma. We call these telecottages « Roma Community Centres and Telecottages », understanding that they have a very special role in Roma community development.

ad (2) In the other group, 3-4 telecottages are identified as « Roma Telecottages ». They are in villages where Roma population tends to 100%, or in larger cities where the Roma live separately from the majority. At this moment, we do not have any study on

their operation, however, we realise that telecottages are extremely needed institutions. We can say that Roma Telecottages are the ONLY places which serve the community as a whole. The most important success is that they are able to keep the doors open and continue their operation.

By the end of 2001, 5 new telecottages will be opened. We will design a special mentor program for their needs, and help them to get prepared.

Infobusses in the Balkans

Another creative and effective means of reaching out to isolated communities where there are no fixed telecentre facilities or where the lack of infrastructure prevents access, is through *InfoBusses*. These mobile ICT and library centres are initiated and funded by the OSI and will operate in Kosovo, Albania, Yugoslavia, Montenegro, Macedonia and Serbia, bringing information and communication within the heart of communities. In order to ensure inclusion of Roma, one of the busses employs a Roma woman who is very successful in reaching out to her community.

Rima Kupryte, Program Manager, Network Library Program, Open Society Institute, Budapest, reports the following:

A project by the Information Program of the Open Society Institute

The InfoBus provides access to local and global information and communication for provincial areas. It consists of a mobile library and an electronic information and communication 'kit'. The InfoBus functions as an on-site email 'post office', local language information provider, lending library, and an outreach 'vehicle' for regional projects.

The information provided and the projects run on the InfoBus are dictated by the local needs of the individual communities they serve. This project provides one InfoBus in each of the following countries; Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosova. and Serbia.

Background:

- *There is a significant lack of access to and availability of information, the media and books outside major cities.*
- *Communications are either expensive, unreliable, or at worst, simply not available.*
- *Organisations (mostly NGOs) who wish to provide information to these communities have problems outreaching to the provinces.*
- *Many ethnic minorities are unable to access information in their own language.*

Providing empowering tools for the general public in the provinces to communicate, learn, develop and be informed remains out of reach in this region for the foreseeable future. This project could offer a viable solution to begin to tackle some of the problems of information access in the provinces.

The activities of the Info-Bus are described in four parts below:

1. Outreach Projects

Working with local partners the facilities of the InfoBus will be used to provide enabling tools, focused information, and projects in the areas of; public health, education, economic and business development, local government information, cultural exchange, womens issues and information for youth. Examples include projects such as; local government citizens advice information in Macedonia, an inter-village 'service and employment' exchange in Serbia, a cross-country children's documentary project in Albania and Kosova.

Special attention will be given to how the information and activities on the InfoBuses may have inter-country applications, e.g., projects run across countries, and exchange of local language information.

2. Local Language Information Provision

The InfoBus will provide a variety of 'live' and 'canned' content from the internet of interest to the communities it serves. Users will be able to access content from the internet through a 'group' gateway, each group will have a different gateway i.e. children, youth, adults. This will include an introductory lesson to the computer, as well as on-demand and pre-selected content from the World Wide Web. Particular attention will be given to the provision of media in local languages.

Support will also be given to encourage the growth of digital content development for this relatively 'new market'. Competitions will be held for the development of both relevant local content (this may range from a local newsletter to campaign specific information) and regional content (this may range from family planning information for women to employment advice for unemployed youth). In particular, efforts will be made to develop information which in other circumstances may not be produced, but has particular value to this audience.

3. Lending Library

The library will provide lending facilities of approximately 2,000 books. These books will be chosen for their relevance to the target groups, and will be rotated with the affiliated libraries' existing collections. The library will also have the opportunity to utilise the publications from the 'Books Across Borders' project. These are books published in the region by one country and used by minorities in neighbouring countries.

4. Email 'Post Office'

Free access to a mailbox (email address) will be provided to users of the InfoBus as well as training on how to maximise its use. A particular focus of the email access will be the provision of a channel of communication with relatives abroad. Where appropriate, there will be an attempt to incorporate existing family reunification projects which utilise email and databases.

Implementation of the project:

The pilot phase of this project is now underway in Kosova. Roll out of all five buses will take place during 2001.

Sustainability of the project is part of this planning phase. Discussions have begun with the relevant local government bodies and Ministries of Culture in each country to develop a sustainability plan. It is expected that the running costs of the Infobus will be

taken over by these bodies after the first year. In some cases these costs will be met from the very beginning.

The organisation responsible for running the InfoBus will be a local library chosen for its enthusiasm and commitment to the project. Librarians will receive training in running and managing the InfoBus, and with the help of advisors this library will identify specific routes and schedules. Discussions are also underway with local NGOs, governments, schools and other interested parties. These organisations will be involved in identifying the needs of the communities the InfoBus serves, as well as setting up and running their local InfoBus.

It is estimated that each InfoBus will service up to 150,000-200,000 citizens in 23-34 villages.

Organisations Involved:

This project co-funded by the Open Society Institute and the Canadian development agency CIDA. Organisations involved are; the Open Society Foundation for Albania, Kosova Foundation for an Open Society, Open Society Institute Macedonia, Open Society Institute Montenegro, Fund for an Open Society - Yugoslavia . As described above the local foundations will work within each country with public libraries, local government, and local and regional NGOs.

Telecentres in Refugee Camps

In addition to the traumata entailed by violent conflict and the loss of one's home, the isolation and lack of purpose felt by refugees in camps adds to their plight. ICTs prove efficient tools of engaging the community and providing them with means of getting in touch with their families and receiving news from home. The following is a case study on telecentres opened in refugee camps in Hungary. FDDR reports:

FDDR opened its first "Internet Telecottage" in the Debrecen Refugee Camp in 1999. The dreamer of the idea was Mr. Peter Tufo United States Ambassador in Hungary - he saw the need of a "Telecottage" type community centre. The Internet room - as refugees called it - was supported by the [United States Agency for International Development \(USAID\)](#). Since April 2000, besides USAID, the [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees \(UNHCR\)](#) has become the main supporter of the programme. This way we had the possibility to open our second "Internet Telecottage" in Békéscsaba in the summer of 2000. In this year we are preparing for a new opening in Bicske Refugee Camp by the repeated support of UNHCR.

GOALS OF THE PROGRAMME

The goal of FDDR programmes is to be benefit to refugees and to the local communities as well. Refugees are able to contact their far away relatives on their mother tongue. The goal is reached through emphasising cultural values and other skills that refugees bring to the communities and through organising joint activities for local inhabitants and refugees accommodated at the Refugee Camps. Refugee-Host cultural and educational activities target Hungarian and refugee children, youth, pensioners and families to help

their shorter integration to the Hungarian society. The institutions of the town and region, as well as the cultural groups and the civil organisations all gave surprisingly great interest to the running programs as well as to their participants. In this way they proved true the needs that we had foreseen in the outset.

NEEDS

▪ *There are no regularly organised cultural/social activities for persons accommodated at the Refugee Camp.*

The local community knows little about who the refugees are, where they come from and what qualities they have.

Refugees are isolated and dependent on others for information; they do not have access to news in their native language.

PLACES OF THE PROGRAMME

Internet telecottage in the Debrecen reception centre

In co-operation with the Debrecen Refugee Facility, Foundation for Development of Democratic Rights (FDDR) initiated the refugee telecottage programme in June 1999 with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The programme's goal is to create the opportunity for refugees to access information via the Internet, maintain contact with loved ones around the world through e-mail, and take part in language and computing instruction and other programmes. Beside computers, there's also a possibility for spare-time activities - magazine reading, games, and so on.

Internet telecottage in the Békéscsaba reception centre

After observing the programme's success, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) became the programme's main financial supporter from April, 2000. Under UNHCR funding, the programme expanded to include a community development component, through which local partner organisations were recruited to help organise numerous programmes for refugees and local residents. These activities hopefully help the strengthen of tolerance, the dialogue and understanding between local residents and refugees. At the same time, a similar programme was launched at the camp in Békéscsaba, where the Internet room opened in August 2000.

Internet telecottage in the Bicske reception centre

Thanks to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) the third Internet room is going to be opened in the Spring of 2001. Similar programme will be launched at the Bicske Refugee Camp with the expected time of the local community development component being August, 2001.

Importance of Strong and Integrated Telecentre Networks

The development and success of telecentres across CEE is very strongly based on networking among telecentres within a region or country or as well as across borders.

As is characteristic of a grass-roots driven, civic movement, initial collaboration among telecentre initiators was rather informal. The enthusiasts interfaced to exchange ideas and provide mutual assistance. However as the movement grew, with more and more people becoming involved in telecentres, the need for organised associations arose.

To date, most countries' telecentres and cottages have formed associations which provide the movement with a visible platform to network around common goals. Associations provide their members with assistance in the fields of training, content development activities, operations and management. Rather than being an isolated rural initiative, they form a constituency with much more weight to lobby the government and interface with the private sector as well as with international agencies.

Due to the heterogeneous nature of the individual cottages in terms of technology and level of experience of the managers, the Hungarian and the Yugoslav Telecottage Associations have established a set of guidelines and minimum criteria, a centre has to fulfil in order to be part of the association and carry the name "Telecottage", thus guaranteeing for certain quality standards. By ensuring a homogeneous level of basic quality across all telecentres, they not only become more effective in helping the community, but also they are able to offer the government and private companies a strong "selling proposition".

Telecentres further network successfully across borders, with the expedience and success of the Hungarian movement enhancing the development of similar programs in bordering countries. The know-how and experience gained in Hungary is thus benefiting the budding associations in Yugoslavia, Slovakia and the Ukraine.

Further north, the Baltic region can draw on the pioneering experiences in Scandinavia, true role models for telecentre movements (including the Hungarian telecottages). The BIT House initiative aims at establishing an integrated regional network of telecentres around the Baltic Sea.

We are witnessing a strong development of national and international networks, focusing on the operation and propagation of telecentres. Working as integrated and united movements, they have become a recognised constituency and proven successful in policy advocacy. Yet, there still are many "white patches", with little if any telecentre presence or the operation of isolated centres. Also within established networks, there network possibilities are by no means optimised, creating the concrete need for co-operative projects and initiatives.

PART 3: RADIO WITH A COMMUNITY MISSION

The terms “community radio”, “radio with a community mission” or “civic sector radio” are often used synonymously and tend to describe radio stations providing information on social issues and local culture and stimulating the intellectual and social development of listeners in a particular community. Radio with a community mission is, by definition, not primarily driven by a profit motive, although there is an increasing number of such operations that have revenue streams, primarily through advertising. In this paper, we will refer to radio with a community mission in order to include all radio stations covering issues and perspectives that are not given much, if any, attention on the purely commercial airwaves, whatever their form of ownership.

Radio stations with a community mission are unevenly distributed throughout Central and Eastern Europe with Hungary, Romania, the Russian Federation and the Balkan countries among the nations with the most. One of the main reasons for this uneven distribution is the significant variation in legislation and government action from country to country. Only a few countries have policy and regulatory frameworks that encourage the spreading of community media in their countries. In many others, fiscal and licensing restrictions have prevented this sector from blooming. For this brief report, we will not cover the legal framework of radio broadcasting. Examples of supportive regulatory and policy environment will be examined during the Bucharest Seminar. Instead, we will focus on the funding mechanisms and sustainability of community radio broadcasting, its capacity for networking, its programming and its potential to use new information and communication technologies to further develop the local radio model and contribute to bridging the digital gap, particularly in rural communities.

Funding mechanisms and sustainability

There are several types of ownership of radio stations with a community mission in Central and Eastern Europe. Most of the radio stations are private, or present a mixed ownership of individuals and municipalities, individuals and private companies, or NGOs. There are, of course, also radio stations that are public and fully owned by the state.

Radio stations are mostly financed by revenue from advertisements, sponsorship and co-operation with various institutions, NGOs and other organisations. Radio stations owned by the state are financed by the state budget. The international community, donors and various international foundations and organisations have also been traditional supporters of independent media in Eastern and Central Europe.

Despite the fact that a lot of radio-stations’ main source of funds comes from advertising, this has proved to be insufficient. The number of radio stations in some countries is impressive but it is increasingly evident that the market is unable to support them all. In the struggle for small pieces of this market, they are often forced to find ways to produce cheap programmes that easily attract listeners and potential advertisers and that require minimum inputs.

It is true that competition may be healthy but our survey results seem to indicate that

the future will not be easy in terms of obtaining advertising revenue for community broadcasting. The radio stations which are not even able to take part in a struggle for big international advertisers, which are the only sources of funding in some countries, are in a particularly difficult situation. A particular trend seems to be the domestic advertisers, who pay for advertising services mostly in kind.

In many countries of the region, a large number of radio stations are funded by international donations and private co-ownership. In the Balkan region, radio stations were set up as a result of receiving donor's funds and endeavours of the international community to remove the monopoly of the State owned media and media controlled by the national political parties.

Such a mode of setting up radio stations had its positive and negative sides. The positive side of the entire process was the improvement in standards of reporting information with greater objectivity and neutrality. Also the media opened up to new, alternative information sources and a diversity of points of view. Efforts were made to ensure an equal access of all citizens to the media, regardless of their political, national, religious and gender affiliations. The negative side of such significant investment of funds in radio stations is that the owners of these media often became accustomed to the donations and did not make enough efforts to achieve financial sustainability for their projects through marketing, sponsorships or selling their services.

Donors, which have been providing equipment and financial support through different projects mostly for independent stations providing news and information services, more and more often leave those in the hands of free market. Most owners or managers of radio stations are now trying to find market outlets for their radio-programming.

State ownership has not been a guarantee of a healthy financial situation either. In Bosnia Herzegovina, for example, municipal radio stations are in the worst position as local authorities do not have funds earmarked within their budgets for payment of the radio stations' operations and the market is at a low level of development in small cities. As the privatisation process within these media is underway, there is a risk that the radio stations in some areas could be purchased by war profiteers and persons linked to national political parties. The radio stations responding to our questionnaire fear that if this happens, there is a real danger of propaganda, biased journalism and the expansion of xenophobia.

Some of the survey results also suggest that there is an additional problem besides the lack of advertisers and donors when searching funds for community broadcasting. In the past few years, the majority of independent stations have organized themselves into interest associations on different topics in order to attract donor funding. According to the respondents to our questionnaire, as the majority of radio managers and editors did not have the skills for project presentation, personal communication with donors was therefore mediated by these third parties, which adopted the form of NGOs. As a consequence, the co-operation between radio stations and donor bodies was based mostly on providing and receiving funding. For some, this has resulted in a lack of focus on the problems of local communities and a concentration purely on financial interests.

There seems to be a need to sensitise owners, managers, editors-in-chief and journalists in radio stations about the importance of catering for the needs of local communities and to develop a new interest in community services.

Radio programming

A large number of radio stations in almost every country of the region concentrate their programming on music and news bulletins. Programs on social issues, children, local culture, health or human rights are much less frequent and they are not a regular feature of the schedule. Because of lack resources, this type of programming is not produced in a regular, continuous way. Some respondents to our questionnaires have indicated that the programmes deal with serious topics in depth only when they have sponsorship by international donors, NGOs, embassies or international organisations.

The reasons why radio stations in some countries do not deal with sufficient topics related to the problems of citizens and the local community have been singled out by our survey respondents as follows:

- most of the owners, directors and editors are not fully aware of the needs of the audience for such programming;
- radio stations do not have sufficient funds for the production of documentary programmes with reportage, interviews, etc dealing with local community issues;
- radio stations do not use sufficiently their membership of certain radio networks in order to exchange audio materials.

Apart from some exceptions, radio stations carry little or no programming dedicated to ethnic minorities. The largest radio stations, public or private, are usually "general public" broadcasters, with no specific target audience.

When local stations, which by nature are closer to local communities, have been able to produce programmes on human (and especially women's) rights, elections, free voting and free speech, it has been mainly with the help of donor institutions. Very successful programs were produced, for example, last autumn in Kosovo during the election campaign by private stations.

However, as we have seen in the previous chapter, local radio stations, which have been engaged merely in news programmes in the past few years, are now forced to commercialize their programmes and to compete with the stations that, from the start, created programmes for selling, on the market. In this situation, local community programming is squeezed the most.

Local public radios have problems of a different nature. They have a legal obligation to provide community programming, which they do, but they report in our questionnaire that they suffer from problems of outdated equipment, lack of flexibility of their managerial staff, and too much control by the authorities.

In some countries, the media are highly politicised, since they depend on whichever political party is in power and their alliance with that party, to put some pressure on advertisers to direct their advertising funds towards a certain radio.

In Macedonia, for example, the current security situation has divided the radio stations into two national camps which are used to promote solely the views of their own ethnicity, instead of working towards attracting a wider audience in the Macedonian largely mixed population. Today, commercial broadcasters refuse to produce or air any community oriented programming (with several honourable exceptions) and would consider their legally imposed obligation to produce local news as sufficient enough in that regard. There are no community radio stations among the independent radio stations, with the exception of Radio Cerenja (the Stars) in Stip, a Roma language radio that works within a larger NGO of the same name. "Cerenja," both the radio and the NGO have worked towards the improvement of the status of the Roma in the country and have had some limited success, as chronic financial problems and the lack of steady funding hampers their efforts.

Regional co-ordination

The survey responses show that there is a large number of regional and national networks to which radio stations can belong. These provide important networking opportunities. As many as eight in ten community radio stations in Central and Eastern Europe are members of one or more associations.

The European arm of the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) has records for some 60 member radio stations in the area, and is aware of a further several dozen in Russia and elsewhere. Of these, about 15 are in Hungary, about 20 in Romania, 10 in Macedonia and a handful in each of Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, the Czech Republic, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Moldova, Poland, Russia, Slovenia and Ukraine.

Regional co-ordination between community radio stations and organisations is increasing. In September 2000, the **Southeast European Network of Associations of Private Broadcasters (SEENAPB)** was established.

SEENAPB members are, to date, broadcasters' associations from Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Hungary, Macedonia, Yugoslavia, Yugoslavian Republic of Montenegro and Romania. There are about 750 member stations.

The network, which is not a separate legal entity but operates through its members, exemplifies the shared priorities of community radio broadcasters across a culturally diverse region.

SEENAPB lists among its objectives to strengthen broadcasters' associations in the region by facilitating the provision of mutual support among members, promoting high professional standards, public access to information, politically and economically independent journalism and enhancing professional collaboration .

Its activities include implementation of joint initiatives, targeted at media legislators and regulatory bodies, training of staff, research and monitoring of media, regular information sharing, organisation of joint events and promotion and implementation of new technologies.

In **Russia**, the **Foundation for Independent Radio Broadcasting (FNR)** is playing a similar role. Set up in April 1999, the FNR is a not-for-profit organisation that took over the operations of BBC MPM, a project of the British Broadcasting Corporation started in 1992.

The mission of the FNR is "to provide comprehensive, reliable and useful information in accordance with the best traditions of Russian and international journalism, to promote development of Russian radio and ensure the free dissemination of knowledge which would allow the Russian people to better understand and evaluate the on-going processes and enable them to act in their own interests and in the interest of society."

Other associations are the SEE Radio Network, Radio Network 'Together', ANEM and Spektar [in Yugoslavia], the Association of Independent Radio 'AIR' [in Croatia], UNEM Association [in Montenegro], Kontakt Network [in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, Kosovo] and the Refugee Radio Network (RNN). The latter includes broadcasters from various countries in the region who are working in using the broadcast medium to serve communities of refugees, displaced persons and separated families. For contact details for these networks, please see www.oneworld.net/radio/see

Use of New Communication Technologies by Community Radio Broadcasters.

The use of new technologies varies from one radio station to another. Generally, their introduction is still at its initial stages and the full potential of such technologies has yet to be fully exploited.

With regard to new communication and information technologies, there are two broad categories of community broadcasters in Eastern and Central Europe. The first group, mostly public, has only access to very old broadcasting technology (tape players and audiocassettes) and no access at all to digital technologies. The personnel of these stations would not be acquainted with advanced radio techniques. This is the case in countries like Albania or Bosnia and Herzegovina, just to mention a few, where according to our survey a lot of radio stations have difficulties to work with computers and an Internet connection can be found only in a few.

The second group has at their disposal digital radio facilities, computers for editing with the best known software (Cool edit 2000, Sound forge 4,5 i 5...), and uses the Internet. However, our survey seems to indicate that these radio stations do not use sufficiently advanced radio techniques for the improvement of their programming. Internet in radio

stations is mostly used for electronic mail and not so much for researching information on web sites or web portals and for downloading of news and sound materials. Only rarely do community broadcasters decide to install their own production on a web site.

The reasons are several:

- Insufficiently trained staff for usage of advanced radio techniques
- Lack of personnel
- Traditionalism in radio expression
- Expensive and slow Internet connections – slow PTT links, providers of low capacity.

The main obstacle seems to be the inappropriate conditions in using phone operators services. A small number of radio stations has ISDN (or even digital) phone lines. Others use old, analogue telephones. The latest price increases of post office services in some countries (around 100%) make this exchange even more expensive. Downloading a two-minute radio feature may take an hour on Internet, which is expensive and diminishes the main use of Internet - its speed for exchange of information. This is especially a problem in small communities.

In some countries, the Internet has also been used to exchange audio-information, especially through different associations like the Association of Independent Electronic Media (ANEM) which uploads its daily information on "ftp" server so that all members can download them.

In general, Internet usage and awareness of how the Internet can aid broadcasters is still in its infancy but growing. Some stations are starting to create their own websites and the general awareness of the potential of online audio is definitely increasing.

Linkages between radio stations, NGOs and telecentres is still a weakness however, especially as the telecentre movement in the region is still undeveloped and is challenged by the large fee-based Internet café development in the area.

PART 4: PROPOSALS FOR CREATING NEW DIGITAL OPPORTUNITIES AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

Community multimedia centres, combining broadcasting with the Internet and related new technologies, have the potential to reach, serve, involve and improve the lives of whole communities in developing countries by supporting education, health, food security, good governance, democratisation, peace and other priority development goals, including economic activities. In the following proposals, the term “community multimedia centres” refers to integrated facilities and also community telecentres and radio stations seeking to develop into multimedia centres.

Community Mobilisation, Mainstreaming, Outreach

Many existing radios stations with a community mission and community telecentres can improve their ability to meet community needs by integrating information and communication technologies (ICTs) which are complementary to those already deployed. In order to fulfil the potential of integrated community facilities, innovative strategies and creative approaches are required to ensure that these facilities are fully inclusive and participatory.

Community multimedia centres should clearly define community involvement to ensure the inclusion of all and especially of disadvantaged and marginalized groups such as women and girls, ethnic or other minorities, the elderly and those living in poverty. They should also identify and target strategic priority groups such as young people, farmers and workers to ensure that they are fully involved and in order to meet the information and communication needs of these key categories within the community.

In the case of community-operated initiatives it is necessary to:

- identify those who, within the community, can best plan, manage and operate these community facilities. These facilities should enter partnerships with and build on established community mobilisation efforts and facilities such as those of libraries, non-governmental organisations and other community initiatives, in order to share resources, skills, networks and experience. Wherever possible, this should lead to the creation of a one-stop shop for the community's communication and information needs.
- assist and encourage the community to define its own information and communication needs and to ensure that the information offered to the community meets the needs of the local people and if necessary is adapted, translated or repackaged to serve their purposes;
- involve the community in producing and communicating information;
- ensure that community telecentres and radios are open and pluralistic in adopting approaches to the different possible combinations of technologies for communicating and for providing information and access to information. An important factor should be the need to reach the most disadvantaged areas and groups;

- make all in the community aware of the importance of information for development and for empowerment and of the nature and role of new ICTs. Radio programmes, wall posters, videos and other audio-visual aids should be used to raise awareness;
- create interfaces between radio and the Internet, such as radio browsing programmes, to stimulate interest in those who can make use of computer facilities and to involve the disadvantaged public who do not have access to computers, e-mail or the Internet, or who face language or other barriers to accessing these technologies directly.

Community multimedia centres can play a strong role in mainstreaming of, and outreach to, disadvantaged and excluded populations, particularly by:

- promoting gender awareness within the community, to create equal opportunities;
- ensuring active participation of women in community radio, telecentres and multimedia centres through training;
- raising awareness of local and minority cultures and their rights.

Networking

The networking of community multimedia centres locally, nationally, regionally and even globally can enable them to meet a number of their needs (training, contents development, information gathering, lobbying the authorities, etc.) more effectively in this way than in isolation.

Community multimedia centres should:

- network around common goals (e.g. training, content development activities, operations and management) where their interests as stakeholders encourage them to contribute fully to as well as to benefit from networking activities;
- develop appropriate co-ordination and seek access to financial and technical support for networking;
- create trust within the network by ensuring that each member shares agreed principles and non-restrictive goals and that each party knows its obligations and responsibilities, while also ensuring that networking allows space for individual initiatives;
- create or gain access to databases enabling each member to accumulate knowledge on the core concerns of the community as well as on best practice.

Networking should be used to seek opportunities to generate revenue. For example, it should be possible to attract larger advertisers through the sharing of community radio programmes.

Networking should be used to seek to cut costs for operation and content production, for example by sharing trainers, maintenance and other specialised personnel (e.g. technicians, accountants, marketing specialists) and resources for content creation on a shared cost basis, as well as exchanging and adapting existing information and programmes.

Networking should be used to give a voice to people sharing the same language, culture or concerns (e.g. a specific economic activity) who would not otherwise be in contact, thus enabling:

- different user groups, e.g. youth, business groups or women, to share best practices at the community, national and international levels;
- minority people fragmented and separated by national boundaries to recover lost links.

Training, Human Resources

The integration of a whole range of ICTs by community multimedia centres creates new training and human resource needs at many different levels and, on the other hand, offers new opportunities to meet those needs. Considering the special training needs of staff, volunteers and facilitators, strategies should include:

- *continuous education and training programmes, particularly through training of trainers and peer-based training, on i) content production, dissemination, translation, adaptation and repackaging, ii) the underlying aspects of exploitation and maintenance of ICTs, iii) radio and telecentre operations, management and finance, and iv) ethical practices;*
- special consideration should be given to physically isolated centres, including through the development and application of distance learning techniques;
- particular attention to ensuring a continuous supply of people with basic and specialised knowledge of ICTs and other key fields, though both incentives for retention and sufficient human resources development to compensate for staff mobility.

Community multimedia centres should introduce extensive and continuing ICT sensitisation and training designed to reach all members of the community who can benefit. They should also network to exchange experience on training programmes and institutions and to facilitate the development of tailor-made training programmes for the centres; the sharing of training programmes and materials should be promoted by encouraging the availability these materials in the public domain via community websites.

Contents and Application Development

By integrating traditional and modern ICTs, community multimedia centres have far broader possibilities for creating a range of complementary multimedia materials to meet the community's information needs. In order to develop truly relevant local contents, participatory needs assessments should be undertaken to understand the characteristics of the community and its information needs. Based on this, strategies and mechanisms should be elaborated in such areas as gathering, evaluation, interpretation, repackaging and regular updating of information and putting information in context. Appropriate information and communication techniques should be applied to produce timely, reliable and targeted development content and services.

Community multimedia centres should strive for the best reasonably achievable quality of equipment, production and services. They should also promote open access to information made available in the public domain, particularly information produced by government, non-governmental organisations and other public service institutions. Community multimedia centres originating Web pages should ensure wide access to relevant and credible Web-based information by including indexing information in their Web pages and promoting the coverage of their sites by major search engines. Community radios should create programme banks offering local content for consultation through the Web.

A two-way collaboration between national and community centres on the one hand, and between community centres and local populations on the other, should be established to ensure a useful and balanced supply of information and a two-way exchange of contents.

Sustainability

In their efforts to integrate ICTs, community multimedia centres can be expected to face sustainability problems but, at the same time, they are often helping to implement official national policies for universal access to information and communication and should therefore receive support. Sustainability should not be restricted to commercial viability. However, all centres should seek a degree of self-reliance and formulate effective business or long-term operating plans.

Community multimedia centres should own, organise and operate their centres from the beginning in a transparent, inclusive and democratic manner. Their sustainability should be considered at the conception stage, ensuring that the project continues beyond initial funding support:

- projects should consider all possible revenue streams, like those coming from government support, private sector and sources with similar development objectives, targeting the poor;
- project proponents should mobilise partners and build on existing resources (e.g. libraries, farmers' groups, marketing federations, women's groups) to minimise the costs of operating community radios, telecentres and multimedia centres;
- projects should demonstrate the capability of ICTs to sustainably support development, e.g. through enhancement of access to and quality of education;
- projects should be based on convincing feasibility studies (including business plans) and should have a built-in mechanism for continuing, participatory processes to evaluate and promote impact.

In addition to economic and social sustainability, technical sustainability should be sought. Efforts should be made to sensitise the private sector to the fact that investments which favour the success of community telecentres and radio stations will also open potential new markets.

The Technical Challenges

Disadvantaged communities need appropriate scalable technologies for access to, production of and presentation of information suitable to their local cultural and

development contexts. These needs can mainly be met through innovative combinations and modifications of existing technologies which may not be immediately available but can be readily developed and shared through special efforts. Software and technology development, training and maintenance centres should be established at the national or regional level and give priority to capacity building and transfer of technology to isolated, rural communities with special consideration to possibilities for implementation of open source software.

Conflict and Crisis Situations

The development of pluralistic media at all levels provides people with information and interactive forums necessary to understand and respond effectively to man-made and natural disasters and crises, and to prevent or alleviate conflict situations. In conflict and crisis situations, the usage of ICTs presents special opportunities to empower citizens for remedial action, and to enhance the influence and capabilities of responsible media in their public service role.

Planners and managers of community multimedia centres must strive to develop a set of suitable information and communication tools that can be used in crisis situations, and have critical items of back-up equipment safely stored; mobile components of these centres should be considered as effective options in this context. Centres supported by media professionals, crisis response teams, civil society including amateur radio, public authorities and the international community, should i) create and adopt a common ethical framework for unbiased, activist, public service with particular reference to crisis and conflict situations, and ii) give special attention to the training of staff and citizens to respond soundly and responsibly in conflict and crisis situations, as well as the training of staff in the production, dissemination and sharing of, content useful for prevention, mitigation and resolution of these situations.

Enabling Policies

Governments should draw up and implement communication and information policies which ensure equitable access to sustainable information and communication facilities in disadvantaged areas as a priority for development. Government policy should support the development of community multimedia centres by:

- establishing frameworks for co-operative development and economy of scale in such efforts, through central supporting facilities and national or sub-national networks;
- enacting appropriate regulation requiring telecommunication operators to provide telecommunication infrastructure and services to less advantaged areas on a nationally defined affordable basis to community users;
- allocating available frequencies at affordable cost for public interest uses including community broadcasting and information services;
- ensuring that connections to Internet service providers (ISPs) can be made via local rather than long distance tariffs;

- supporting the establishment of community radios, telecentres and multimedia centres, for example by requiring telecommunication operators to assist with initial capital investment;
- promote universal and affordable access to ICTs, for example through fiscal measures, promotion of endogenous technology development and the use of local skills, negotiation of preferential rates from commercial ICT vendors, or through allocation of the proceeds from telecommunication privatisation;
- enabling and encouraging efficient public information services while respecting fair competition and the contributions of private sector media and information centres.

Governments should formulate and implement policies and regulatory frameworks to promote the development, testing and adoption of appropriate technologies for rural and community access to communication and information, including public investments and incentives for private sector co-operation. National and institutional training strategies should encourage networking and training of trainers to provide in-depth knowledge and skills in areas such as content development, ICT skills, radio and telecentre operations, management and finance, and ethical practices; particular attention should be paid to opportunities for distance learning, self learning, and use of national and international volunteers.

Governments should guarantee the transparency, free flow of, and access to public information, notably by defining and encouraging the development of information in the public domain and by promulgating "freedom of information" legislation. Governments should encourage and support the development and use of open source software in the public service sector, and particularly in community level applications.

International Co-operation

International development support partners should collaborate closely, according to their areas of expertise, in supporting programmes and projects for community multimedia centres. A mechanism should be put in place to co-ordinate and strengthen international technical and financial support for these programmes and projects at the local, national and regional levels, both for governmental and non-governmental organisations. International development partners should support the in-depth, long-term technical training necessary to achieve sufficient understanding of the use of ICTs and other key techniques to ensure the sustainability of community multimedia centre projects. Concerned international organisations should help to launch, jointly with national authorities, an international network for co-operative research and experimentation on, and evaluation and dissemination of, appropriate information and communication technologies for community development.

PART 5 INTERVIEWS

ATTILA HALASZ, AMARC (the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters) EUROPE

Interview: 10 July, 2001

Q: What is the situation for community radio in Hungary at the moment and, as far as you're aware, beyond Hungary?

A: There is a special situation in Hungary, because Hungary is one of those countries where community broadcasting is regulated under media law. So, this means that when there is a free frequency somewhere in the country, these free radios, or community radios, can apply and have priority in front of all others. This unfortunately is just theoretically the situation.

Q: So, the best thing the Government could do is give you access to frequencies?

A: Exactly. First of all, the intention of the Government has to be positive. I believe every type of government needs to recognise the importance, the role of the community sector in Hungary, and not only in Hungary.

Q: How many community radio stations are there in Hungary?

A: The Hungarian Radio Federation has about 15 members, and only half of them are on the air at this moment. The others are waiting for the possibility to apply for a frequency. Specifically, we have here in Budapest four community radios. Two stations share one frequency, another one has a frequency, and the fourth is now only on the internet, after seven years on the air.

Q: How important in Hungary socially is community radio?

A: Community radios are dealing with those issues which can not get attention on national commercial radio stations. More specifically, for example, the voice of the minorities or women's' right or in general human rights or every kind of minority culture. Community radio is giving time to issues like homosexuality and AIDS. And women's rights. We have in the Hungarian parliament only about half a dozen women from 380 people. Why?

Q: Can you give an example?

A: I used to work for a radio station called Tilos Radio, and they were broadcasting since 1991 – at that time it wasn't regulated, so they used to act as a pirate radio, and they fill up an empty space on the media field in Hungary, dealing with those sort of issues I just mentioned. I was editing the Roma programme there, weekly, one and a half or two

hours. If you look at national broadcasters, the Roma people have only about half an hour weekly, which means we have over half a million Roma people who only get half an hour. But in community radio, we have two hours for them. We speak about them, show their culture to the majority, show the positive things, not only the negative things like other media. Just do something to fight against prejudice. This is just an example.

We've got in Budapest a couple of minorities. Americans, for example. There are about 10,000 American people in Budapest. They've got their own broadcast, their own programme on the radio.

Q: To take your example of the Roma people, do you think that has helped them and helped other people?

A: Definitely. If you just get your voice and just talk about yourself, if you show that, look, we are darker than you, but that doesn't mean that we are just bad. We have our own culture, our own language, these old professions which during history were helping your people, yes, that helps.

Radio C won the frequency in Budapest against Tilos Radio. In that moment, when we had this case with the Roma People applying for political asylum in Strasbourg, in France, the Government decided to give the frequency to Radio C.

Q: Speaking from the AMARC point of view, what is the situation across Central and Eastern Europe for Community Radio? Is it growing, is it everywhere, is there much of it?

A: Every country has a different story. Let's start with Romania. We've got an association called Association of Romanian Free Radios, which has about 20 members. But we've got other members from Romania that are not members of that, because these are small local free radios, rather more commercial than pure community radio. We have very strong members in Transilvania.

There are over two million (ethnic) Hungarians in Romania, and they wanted to start their own radio...they decided to make a multicultural radio, and they broadcast in Hungarian, in Romanian, in German and other languages.

Then there's Yugoslavia. We have a very strong association in Yugoslavia, but after this change in regime there they are probably very busy now. They are dealing so much with the recent political situation.

Q: Which other countries in the region do you consider to have significant community radio presence?

A: A strong country is Macedonia. There are maybe more than 10, and I know they have national and local Roma television. Two or three are now members of AMARC.

In Bulgaria, we have a strong member, but only one, which is Radio Glaros. They are running a commercial radio station and from that money they are setting up a community

radio, and they are planning now to set up another community radio station somewhere else in Bulgaria.

Bosnia – we have three or four strong and active members in Bosnia. One of them, for example, is Radio Zid in Sarajevo. They have been on the air since the beginning of the nineties and they were broadcasting through the war in Sarajevo. During the time Sarajevo was being bombarded, they were broadcasting three or four languages.

Q: Is there much community radio activity, as far as you know, in Russia?

A: What we know is that through this Russian federation we have some 50 members. These are very small local, district radio through the cables. So, they are a bit like mushrooms in Russia. They have an interesting intention to set up in St Petersburg a new community radio called Radio Free Russia. There are some Canadian or American volunteers there who are in contact with us to help them start this.

We have the same situation in Warsaw – a station called Voice of Warsaw. They've got a business with a newspaper, a news magazine, which is a good business and from this money they want to set up a community radio.

The Czech Republic and Slovakia: From the beginning, after the change there, there were a couple of community radios, and then on the way they become strongly commercial radios. We don't have a single member in Slovakia.. We have maybe a couple of members in the Czech Republic but I don't really believe that there are community radios.

We have a lot of members from Croatia. We have members from Albania, all over in this region, in Moldavia, in the Ukraine.

Q: What do you think of the idea of Community Multimedia Centres?

A: You know, these radios need a lot of help – not only political, or lobbying or networking as these are, in general, poor radios. So, I can see a point to get out of this situation through modern technology, which is related to the CMCs plan.

MATYAS GASPAR, PRESIDENT OF THE HUNGARIAN TELECOTTAGE ASSOCIATION

Interview: 9 July, 2001

Q: Your projections show the number of community telecentres or telecottages in Hungary doubling to around 400 this year; there seems to be a lot of growth in your country and elsewhere?

A: Yes, and we are helping with expansion in other countries. First in Romania, where they now have about 20 telecottages. And they are planning new programmes and looking for resources, so I think development in Romania will move fast.

Yugoslavia has established, with USAID help, 66 telecottages – which were opened last month. And they are also looking for new programmes.

Through the Balkans Stability Pact, under EU co-operation, we were asked to put together a telecottages project for the whole of the Balkans. So I think that from these resources and other resources this process of growth of telecottages will continue.

At this moment, we have about 220 telecottages in Hungary and we have resources to double this number in a year. So, in Hungary in a year we'll have around 500 telecottages – that's based on a national development plan.

Q: What are the reasons for the growth of the telecentres in recent years in Hungary?

A: I can point out six key success factors.

First, these are people who are very enthusiastic, fanatics, who are pushing this movement. These people come from different professions. Mainly they are librarians, computer professionals, IT professionals or community workers.

Second, this movement is a civic movement, a grassroots movement, so nobody can abolish telecottages because they have their own right to exist as a civic organisation.

The third is the multifunctional nature of the telecottages: Their owner is a civic institution; the building is given by a government institution like a library or a cultural house or a school; the telecottages are usually run by a private person or company who has contracted to do it. This is a success secret because it allows us to sustain infrastructure because that infrastructure is shared between private, public and civic needs.

The fourth secret is that this movement is politically neutral, it is not partisan. They want to help their community to survive or develop.

The fifth secret is the very, very strong lobbying work we do on every level – local, regional and national.

The sixth is that there is no corruption in the movement.

Q: What role has the movement played in your country's social and economic development?

A: The main role of telecottages in this context is to strengthen local communities in many senses – economically, in terms of democracy or simply the technical capacity to make local settlement and development plans. That's very important because many changes are planned on a national level, like information society development or other policies, and in many cases there is no chance for the local communities to participate in this big change.

So the motivation and mission of the telecottages has been to make local communities sufficiently strong and organised and well-managed to be part of these changes.

Q: You said lobbying was very important. How successful have you been in getting government at various levels to implement the policies you want ?

A: This movement started in the early nineties, so we have been through three political cycles, and we survived. It proves that this movement had good neutrality and was accepted by all these three governments. I should underline the importance of personal contacts in our lobbying work. My contacts and my colleagues' contacts with different national institutions, parties, ministries – we were inviting them to conferences and

organised tours for them, sent videos and books. Also we the press made an important contribution to this lobbying work.

My initial profession is organiser of public administration so I know well how this fabric is working, I understand how strategic plans are made by ministries on a national level.

Q: What were the main policies you wanted government to accept?

A: It was a long story. Now we are well-accepted by the Government. We have a national telecottages strategy and we analyse all national strategies and co-ordinate them. That's the situation now. But at first, the main issue was promoting information society. That was the first thing accepted – that telecottages are working for local information society. That was supported by all parties.

Q: How important has public policy support been for the relative success of the telecottages movement in Hungary ? Could you have done it without the government?

A: No, government help or support is very, very important. The first telecottages were supported by USAID, so the initial risk of this telecottages movement was taken by an international organisation, USAID. So, we established 30 telecottages, and as it was accepted and proved (to work), and in no time government started saying ok this is a good movement, we'll support it also. So, there was only a gap of a few months between the support from USAID and governmental support, but it was interesting to see who would take the risk first.

Q: What do you think of the concept of Community Multimedia Centres – merging community radio with telecentres?

A: Telecottages are very good at strengthening local democracy because most of them are publishing local papers, and such papers didn't exist before the capacity of the telecottages. In some telecottages we have cable studios and telecottages are running local radio. Two weeks ago we heard the national radio regulator decided to establish about 1000 local radios and telecottages have a very good chance to get this support and commission to run local radios.

Q: So is a Community Multimedia Centre perhaps a natural evolution?

A: Yes, it's a new development whereby telecottages can easily provide media services to the television organisation and also local community radio, and this process is growing.

Q: Where are the resources coming from for this sort of development and for the sort of growth we were discussing earlier?

A: From the Government. The telecottages programme is part of the national development plan. We published last year a national telecottages which was worked out by the Telecottage Association, and based on this strategy the telecottage development was accepted by the national development plan.

Q: Do have figures on how much it costs to set up and run the average telecottage?

A: The initial capital investment is about 2 – 3 million Hungarian Forint (between USD 7 000 – 10 000) The annual budget is between 1.5 to 2.5 million Hungarian Forint. (around USD 6 000 – 8 000)

Q: What priority if any have you given to minority groups, special interest groups, women in the telecottages strategy ?

A: We have five main goals in this strategy and about 60 projects. Minority telecottages are not the main goal, but we have a Roma telecottage project and we have several minority telecottages at this moment and the importance of this project growing.

We have some projects now. First is the Roma children education programme in telecottages, we are trying to create the same conditions for the Roma children and give them the same success and performance as non-Roma children.

Another project is a pilot programme of Roma telecottages, to turn this into a reference for a bigger programme funded from EU sources; we are planning some 40 or 50 new Roma telecottages.

Q: Within the average telecottage are there policies to give preference or support to minority groups or groups with special needs or to women?

A: There are no special programmes, but the spirit of telecottages is to help not only minorities but everybody. That's a very basic value.

Q: Does your association, other than with Romania and Yugoslavia, have growing contacts with other telecottages associations throughout Central and Eastern Europe?

A: Yes, absolutely. We are helping in Ukraine – the first telecottage has been established, and we are helping them with that and with establishing a Ukrainian telecottages association.

The same situation is in Slovakia, where they have also established their first telecottage with our help. There are Hungarian speakers close to the border. We are helping them set up a telecottages association, too.

We are helping, too, in Yugoslavia and Romania. So, the Hungarians outside of our borders are serving as a bridge to the regional countries. But we are not limiting our co-operation to Hungarians over the borders – with USAID in Yugoslavia, we have established telecottages in places where Hungarians are living but also in Serb territory.

Q: Do you have any idea how many telecottages there are in Central and Eastern Europe?

A: There are about 350, including 200 hundred in Hungary.

Q: What are the main issues facing telecottages?

A: The main one is how to make telecottages sustainable. We are promoting solutions. The first to involve telecottages in e-commerce wherever possible. The second is to create a national public telecottages network partly financed by the Government to provide public services on a lease-line network. This can create revenue for other parts of the budget. It's a very important issue for sustainability.

Q: Do you think telecottages can be profitable?

A: That's a big question. In five years, it's possible.

Q: But should they be profitable – a telecentre is not motivated by profit?

A: No, it's not. They are non-profit organisations, but they can have some profitable services, but in total they should not be profitable organisations.

Q: Where do you think telecentres can have profitable services?

A: For example, providing web services for entrepreneurs. It depends how the local economy is developed. One of the main rules of telecottages is promoting local economic development. If they do this work well, that can make them profitable in some services.

