

Chapter 2

TELECITIES: THE ROLE OF CITY NETWORKS IN E-GOVERNMENT PROCESSES

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1. INTRODUCTION

The objective of this chapter¹ is to give a comprehensive overview of the projects and activities undertaken by TeleCities in order to contribute actively to the development of an inclusive information society in Europe, with a particular focus on the role of cities' administrations as the fundamental engines of economic growth and social inclusion. The information and knowledge society represents a new form of social organization that will bring about increased economic vitality and an improved exploitation of the European social and intellectual capital. As a natural complement to EU's strategies and programs, TeleCities aims to place cities, local communities and local economic systems at the center of this new form of social and economic organization. As a matter of fact, cities and municipal administrations represent the first point of access to advanced administrative services, decision-making processes and policy-making institutions. Therefore, being cities and municipal administrations the first and more important *loci* of administrative and political innovation, TeleCities aims to support the European Union as well as national governments in the construction of a European Information society and a truly European citizenship, capitalizing experiences, innovations and new relationships that are being established and consolidated at the urban level.

¹ The presentation of Ms. Teresa Serra to the "On Line Citizenship" Conference is available at the Website http://it.sun.com/eventi/on_line_citizenship.

TeleCities is a network of cities focused on the development of ICT-based technological architectures and applications for the innovation of administrative procedures and organizational arrangements. E-government and ICT-based technologies and applications are conceived as instruments to create inclusive and distributed decision-making processes and to enforce the right of citizens to be included in policy-making processes. The following paragraphs will illustrate in detail how the European objectives synthesized in the Lisbon strategy will require an effective implementation and a purposeful action by cities in a cooperative approach, through the coordination, the mutual support and the exchange of knowledge and experiences granted by TeleCities.

The second paragraph will introduce the history of TeleCities, the goals it intends to achieve, its organizational form, its composition and its main institutional bodies. The third paragraph provides the reader with a detailed description of the 2004 Work Program, approved at the end of 2003. The main vision underlying the whole program is the creation of a *knowledge-based city*, which is seen as a key actor in the development of the information society in Europe and in the achievement of the Lisbon goals. Particular attention will be paid to frameworks for working groups' activities, such as the *eCitizenship for all* challenge that oriented working groups' activities until now, pre-eminently on the field of e-government, and the new *knowledge-based city* challenge, which comprehends the *eCitizenship for all* objectives and introduces new issues and topics to be addressed by working groups. The fourth paragraph deals with the issue of favoring the widespread development and enforcement of rights connected to the information and knowledge society for all European citizens in a more mobile and integrated European framework. As European member States succeeded in creating a single market and a single currency, they must face the challenge of creating a unique space for Europeans to enjoy their rights wherever they are and whatever the access technology they use. TeleCities is actively engaged in the development and widespread diffusion of e-rights and in the formal draft of a European charter of e-rights, whose basic guidelines are illustrated in the fourth paragraph.

2. TELECITIES: A NETWORK OF CITIES IN THE INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

TeleCities was born in 1993 as a network of cities willing to actively contribute to the development of a society based on information and knowledge. Since its foundation, this initiative recognized the strategic importance of information and communication technology as a means to

improve municipalities' effectiveness, to foster citizen participation in decision-making processes, and to increase the transparency of administrative procedures.

In 1993, representatives from thirteen European cities² participated in a workshop to discuss strategic issues concerning information technology, and decided to launch a network open to all European cities, expressing their willingness to collaborate with the European Commission in defining a strategic plan for the concerted development of technological infrastructures in the urban environment (TeleCities, Declaration of Manchester, 1993). The main objectives of TeleCities are, as expressed by the Declaration of Manchester, "to promote the exchanges of experience and to examine the issues related to the development of harmonized info-structures or telematic networks and services across Europe which will serve the development of local industrial and service sectors, local societies and citizens" (TeleCities, Declaration of Manchester, 1993).

Table 2-1. Number of members per Nation (2003)

	Number of cities
Austria	2
Belgium	3
Eastern countries	9
UK	20
Denmark	5
Finland	6
France	10
Germany	11
Greece	2
Hungary	1
Italy	14
Malta	1
Portugal	2
Spain	14
Sweden	5
Netherlands	7
Turkey	1

The city of Barcelona (Spain) holds the presidency since the beginning of 2002 to the end of 2004, while the vice-presidency is held by the city of Naestved (Denmark). In the last ten years, the network has reached a

⁸ The declaration of Manchester is the document that officially institutes TeleCities and it was signed by the cities of Amsterdam, Barcelona, Birmingham, Bologna, The Hague, Hull, Cologne, Leeds, Lille, Manchester, Nantes, Nice, Nottingham.

European dimension, with 124 members, 115 of which are local authorities and 9 are private organizations.

When considering the composition of TeleCities membership, we observe a sort of competition among countries in participating in the network. The United Kingdom has the leadership, with the highest number of cities involved (20). Spain and Italy are behind the UK, counting the same number of cities (14). If we consider the growing importance of Eastern European countries in the economic and social scenario for Europe, we hope that cities from those countries will join the TeleCities network in the near future.

The organization is run by a steering committee formed by one representative for each country, which is responsible for implementing the annual work program in accordance with the TeleCities budget approved by the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of all the representatives.

The main objective of TeleCities, the creation of a European citizenship through the development of digital infrastructures and services, requires a variety of actions, which can be summarized in four main areas:

- Influencing the European agenda to ensure that the interests of cities are taken into account in European policy-making.
- Fostering exchange of experience and knowledge transfer among cities, to guarantee a widespread diffusion of organizational and technological innovations at the European level.
- Informing TeleCities members on policies, programs and initiatives at European and local level.
- Facilitating and supporting the development of projects funded by the European programs that are supposed to be relevant for the members and the network as well.

3. TELECITIES ACTIVITIES IN DETAIL: 2004 WORK PROGRAM³

The four main areas of action illustrated above are articulated in specific strands of action in the annual work program evaluated and approved every year in the Annual General Meeting (AGM). To describe precisely which specific actions are undertaken by TeleCities, it is useful to summarize briefly the content of the 2004 work program approved in November 2002 which will be developed under the Barcelona presidency.

³ This section represents a synthesis of TeleCities 2004 work program, approved by TeleCities AGM, 26th November 2003.

3.1 Policy Development And Lobbying With European Institutions: The Knowledge-Based City

TeleCities aims to place the city-related aspects of the information society higher on the EU agenda. Priority will be given to acknowledge the role of cities in the process of achieving the Lisbon goals, which aim at “making Europe the most competitive knowledge economy in the world” by the year 2010. To this end, TeleCities aims to propose a strategic framework focused on the concept of the *knowledge-based city*, which is central in the whole TeleCities Work Program for 2004, approved by the TeleCities AGM in November, 26th 2003 in Porto.

The information and knowledge society is a new form of social organization, where equitable and ubiquitous access to information, knowledge and to appropriate content based on advanced ICT networks, should enable all people to achieve their full potential, promote sustainable economic and social development, and improve the quality of life for all. The generation and exploitation of knowledge is now the predominant factor in the creation of wealth. The shift to a knowledge-based society, prompted by new technologies and innovative flows of communication, is a powerful engine for growth, competitiveness and job creation. It is responsible for the renewal of urban and regional development and the promotion of environmentally sound technologies. Nevertheless, it carries important challenges and problems of an increasing digital divide.

The *knowledge-based city* is meant to ensure that these risks are minimized and that the benefits coming from the knowledge society are granted to all citizens, local communities and businesses. This means that all cities need to adopt long-term e-government strategies and visions, and use Information and Communication Technologies to innovate and modernize. Only by doing this, they will be able to offer high quality information and knowledge and the most advanced services, develop improved forms of governance and transparency, set-up innovative forms of education, protect users’ privacy and security, and contribute to the long term economic, social and environmental well being of their citizens, businesses and social partners.

Within this strategic framework, TeleCities aims at supporting all members in exchanging experience and developing concrete partnerships towards a common goal at the European level, as well as in ensuring a strong and stable position of TeleCities *vis-à-vis* the European institutions with a long-term perspective. The knowledge-based city strategic framework is based on the following four main challenges:

a) *Overcome the barriers to the development of the knowledge society*

The role played by cities in allowing the transition to the knowledge society is fundamental, because they can contribute actively in a number of areas. First, to ensure equal access for all to telecommunication infrastructures and the Internet, the collaboration among cities and the telecommunication industry will be a necessary condition to guarantee the implementation of broadband infrastructures at the urban level as well as to set up affordable and high quality Internet access services. Second, cities can overcome the threats of digital exclusion and of lack of trust among citizens through the development of networks of public institutions and organizations such as schools, libraries and other public spaces and facilities. Third, cities can play a fundamental role in increasing the digital literacy at all education and income levels, for all age groups, for men and women, for the employed and the unemployed and across all different ethnic groups through the collaboration with the private sector and various social actors.

b) Ensuring information and knowledge society rights for citizens

The advent of the knowledge society requires a redefinition and an enlargement of citizens' rights according to the new economic and social scenarios. In particular, issues of social and territorial cohesion will be tied to the development of competent, skilled and well trained social capital in order to ensure the wealth of local communities. A first class of fundamental rights is represented by the accessibility to digital information and communication infrastructures and user friendliness in public information services and applications. Public administrations are called to provide updated and complete information in each phase of the decision-making process, including deliberations, consultations and citizen participation.

The right to security and confidentiality must be granted by public administrations in the development of technological infrastructures for administrative services, in order to ensure privacy and confidentiality for citizens and their data and information. Services will rely on a secure environment in order to improve the trust of citizens and businesses and promote the development of valuable content, services and applications. To reinforce the fundamental right to education in the knowledge society, it will be now essential to support the development of lifelong learning to allow people of all ages and sectors to take fully part and benefit of the development of the information and knowledge society. To this end, TeleCities will develop a charter of European e-rights, to be promoted at the local, national, European and global level.

c) Foster the knowledge-based industries

Cities have a crucial role to play in fostering knowledge-based industries as well as in the creation of high quality employment. The future competitive edge of cities as business locations will hinge on their ability to integrate innovation in all sectors, especially those underpinned by

information and communication technologies. Therefore, cities must promote the ICT industry by fostering entrepreneurship, especially in terms of knowledge and cultural content exploitation with a particular focus on multilingual content in a culturally diverse Europe. Equally, it will be crucial for cities to support secondary and tertiary SMEs facing globalization and competition, in the necessary process of integrating ICT in their business and organization, including developing e-business and e-commerce strategies. All these measures will promote the economic regeneration of cities affected by job cuts in traditional industrial sectors, by helping them to fully grasp the opportunities of the knowledge economy thus ensuring the territorial and social cohesion expected by European societies.

d) Promoting the modernization of public service and e-government

TeleCities will continue promoting e-government “as a key in increasing productivity, transparency and efficiency of Public Administration, thereby freeing resources and delivering more value for taxpayers’ money”⁴. Local authorities are indeed strongly engaged in modernizing their organization by making intensive use of information and communication technologies to speed up administrative procedures, minimize paper consumption and facilitate information transfers and communications with the citizen, customers and stakeholders. To improve its own productivity, cities also have to undertake a difficult re-engineering process by pushing through significant internal changes, increasing the skills of the workforces in the areas of communications and information management, and pushing for greater professional training and know-how. Globally, this process aims at continuously increasing the quality of administrative public services but will also help to modernize many activities of high importance for citizens as education, health, transport and tourism, etc..

This framework will inspire all policy activities of TeleCities, being them oriented toward European institutions, national governments and local policy makers. At the European level a regular dialogue with the European Institutions will be maintained and specific policy contributions will be produced. TeleCities will therefore continue to co-operate with several Directorates of the European Commission, specific members of the European Parliament and of the Committee of the regions on several consultation processes and policy developments.

European programs and TeleCities activities

Sixth Framework Program (FP6). Regarding the 6th FP for Research and Technological Development, TeleCities continues to monitor how the

⁴ Ministerial declaration, Como, Italy, July 2003.

program develops and works to ensure that cities' priorities are acknowledged in future calls for proposals. A targeted action on eDemocracy will be pursued in cooperation with the e-government Unit of EC DG Information society. Some first exchanges with the Commission will also be sought on the 7th Framework Program for R&TD, due to be launched in 2006.

eEurope 2005. In synergy with its sister networks (Eris@⁵ and Elanet⁶), TeleCities cooperates with the European Commission to foster the role of local authorities in the Implementation of the eEurope 2005 Action Plan, which mentions TeleCities among the European platforms used to disseminate good practices at the local level. This will mean providing specific policy input to the several initiatives foreseen to achieve the goals established in the Action Plan. The implementation of the Action Plan will be supported through existing EC funding opportunities, whose work programs and action lines will be reshaped according to the new priorities of eEurope 2005.

Other Programs. TeleCities will closely monitor other EU Policies and Programs that are focal for its members and in line with the network priorities. Regular dialogue will be mainly maintained with the relevant representatives from the European Commission DG Information society, DG Regio, DG Employment and DG Education. Specific contacts will be developed with Members of the European Parliament and other institutions.

World Summit of the Information society (WSIS). TeleCities contributed to the preparation of the Lyon summit (December 2003) which gathered leaders from local and regional authorities and the civil society at the global level to influence the works of the Summit on information society held in

⁵ ERIS@ is the European Regional Information society Association. 36 European Regions and two corporate partners (Microsoft and Pricewaterhouse Coopers Europe) compose the association. The overall objective of the Association is to promote universal access to ICT-based services and applications in member regions in order to generate new employment opportunities, to improve the quality of services and the quality of life of citizens. To achieve this main objective, ERIS@ provides a platform for regions to exchange information and experience, and a forum to discuss policy development relevant to Regional development and Information society (<http://www.erisa.be>).

⁶ ELANET is the European Local Authorities' Telematic Network that operates under the endorsement of CEMR (Council of European Municipalities and Regions) and focuses on the development of the Information society at the regional and local level. The peculiarity of ELANET is to bring together the public sector and private-organized bodies represented by their telematic daughter companies. At present the network consists of representatives from 20 European countries and five technological partners (Siemens, Pinkroccade, Sonera, Engineering Informatica, Omega Generation).

Geneva on the 13th of December 2003. TeleCities will actively contribute to the preparation of the next World Summit, to take place in 2005 in Tunis.

At the national level, TeleCities needs to develop regular contacts with the relevant ministries of the European countries represented by its membership. Through the promotion of the network and its initiatives at national level, TeleCities aims to influence national governments' ICT policy development in order to allow a more city-oriented approach. This role will be particularly ensured by the cities representing the different member States within the steering committee and the national branches.

The key policy development activity of the network is carried out at the local level, where TeleCities aims to facilitate the promotion of the information society for all. The goal is to help local decision-makers to develop policies that use ICT to foster new modes of governance and to improve the delivery of local public services reflecting the needs of citizens and communities.

3.2 Information Provision

A second priority for TeleCities is to keep its members updated and informed about EU policy developments regarding the information society. This was mainly achieved through the following instruments:

The *e-Newsbrief* sent to members on a monthly basis. It provides information on EU policies, programs, calls, events in the field of information society and other relevant areas for TeleCities. Initiatives, partner search, projects and events from the members are included, to improve internal cohesion and communication among members. A three-month calendar of events is also included.

The *Eurocities Flash*. This service provides news relevant to cities on EU and local initiatives and policies, and it also gives regular insight into the activities developed by Eurocities and its thematic committee and networks.

The *TeleCities Website*. The network's database-driven Website is conceived as a tool to provide members with effective information on a wide range of issues as well as to promote both the network activities and members' news internally and externally. It has been designed to ensure more transparency and empowerment by the members around the main decisions influencing the life and the strategies of the network. The Website is composed of several sections: about TeleCities (AGM, steering committee and TeleCities coordination office activities), news, activities (working groups, events, projects, discussion fora), member profiles (for promoting members' activities), partner search, library and contact. Members can

contact the TeleCities coordination office to identify improved ways for self-promotion or tailored information services.

TeleCities Events. Conferences and working group sessions are used as an opportunity for cities to receive information about best practices, as well as on EU and national policies, funding and initiatives. Representatives from cities, the EU, national governments, businesses and other institutions are regularly invited to speak and participate in the debate and to help TeleCities in the development of policy contributions. These events play also an important role as tools for dissemination of experiences and initiatives of TeleCities' member cities. TeleCities' Events last two days: the first day is dedicated to plenary sessions aimed at providing participants with a comprehensive view on the issues at stake, on the results achieved by TeleCities and its working groups and on future perspectives. The second day is entirely dedicated to working group sessions, in order to place working groups in a concrete and real framework for collaboration, discuss activities and outcomes, design initiatives and projects, share views and experiences.

3.3 Exchange of Experience, Transfer of Know How, Networking and Integration

Since its creation TeleCities promoted the exchange of experience and know-how between its members through a number of events, each of which includes a public thematic conference and a day dedicated to TeleCities working groups. Several cities have applied to host events in 2004. On the basis of a detailed list of criteria, publicized on the TeleCities Website, the steering committee has selected a restricted number of hosting cities, which are listed below. The criteria include: the conference theme has to be clearly related to the current TeleCities work program, complete financial responsibility, etc... Cities interested in hosting a future TeleCities event should send an application to the steering committee, respecting those criteria.

Since TeleCities is a partner of EU funded projects with a role to disseminate the projects results and in some cases to validate the outcomes with potential users, the TeleCities Events might become a dissemination opportunity to the whole membership. This will be the case of The Hague Conference which will be organized in strong cooperation with the MUTEIS Project. Such a choice will allow a clear benefit of the projects results for the whole membership as well as a cost effective management of TeleCities resources.

For 2004, the following cities have been selected to host a TeleCities event:

- The Hague, 18-19 March (in close cooperation with the MUTEIS Project)
- Ronneby, 2-4 June
- Gijon, 29 September - 2 October.

The TeleCities Conferences to be organized in 2004 will be focused on themes that are inherent to the annual work program and overall strategy. The general themes of the conferences have already been approved by the steering committee in 2003 as part of the hosting application. The responsibility for the detailed conferences' program will be taken by the hosting cities, the president or the EU Projects consortium, with the final approval of the steering committee and TCO.

3.4 Working Groups

Working groups represent one of the core activities of the network. That is why they will focus on the strategic framework of the *knowledge-based city* and its four challenges. This framework wishes to include all the topics that have been addressed in the past years by TeleCities and those emerging from the growing level of specific issues that naturally emerge in the fast moving evolution of information society. This is why the four challenges have been defined broadly enough to be able to contain as many issues as possible.

Until now, TeleCities worked on the fulfillment of the “eCitizenship for all” challenge⁷, which was related to e-government services and applications as an effective instrument toward the development of a true European citizenship. E-government and information technology represent the two relevant factors in achieving full citizenship, but the concept of citizenship by which TeleCities is inspired is an old, though robust one. A quote of Abraham Lincoln about his desires for the role of government can be used to summarize TeleCities approach to e-government. According to Lincoln's wish, the government is *of* the People, *by* the People and *for* the people. According to this broad definition, TeleCities promotes and develops specific programs for e-government. First of all, government *of* the People means that it is elected representatively, tax-funded, transparent and responsible. Secondly, a government made *by* the people stresses the ideas

⁷ The eCitizenship for all Challenge emerged in 2002 from the PACE project (Public Administration and eCommerce in Europe) coordinated by Alfonso Molina, during the Rome presidency of TeleCities. The background document “Towards eCitizenship for all” by dr. Nick Lancaster and prof. Alfonso Molina is available on the TeleCities Website, <http://www.telecities.org/library/index.htm>

of participation, empowerment, and a strong involvement in decision-making processes. Finally, a government *for* the people means that it is inclusive, where added value services have to be offered with enough privacy and security for all.

Full citizenship means to grant individuals the right to access to public services in the most effective and convenient way, to actively participate in the democratic decision-making process, to equally take advantage of the benefits generated by developments in the information society, to have e-security.

The *eCitizenship for all* framework for working groups was divided into separate interrelated large challenges, all within the time perspective of 2010:

Re-engineering Services. all cities will have to re-engineer their services in order to improve the cost/benefit ratio and the quality of all the services they deliver to citizens, professionals and businesses. The primary objectives related to this challenge are:

- Increasing the provision of on line delivery of services, helping accelerate the development of e-commerce and the implementation of relevant legal frameworks.
- Fostering the customization of services and generate best practice examples that will relate to the many ways of ensuring the quality of information offered by the public sector.
- Improving the management of many internal re-organization processes needed. For example an improved organizational framework for the exploitation of public sector information by private firms and citizens would facilitate the creation of information products that cover Europe in its entirety.
- Increasing the e-learning possibilities for staff within public administrations, with a bottom up approach, that means through the gathering of learning needs expressed by public sector workers in order to design specific e-learning initiatives and to allow life-long learning.

e-democracy, all cities will have implemented e-democracy with all the new forms of citizen participation and community empowerment. The main objectives related to this challenge are:

- The improvement of the participation and consultation processes for citizens groups towards local governments; accessibility of government information, services and decision-making procedures on line; the development of new models of government relating to the empowerment of citizens in the context of e-democracy.
- The improvement in securing e-voting and in guaranteeing access for all users.

- The provision of public sector information through information portals in order to increase the awareness and the strength of the local social and economic community.

e-learning and e-inclusion, all European citizens will be digitally literate and able to benefit from the gains of the information society. These main goals related to this challenge are:

- Increasing the provision of e-learning and training for youngsters approaching the labor market; alignment of occupational skills with skills learned in educational institutions.
- Increasing e-learning initiatives for school students, helping to adapt educational standards to the digital age.

e-security and data protection, all cities will have to implement secured information systems in order to guarantee integrity and confidentiality of all the information and security to the users. This objective will be reached through a deep understanding of issues such as:

- Securing personal identification;
- Measuring plans of security on municipalities;
- Ensuring complete transparency in all administrative processes;
- Ensuring complete integrity and confidentiality when dealing with sensitive data.

3.4.1 The Knowledge-Based City Framework for Working Groups

The new framework for Working group activities is centered on the *knowledge-based city* challenge, which includes all the previous themes and several new topics. The rationale behind the adoption of this framework for Working groups is to guide the members to fulfill the mission of the network (policy making, exchange of experience, project development) in a well structured and targeted way, so to capture as much knowledge as possible and meaningfully use it for learning and promotional purposes at the European and local level. To this end, a final annual report on the *knowledge-based city* will be compiled and will include all the knowledge gathered during the year by each working group.

The Working groups will focus on the main challenges constituting the TeleCities' work program, with specific and focused projects and activities:

Overcome the barriers to the development of the knowledge society. This Working group would address several issues, such as broadband access for all; security, privacy and trust; e-learning contents and digital literacy for all, pas as knowledge providers, e-inclusion.

Ensuring information and knowledge society rights of citizens. This working group would address the promotion of a charter of European e-rights, which establishes a framework of guaranteed "rights" for all members

of society in order to benefit from the opportunities of the information society. These rights will set the framework for local administrations to develop policies and services that will support Europe to become the most competitive and inclusive knowledge-based economy in the world. The fundamental rights to be guaranteed by local public administrations are: rights to accessibility, rights to education and formation, information rights and rights to participation.

Foster knowledge industries. This working group would address several issues, such as delivery of high quality on line services for businesses, supporting and sustaining the development of ICT related growth sectors within the knowledge economy; convergent technologies - how ICT are combining with broadcasting and publishing industries in the development of a European e-media sector. In this field, working groups will face topics such as the Delivery of high quality on line services for businesses, Use of mobile technologies and located based services within PAs, Promote ICT Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Promote broadband access and e-business strategies for SMEs.

Promote the modernization of local public administration and e-government. TeleCities is committed to promoting e-government as a key in increasing productivity, transparency and efficiency of local public administrations. Many local public authorities are already engaged in improving their organization through an intensive use of ICT, and working groups in this field will provide them with valuable support through research and innovation activities on topics like re-engineering processes, advanced on line services in healthcare, education, tourism, culture, use of ict for risk management and civil protection, e-security solutions for on line transactions, open source software for PAs, Interoperability between administrations.

3.5 Project Development And Management

The exchange of experience and know-how promoted through TeleCities events and pursued by the activities of each working group, leads often to the development of common projects and initiatives. TeleCities is active in facilitating members in the development of new projects proposals, as well as in supporting the direct participation of its members in European projects.

The most important tool to support TeleCities members in proposing innovative projects and in participating in existing projects is the regular provision of information regarding European projects, calls for proposals, funding opportunities and European Programs. The network aims to function as a “clearing house” in which members submit their interests for projects and where matches between potential project partners are made possible.

The partner search will be ensured through the development of the partner search facility in the network's Website.

TeleCities aims to play a fundamental role in providing policy inputs in the context of the European 6th Framework Program for Research and Technological Development, developing proposals to be submitted to the European Commission for the development of more city – oriented projects.

Ongoing projects are:

MUTEIS. MUTEIS is a pan-European research project about Macro-economic and Urban Trends in the European Information society. The overall objective is to analyze the effects of the so-called “digital economy” on national economies in Europe, and to explore the way these effects manifest themselves at the level of urban regions. The research reveals developments over the 1990s, starting a few years before the Internet hype, and ending with the first signs of the dot-com crisis.

The analysis will improve the design and implementation of policy action on European, national and urban levels, to support Europe's transition into the digital economy in a sustainable way.

The first stage of the research project took place in 2001 and 2002. It is a comparative, in-depth analysis of the macro-economic growth performance during the 1990s of four countries that are frontrunners in the take-up of the digital economy in Europe: Finland, Ireland, The Netherlands and Sweden. We refer to these countries as “the FINS”.

The second stage concerns a detailed, more qualitative analysis of the most important regional and urban developments in these FINS countries. There are two phases of this stage. The first is now published and entails case studies in two different kinds of regions in each country. One region being the national frontrunner in ICT take up, the other being more remote, but apparently successful in ICT too. These studies are available in the publication *ICT Clusters in European Cities during the 1990s* (more details further down). The second phase will study the impact of the ICT clusters on other aspects of the society in the regions.

The third stage of the overall project extends the analysis to urban regions in four other countries of the European Union: France, Italy, Germany and Spain. This analysis took place in 2003.

On the basis of the research and analysis done so far, four key growth models - the so-called ‘four stairways to heaven’ - have been identified across the FINS countries: the Irish model, the Nordic capital model, the peripheral specialization model, and finally the international service city model.

Three Roses. TeleCities is one of the key partners in cooperation with Eris@ and ELANET of the Three Roses Project which started with a kick-off meeting on 13-14 January 2003. It aims at building a constituency of

actors, including cities, interested in submitting a project proposal under the 6th Framework Program RTD to develop open source software applications for local and regional authorities in the fields of e-government, e-learning and e-business. The main objective is to design a roadmap leading towards an Integrated Project (IP) to support the advancement of digital service delivery and the full integration of local and regional prime movers, including public administrations, in the European Research Area.

To achieve this objective, Three Roses has arranged an open platform in which potential participants in an IP will be able to debate and exchange views, by setting up a Website and a virtual forum, as well as holding workshop sessions, the first of which took place on 14-15 April 2003. The information, opinions and experience exchanged in this way will form the building blocks for the more focused discussion in the second Three Roses workshop scheduled for September 2003 leading to the roadmap for future integrated research.

Intelcities. Intelcities is an integrated project (IP) approved under the first IST call of the 6th FP – IST Program. The project aims to support achievement of the EU policy goal of the “Knowledge Society” by 2010 through advancement of e-government at the city scale, focusing on a range of citizens’ and business concerns about decision-making over regeneration and management of their local environment. It addresses the IST strategic objective of developing ICT to support (urban) organizational networking by constructing a demonstration of an Integrated Open System City Platform (IOSCP). The objective of the IOSCP is an integrated citywide information system continuously accessible to all (planners, developers, politicians, designers, engineers, transport and utility service providers and individual citizens) that will enable more inclusive decision-making and support more sustainable life-styles. TeleCities will take care of the dissemination of the project results to our wider membership, as well as the involvement of our members in the validation phase of the project. In addition, targeted dissemination activities (e.g. special sessions at TeleCities Events, or a fully-fledged conference) will be defined during the implementation phase of the project.

FLOSS-POLS. In 2004 TeleCities will consolidate its work in the domain of open source software in public authorities. To this aim, the work done under the Three Roses⁸ and the enormous interest of our members vis-à-vis

⁸ TeleCities is one of the key partners in the Three Roses project, in cooperation with Eris@ and Elanet. The project, started in January 2003, aims to build a constituency of actors, including cities, interested in submitting a project proposal under FP6 to develop Open Source Software applications for local and regional authorities in the field of e-

open source applications will feed into the FLOSS-POLS specific support action, funded by the 6th FP – IST Program. FLOSS-POLS (Free/Libre/Open Source Software - Policy Support) will start on January 2004 and puts together the expertise of the Three Roses and the FLOSS consortia. The primary objective of FLOSS-POLS is to investigate the use and the development of open source software across Europe.

Auxilia. In 2004 TeleCities will be a partner in the Auxilia project, funded by the EC Socrates, Leonardo and Youth Programs. This project investigates the use of ICT in learning opportunities for young people with disabilities. In particular it aims at creating a European model for the integration of young people with disabilities in schools and University through the introduction of supportive technology for e-learning. The project will involve local authorities, schools management, teachers and families to contribute to the development of a successful methodology for the integration of youth people with disabilities in formal education and social environments. TeleCities will be in charge of the Europe-wide dissemination of this project and will enhance the transfer of training material and knowledge.

Proposals submitted. In 2003 several proposals were submitted. Here we present a list of proposals currently under evaluation by the European Commission which are likely to start in 2004.

CEL-FLOSS-NGB. The CEL-FLOSS-NGB proposal (Constituency-building for European Leadership in Free/Libre and Open Source Software for Networked Businesses and Governments) is a coordinated action under the IST Program of the 6th Framework Program for Research and Technological Development, aimed to position Europe at the forefront of global efforts regarding open source for networked businesses and governments in local/regional economies.

GPOSS Tender. Besides the traditional involvement in projects, in 2003 TeleCities submitted a proposal for a tender on the usage of open source application for public authorities across Europe. Together with Three Roses, FLOSS-POLS and CEL-FLOSS-NGB, the GPOSS tender completes the full range of TeleCities activities in the domain of the usage and uptake of open source in cities across Europe. These four activities are meant to strengthen the position of the network in this domain. The GPOSS tender has been submitted under the call published by the IDA program (Interchange of Data between Administrations).

3.6 Other Activities

Cooperation with Deloitte. TeleCities will carry out its second year of cooperation with Deloitte to develop an yearly benchmarking study and Award on *eCitizenship for All*. The main results of the first year edition have been a database, owned by TeleCities and freely accessible by its member cities, containing specific information on their individual state as to the four aspects of *eCitizenship for All*: re-engineering processes, e-democracy, security and data protection, e-learning and inclusion. The first *eCitizenship for All* Award has also been successfully done and the second edition will be launched early in 2004.

Cooperation With ELANET and Eris@. TeleCities will continue and consolidate its co-operation with its sister networks, ELANET and Eris@. This will be done in many ways and types of activities, detailed below. The three networks have agreed with the European Commission (DG INFSO and DG REGIO) to maintain and consolidate an agenda for 2004, on whose items the three networks will provide regular input and feed-backs, as follows: follow-up of the Three Roses project on Open Source Software in local and regional e-government; benchmarking the information society developments at the local and regional level; broadband infrastructures; cooperation with accessing countries; the role of regions in research; dissemination of good practices.

Cooperation with the Global Cities Dialogue. Cooperation with the Global Cities Dialogue will be maintained during 2004. TeleCities remains promoter of GCD among its members; it is an observer member in the GCD Steering structure and will contribute to the organization of signatory and other events. Concrete initiatives will be developed within the TeleCities Working Groups, to which the GCD members will be invited, addressing specific issues, such as Security and data protection.

4. A CHARTER FOR EUROPEAN E-RIGHTS

Public administrations at all levels will be called, in the information and knowledge society, to guarantee the development and the enjoyment of new rights for European citizens. As the basic structure of the European social and economic space changes according to the increasing importance of knowledge and information, citizens and businesses will exploit their full potential only if the access to applications and services of the information society will be widespread and easy, and if ICT will be used effectively as instruments of change in policy-making processes in order to include local communities in the political and administrative agenda setting process.

TeleCities is committed in ensuring the effective recognition and protection of concrete and measurable rights of all citizens in the Information and Knowledge Society. These rights are essential to achieve a competitive and competent society in the digital age and to ensure social and territorial cohesion. The effective development and enforcement of these “e-rights” require a purposeful action towards the creation of a “charter of rights” that can address policy-making processes at every institutional level, putting citizens’ rights at the center of the European agenda. TeleCities started working on this charter, that will be the main objective for its working groups during the last year of Barcelona’s presidency.

The charter of e-rights will establish a framework of guaranteed “rights” for all members of society in order to benefit from the gains of the information society. TeleCities believes that if the administrations do not address decisively this issue decisively, some citizens will access the information and knowledge society and others will not, thus creating conditions of inequality.

The rights guaranteed by the charter will set the framework for local administrations to develop policies and services that will support Europe to become the most competitive and inclusive knowledge-based economy in the world.

The reasons for the definition of such rights are many. As citizens are the substantial part of a knowledge society, defining their rights allows, first, to draw up the interaction between citizen and the Information and Knowledge Society, and second, to determine which model of Information and knowledge Society is best suited to each European city context.

The TeleCities proposals on the charter of e-rights begins with the outline of what TeleCities thinks are the main e-rights to be developed in the scenario of European society. Basically, there are four sections

- rights to accessibility.
- rights to e-learning, that is the right to education during the whole life in a personalized fashion.
- right to information and communication.
- rights to e-democracy.

4.1 Rights to Accessibility

Rights to accessibility do not refer only to Internet access but, in broad terms, to access to every telecommunication service and platform. The development of broadband in every European region is essential to guarantee e-inclusion and equal access possibilities for all citizens. In this framework internet is one of the different channels within which administrative information and services are provided, but other technological platforms

experience a wide diffusion among citizens, as for example mobile phones. Local public administrations must reach every citizen through his or her preferred technological platform; otherwise, the simple reliance on Internet would act as a barrier for those who cannot use it or do not want to use it. In short, municipalities will have to provide services also through mobile phones and digital kiosks, for example, designing multiplatform services and infrastructures, providing thus connection and access everywhere and through every technological interface.

Access to services, in high information intensive environments such as the Internet and GSM networks, requires the assurance for citizens that their confidential data will not be abused, misused or inadequately diffused. The lack of security represents a barrier to access: as long as citizens do not feel confident with new digital services, they will not use them. The trade-off between opportunities brought by technologies and security, threatens to push citizens away from improved services and inclusion opportunities. In this sense, municipalities will have to act on two fronts: the first is related to the development of truly secure protocols and standards; the second is related to the creation of awareness and confidence among citizens and users. TeleCities is working on each of these areas, and has defined a range of emblematic actions.

In that respect, as an example, we can point out the next emblematic actions, regarding accessibility and security: implement the legislation in reference to the e-Rights of citizens, build a network of Public Internet Access Points (PIAP), define, spread and foster standards for Internet accessibility, monitor prices and quality of telecommunications operators services.

4.2 Rights to e-learning

The principles shaping TeleCities actions and strategies on learning and education is that all the citizens have the right to be skilled in order to effectively benefit from services and information delivered through ICT. New communication technologies detach learning from schools and universities and give the opportunity to develop new skills and competencies also to those who are already working or are looking for an occupation. While traditionally learning was accomplished in specialized institutions before entering the labor market, and learning and working were two separate areas of our life, now new technologies offer the chance to learn everywhere and anytime in the life of an individual. The eEurope 2005 objective of making Europe the most competitive knowledge economy of the world by 2010, will be reached only developing and implementing e-learning technologies and platforms that will effectively allow citizen to

update and redefine continuously their skills and competencies, in order to be more mobile and well endowed in the European labor market. In this wide perspective, TeleCities' aim is to identify which are the necessary projects to be implemented at the local level to guarantee these rights. In identifying opportunities and solutions for e-learning, TeleCities, as well as the European Union and other public actors, will have to work with firms in the technology sector in order to develop personalized technologies and services. Only responding to the citizens' requests for specific competencies and skills, and providing each citizen with the content and knowledge he or she really needs, e-learning initiatives will reap high returns in terms of employability and human capital. This means that public institutions, most of all municipalities, will have to screen the occupational structure of their territory and the potential development opportunities, gathering customized information about the learning needs of their citizen and addressing them with customizable platforms, content and technologies. Personalization is the key to life-long learning in this perspective: as far as every citizen can find services and content that respond to specific and personal need at any moment, he or she can design a personalized learning path, drawing from an existing and continuously growing knowledge base.

Among the emblematic actions identified, obviously the creation of all types and levels of educative courses in every language is the most challenging one. Other strategies are equally challenging and important, such as favoring the ongoing training of teachers as promoters of change in any educative environment and favor the ongoing training of specific groups such as immigrants, seniors and disabled persons.

4.3 Information and Communication Rights

The objectives of including citizens in the decision-making process and of making administration procedures more transparent, rely on the ability of municipalities and public actors in general to deliver complete and high quality information. The participant citizen is the informed citizen: thus information must be diversified and updated. These issues are strictly intertwined with those highlighted in the previous paragraph about accessibility: public information has to be easily understandable, delivered through adequate and differentiated technologies and platforms, personalized in its contents, according to the needs and the requests of every citizen. The ability to deliver to every citizen only the information he or she requires is crucial to the active involvement of citizens in administrations' processes and decisions. Segmenting and personalizing contents, technologies and access devices as well as services, avoids overloading the citizen with undesired and uninteresting information, and results in strong feedback and

involvement by individuals who are particularly inclined towards specific issues and topics.

The content delivered by information services are diverse in nature. The goal of public administrations is to provide every useful informative item to the citizen, from databases, registries and statistics, to policy documents and programs, studies and benchmarking. The information must be diverse also in its origins: municipalities and administrations in general will also have to provide information produced outside the public sector, for example, studies and reports produced by private firms, journal articles and the like. The diffusion of information must be performed with particular attention to privacy and confidentiality.

The emblematic actions on which TeleCities is and will be focused, refer mainly to information on administrations, which have to be the catalyst of content production. In addition, all information on available personal data has to be gathered from citizens with appropriate and sufficient guarantees of privacy, security and confidentiality.

4.4 Rights of e-democracy

As far as e-democracy is concerned, the increase in citizen participation to decision-making and policy-making processes is not only a matter of services and technologies. Providing access to digital services and content, though important, is not sufficient. E-democracy, meant as participation of citizens, regards the ease with which citizens can relate to the administration and, most of all, the accessibility of its processes and procedures. Public administrations will have to re-engineer their processes in order to make them understandable for citizens: that means that the whole administrative flow must be clear and its outcome, whether definitive or intermediate, must be public and available. In order to participate, the citizen must be aware of who is responsible for processes and actions, who works on them, how these processes flow inside the organization. Rationalization, re-engineering, transparency and access are fundamental prerequisites for the development of a participative citizenship.

Web portals, e-voting systems and platforms, content provision services are the outcome of this process of radical organizational redefinition by municipalities and public administrations. The design of effective interfaces, services, platforms and contents will be the result of an effective reorganization of the administrations around citizens and users of their services.

TeleCities believes that e-democracy will be the result of the development of other fundamental and basic rights and principles, which are: the right to a transparent public administration during the whole

decision-making process; the right to a public administration with deliberations, consultations and citizen participation; the right to a public administration actively engaged in responding to citizen participation and strengthening civil society.

Under these perspectives, the emblematic actions undertaken by TeleCities members are: the design and launch of effective systems which foster citizen participation in decision-making processes; the careful consideration of all of the technical options to ensure an effective response to citizen enquiries and to report the results of participation; the use of multiple channels (email, SMS) to encourage citizens to express opinions, suggestions and complaints.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Ten years ago, in 1993, thirteen cities willing to actively contribute to the development of the information and knowledge society, started to think about the opportunities that ICT would have brought to cities' administrations and, most of all, firmly believed in the importance of the exchange of experiences and the transfer of knowledge in a cooperative framework to ensure the rise of a European inclusive information society. The network has grown, counting up to 130 members, and still does, but its objectives remain unchanged: fostering the widespread access to digital infrastructures and services as the key for a more competent and competitive European society, with a clear focus on the role played by municipal administrations, local communities, citizens and businesses. The European Union and national governments are actively and successfully engaged in programs and initiatives oriented toward the achievement of the Lisbon goals, but their efforts require a strong enactment by local administrations, because cities and local communities are the loci of innovation. Within urban contexts citizens and businesses require new services and improved security and confidence; within cities citizens and businesses association participates in new ways and through innovative instruments (ICT) to decision making processes; local administrations, and in particular municipal administrations, represent the primary actors in creating innovative procedures, technological solutions, organizational arrangements aimed at responding effectively to emerging citizens' needs.

These beliefs drove the birth and the growth of TeleCities as a body that is a direct expression of the active engagement of cities and local public administrations in the process of creating a new Europe, within which ICT and an improved local government will allow the expression of the European social and intellectual capital at its full potential.

To consolidate the work of the last ten years, TeleCities is working on the elaboration and the launch of the Charter of eRights for all citizens, that will serve as a framework for all TeleCities' members in the creation of a more inclusive Information and Knowledge Society. The charter will represent a bridge between the results achieved by member cities and the future challenge they will have to face, that of building up European public services and make TeleCities a platform to stimulate local democracy, foster the full development of a European economy based on knowledge and contribute to the emergence of a real European citizenship.

On Line Citizenship

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