Comparative Study 1:
INNOVATIVE EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES OF PUBLIC INTERNET CENTRES FROM THE CZECH REPUBLIC, FRANCE, GERMANY, ITALY AND SPAIN

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1. INTRODUCTION

This study consists in a comparative analysis of the variety of best practices in Digital Literacy and Adult Education that were identified in individual Public Internet Centres (PICs) across Europe -practices that are potentially transferable to other European regions or countries - with a view to the local context, the local network and the typology of PICs in which they were developed.

The source data for this study is contained in an on-line database which collects all the interviews for PICs that were carried out by PPII's project partners during 2006.

These cases were collected in the five countries represented by the project partners, i.e.: Spain, Italy, France, Germany and the Czech Republic.

2. DESCRIPTION OF CASES

We have defined as "Innovative" those practices that were created under certain local conditions, that have produced a positive learning environment for learners -improving not only their concrete knowledge but also their quality of life in many different ways- and that are potentially transferable to other European PICs.

During the project data gathering process, some 60 PICs/Networks of PICs were selected as having a higher degree of innovation in the field of Digital Literacy and Non Formal Education, this innovation also being potentially transferable to PICs from other European regions.

Here below, we have included a summary of innovations developed by each of the centres by country.

2.1 Spain

Spanish cases were collected by Fundació Ciutat de Viladecans in three regions: Catalonia, Andalusia and Extremadura.

Centre: Adult Training Centre "Edelia Hernandez"
Innovative Practice:

Introductory courses on ICT taught by means of Socratic learning strategies, combining regular lessons together with practical applications.

Centre: Auditorium "Pau Picasso"
Innovative Practice:

Discovery learning methodologies structured in theoretical and practical lessons and supported by reference material (files and practise cards).

Centre: TecnoCampus Mataró
Innovative Practice:

Short workshops (3 hours) for small groups (up to 8 people) coordinated by specialised trainers and structured according to its contents, with detailed explanations and exercises for the subject area.

Centre: "Alba Rosa" Civic Centre
Innovative Practice:

Technology literacy for the aged : learning-by-doing techniques and on-demand assistance, plus a specific course to train participants' memories, a course carried out by a specialist.

Centre: Manresa Council
Innovative Practice:

Staff are young scholarship holders hired as practitioners and trained to teach, who then put into practice their teaching skills in any of the 21 PICs of the area.

Centre: "Aplicació" Private Foundation of Callús
Innovative Practice:

Projects for the creation of digital content in a collaborative way: Atlas of Diversity and Atlas of Living Memory. The outputs are on-line databases containing a recompilation of documents, provided by the participants, related to the reference subjects (historical memory, etc.). Blended learning and a combination of different types of subjects (ICT and History) are oriented to a common goal: the collective edition of the Atlas as a driving force of the learning process. Lessons on ICT, History and how to recompile historical information; activities to gather data, digitalisation and creation of documents to be incorporated in the "Atlas"; creation of networks to give inputs to the Atlas and to similar networks to enable a virtual grouping of persons with analogous interests.

Centre: NCC Cabezuela del Valle
Innovative Practice:

Cycle of chat sessions that host local politicians. A step-by-step process: contact with potential guest politicians; selection of a common issue for discussion; involvement of local authorities and collaborative networks; training of the centre's users to allow them to participate in the activity; elaboration of a project card and a web page; communication event through media, to carry out the event.

Centre: NCC Madrigalejo
Centre: NCC Puebla de la Calzada
Centre: NCC Villagonzalo
Innovative Practice:

NCC is the Spanish acronym for New Centres of Knowledge, which is the name given to Extremadura's model, founded in early 2000 and then exported to other areas. These three centres represent the innovation introduced by the model, which can be summarised in this way:

Content: promotion of e-administration, creation of blogs and podcasts, on-line radio, video-conferencing, regional thematic chats and internet relay chats (RCs).

Method: User-centred methodology, based on animation, motivation and training, pointing out three areas of intervention: i) social components that can become agents of transformation towards the Information and Knowledge Society; ii) generation of targeted projects, initiatives and actions; iii) focus on digital literacy/ICT training and capacity to develop autonomous initiatives.

Process: Mobilisation of target groups that can become digitally literate, active hearing of users' knowledge and interests, team building, digital literacy workshops and participation in regional projects and local action.

Centre: Ignasi Iglesias-Can Fabra Library
Innovative Practice:

Guided lessons with the help of a teacher and a file.

Centre: Telecentre del Solsonès (CTFC)
Innovative Practice:

The Centre's offer is open, "à la carte" and targeted to different disadvantaged groups. Thanks to on-line courses provided by Aula Mentor (a Spanish model for on-line training) and by the Woman's Institute - together with classroom-based courses- the training offer has evolved towards non-ICT subjects (environment, accounting, languages, etc ...), a situation which indirectly brought new users towards new subjects.

Centre: Centro Guadalinfo Turre
Innovative Practice:

Different strategies are used to involve people in training: i) on Grandfather's day, users can contact their relatives through video-conferencing, chat or instant messages; ii) a singles' caravan to another city allows local users to meet with their virtual interlocutors (i.e., users who first "met" through Internet); iii) training lessons via a well-known FM radio channel: once a week the PICs monitor together with senior/retired people who are advanced students and offer a step-by-step explanation of a PIC's activities; the audience can contact them by phone or email and present their questions that will be answered "live".

Centre: Centro Guadalinfo Huétor Tájar
Innovative Practice:

The centre provides a complementary course to the Digital Literacy courses that the local Centre for Adults offers. Students come to the centre looking for information related to their lessons, and have to learn how to deal with new technologies. Theoretical group explanations are complemented with several exercises and individual tutoring. Motivation is managed through attractive and familiar activities, which depend on skills, interests and needs of each target group.

Centre: Centro Guadalinfo Ítrabo
Innovative Practice:

A car driven course was designed to give a response to a specific local need, to collect materials from specialised offices and to design a training path for a long workshop, thus harmonizing all available elements, including a pair of original training activities at the end (a simulation on a circuit using mini cards with traffic signals, and a puppet theatre play supplied by the National Traffic Office). Thanks to this kind of initiative, people who were initially reluctant towards new technologies, started using them in their everyday lives.

2.2 Italy

The selected sample of relevant cases in Italy is composed of PICs belonging to both ARCI networks (the PPII's local partner organisation) and other Public agencies at both regional and local levels. They have been selected according to the following criteria: a) geographic area [North; Centre; South]; b) legal Status of the promoting body [Public; Third System]; c) their range of action [formal rather than non formal adult education; information rather than job guidance and/or cultural and social inclusion]; d) the category of users [young people rather than migrants, and/or women and/or unemployed and/or disabled people, etc.].

Centre: Piazze Telematiche
Innovative Practice:

Full immersion e-skills course, where ICT is applied whenever possible (on-line selection of candidates to attend courses, practical exercises connecting e-government "theory" with local government processes; organisation of website contents).

Centre: Mediateca Centrale di Firenze
Innovative Practice:

Free access to e-learning platforms.

Centre: Biblioteca Berio- Genova
Innovative Practice:

Promotion of e-inclusion and language learning aimed at the aged and migrants. The relationship between young teachers and aged students has proven to be particularly effective. Promotion of self-learning in language laboratories.

Centre: Biblioteca Lazzerini- Prato
Innovative Practice:

Study groups dealing with technological literacy started up spontaneously from Arabic language courses, oriented towards children and young people who used the library. Availability of mother-tongue tutors, speaking Arabic and French.

Centre: Internet Social Point
Innovative Practice:

Diffusion of a wide approach to ICT, throughout the regional area of Basilicata in southern Italy. Cooperation with local universities in orga-nising European Computer Driving License (ECDL) courses. International network of 55 PICs around the world represents a point of reference for native people of the Basilicata Region who live abroad.

Centre: Viconet Points
Innovative Practice:

Citizen guidance and assistance to know the Public Administration ser-vices through a network of 6 PICs hosted by local associations in a small town in the Tuscan Region. Growing connection between the local Public Administration and the local Third System.

Centre: Passpartout
Innovative Practice:

This Cultural Network, ARCI, links up to 80 Local Cultural Youth Clubs located in different large urban areas and in middle-sized towns of the Emilia-Romagna Region. It has: i. encouraged the exchange of human and material resources, knowledge and multimedia skills, equipment, know-how and joint productions across the Network; ii. fostered youth entrepreneurship; iii. increased communications and links to other European/Non-European Cultural Networks.

Centre: Comitato ARCI di Caserta- Sportello Immigrati Con Accesso Ad Internet
Innovative Practice:

Free ICT courses officially recognised by Regional Authorities. Friendly, informal and inclusive approach. Care towards different disadvantaged features. Multicultural Guidance Approach/Method to enable migrants to plan their stay in Italy and develop a life/business project.

Centre: Artisti in Rete
Innovative Practice:

Training of artists on new technologies. Promotion of self-learning initiatives and exchanges/development initiatives to improve cultural knowledge, know-how and multimedia skills within the ARCI's Network of Local Youth Clubs of Emilia Romagna.

Centre: Circolo ARCI "Zona Franka" of Bari
Innovative Practice:

Training on Linux open source system that provides options in the direct use of target software and in direct contact with the University of Bari' s training resources on the subject.

Centre: Passwork - Sportello di orientamento e formazione al lavoro
Innovative Practice:

Increase job-searching opportunities through the improvement of e-skills and on-line opportunities thanks to free short-term courses tailored for people who have little time and not much money available. The courses are part of a variety of integrated resources to help people insert themselves on the labour market, which ranges from fast development of social and relational skills to on-the-job practice ("stages") for the most representative firms of the area.

Centre: Circolo ARCI of Melizzano (SW Italy)
Innovative Practice:

Being located in a rural tourist area, this PIC produces a cultural change to the local traditions in order to both encourage local citizens to participate in civic life, to access Public Administration services, to create steady distance links with about 3 500 relatives who have emigrated elsewhere in Europe and to improve sustainable and socially responsible SMEs/small business set-up. LINUX and OPEN SOURCES Systems/Software are also strongly promoted/disseminated.

Centre: TRIO
Innovative Practice:

A self-learning network of 19 Training Centres provided with the most advanced multimedia technologies and equipped classrooms (each one has about 11 Internet access points). Courses deal with a high percentage of students attending a second course (as in a prison's PIC, where a significant fidelity process of prisoners was observed). Vocational training and guidance for foreigners.

Centre: P.A.A.S.
Innovative Practice:

Oriented to all categories of citizens. The 296 P.A.A.S. Points have been put forward by the Regional Authorities and are all managed by Third System Organisations belonging to the Regional Tuscan Third System Forum. ARCI directly manages 90 P.A.A.S. Points. They are: a) disseminating e-democracy; b) guiding citizens to web on-line opportunities and Public Administration Services; c) informing/training them about OPEN SOURCE systems/software and multimedia technologies. "Shared Thought" Method: from individual to group planning. FLUG Groups that manage network situations/events/moments and OPEN OFFICE. Central Training Courses Planning integrated to the one taking place in any of the 296 P.A.A.S Points in the Tuscan Region. 60 "central trainers" going around the Network to train "local trainers/animators".

2.3 Germany

In Germany, data was collected with the help of an existing database of 8000 PICS elaborated by the foundation Digitale Chancen (www.digitale-chancen.de). This database uses a search engine which allows users to identify PICs on the basis of a variety of criteria ranging from addresses to target groups, qualification of staff, activities, etc. This database also provides the opportunity to establish which typologies are most represented in Germany.

Centre: Computer school Viernheim
Innovative Practice:

ICT training to find a job, combined with enterprise contacts that help to find a job through the internet. Mutual help between unemployed people with university degrees and unemployed people who do not have any professional training. Contacts with psychologists to help those people having difficulties in finding a job.

Centre: Family centre Barmbek
Innovative Practice:

Children and parents training on the development of computer and internet skills but also in critical education concerning the media (especially for parents in connection with their children's education).

Centre: Silbermedia
Innovative Practice:

Oriented to the over 50s. Special training activities, counselling concerning which computers to buy, internet coffee shop. After a basic course on ICT, a targeted course is proposed with many practical exercises that are useful in everyday life. Special summer activities (café for women, cinema, games with and without the computer, refresher courses, sessions on topics like IP phone, etc.

Centre: AWO Day care centre for elderly people
Innovative Practice:

Objectives and the learning rhythm depends on the participants, the slowest determine the speed. Teachers can also be elderly people who have good knowledge of ICT and work as volunteers in the PIC.

Centre: Computer and internet without stress Biberach
Innovative Practice:

A self-help organisation which helps people over 50 with basic knowledge in computers to resolve problems they are confronted with, to inform participants about new trends and to help refresh forgotten knowledge. Volunteers are at the disposal of people to provide them with explanations as to how to resolve special problems related to their work. They meet twice a week in a centre for elderly people and in a kind of pub.

Centre: Youth centre Pegasus
Innovative Practice:

A combination of open activities and learning activities, low cost computer activities that aim at using computers to assist young people access the knowledge based society and socio-cultural learning. This PIC's website is developed and maintained by the young users of the centre.

Centre: Medientreff Zone
Innovative Practice:

Project groups from kindergarten to the elderly or mentally or physically disabled groups, training for educators in the field of competence and free access for individuals. Activities suggested/decided by the users or project partners (no yearly programme). In the near future: a mobile youth club on media activities aimed at reaching young people in the countryside, out of town.

Centre: Public library of Münster
Innovative Practice:

Computers are user tools to look for information in well-known databanks in national and international libraries, which would be expensive for individuals. Motivation to use internet in a simple way, people who maybe do not have the courage to go elsewhere, whereas in a training course they have the possibility to take a first step to get to grips with computers. Learning groups, workshops, German language courses are offered with the support of computers.

Centre: IBIS Integration and training for migrants
Innovative Practice:

Integration of migrants by different means (from German language courses learning about daily life in Germany including a consultation service on non-discrimination). Contents and activities are target oriented. Learning groups, workshops, German language courses with the support of computers. The number of successful training activities on German language courses is higher (at 86,5 %) than in Germany in general (at 66 %) certainly also due to the use of computers and the

possibility for migrants to learn how to use computers by themselves which is a well accepted method.

Centre: AWO Computer training courses for migrant women
Innovative Practice:

Basic courses addressed specifically to migrant women, very often those who come to join their migrated husbands. Main objectives are to take them out of isolation, give them self assuredness and competency to be able to participate in everyday social life and to prepare them for the integration German language courses. Computer training is part of the different activities aimed at their participation in everyday social life.

Centre: Public PIC Esslingen
Innovative Practice:

A network of community centres working in special quarters of the town where trainers are at the disposal of users on request (no training courses or programmes). Trainers are volunteers with high ICT knowledge coming from the centre's area (they could be a migrant, or an elderly person in an elderly centre) with the aim to motivate people of special target groups to come to the centre.

Centre: Public library Paderborn
Innovative Practice:

Three hour workshops that are accessible to working people and people who do not want to engage themselves for a longer period of time. Transmission of basic knowledge and new trends (i.e. how eBay works, etc.). Cooperation with teachers of an associated school (and between them).

Centre: Local Internet centre AWO
Innovative Practice:

A neighbourhood centre which offers training specifically on topics requested by the users.

Centre: Communicate without barriers
Innovative Practice:

Products are developed concerning websites without barriers and adequate material for different types of disabilities. Integrated courses for the disabled and non disabled people. Consultation is provided so as to use and find the right material for a specific disability.

2.4 The Czech Republic

A distinctive characteristic of interviewed PICs in this country is that they mainly belong to the network of associated centres of Centrum Internetu (PPII's local partner organisation). In most cases, their main mission deals with Digital Literacy and Adult Education. Even if not so many details about the identified innovations are available in the database, information gathered shows some tendencies in the country which are further included in the next chapter.

Centre: Gymnazium Matyase Lercha
Innovative Practice:

Assimilation of the dynamics and pace of education according to target groups.

Centre: SPS and VOS Pisek
Innovative Practice:

Blended-learning. Self learning is implemented for benefits of easy learning individuals as well as to extend trainers' capacities.

Centre: Lyrix centrum
Innovative Practice:

Operating in rural areas, carrying out educational programmes in villages and small towns. It has its own call centre to provide detailed information about its services.

Centre: ZS Slany
Innovative Practice:

Own methodologies for design, development of websites and digital photos.

Centre: OA Hodonin
Innovative Practice:

Use of the latest interactive programmes/software with the final scope to insert unemployed people on the labour market.

Centre: SSD Frydek- Mistek
Innovative Practice:

Quality methods evaluation to take into account participants' feedback. Social inclusion of women on maternity leave.

Centre: Jintes CB
Innovative Practice:

High rate of specialised courses. The PIC compiles its own methods to teach graphic programmes.

Centre: SOS Lanskroum
Innovative Practice:

Trainees have the option to be tutored individually in case he/she does not follow all the course lessons. Procured education helps trainees insert themselves in the labour market.

Centre: Arci Gymnazium
Innovative Practice:

Focus on e-skills development of those citizens who have not had a possibility to pass IT courses. The PIC develops its own methods that are relevant to the e-skills level of trainees.

Centre: VOS informatic Brno
Innovative Practice:

The content of courses is established in accordance with trainees' interests and needs.

Centre: IC- HK
Innovative Practice:

Content is adapted to IT knowledge of target groups.

2.5 France

The effort by La Ligue (PPII's local partner organisation) in France was inserted in the identification and explanation of relevant typologies, as innovation in this country seems to be mainly promoted by the models or networks operating behind the individual PICs. This is why there are only a few cases of best practices included here below, and innovation in this country is explained in the next chapter, in close connection with identified French typologies.

Centre: CYBER-BASE de Guérande
Innovative Practice:

A key role to bridge the digital gap on the territory. Cyber-Base proposes workshops adapted to adults' needs. Workshops are not formal courses but rather animations in which participants can learn through games. The pedagogical methods used by the trainers take into account different approaches, visual, audio and kinaesthetic. Practical sessions alternate with theoretical demonstrations during the workshops.

Centre: Forum Inter'@ctif de la Communauté de Communes du Val d'Oust et de Lanvaux
Innovative Practice:

The PICs located in a rural area which encourages users to become active and to create contents by themselves (appropriation of ICT tools is seen as a means of emancipation for the citizen in everyday life).

Centre: Ligue de l'enseignement de la Dordogne
Innovative Practice:

Training for a public who is often far away from ICT, especially retirees. They learn how to use ICT resources in a familiar context.

Centre: Association Varlin Pont-Neuf de Limoges - Bourri Multimédia
Innovative Practice:

A strong link between the different activities of the centre (a Young Workers Hostel): social inclusion, citizenship, culture... Initiation to ICT is also an initiation to collective action and creation, but also to profes-

sional inclusion. Innovation in terms of education is when social inclusion and personal development are important in the different activities. By giving confidence, participants can create social links, which in turn can help them in their insertion into a socio-professional context.

Centre: P@T de Nontron (Aquitaine)
Innovative Practice:
P@T is a tool that proposes a whole range of vocational training to adults (in a region where there are not many training structures), linking training to the concrete competencies required for a particular job. It uses video-conferences for direct tutoring with the trainer.

3. ANALYSIS

3.1. Introduction

Interviewed PICs demonstrate that they play a key role in the local society, especially in towns and small villages, where they have become a point of reference not only for new technologies and learning, but also for the development of social links, a sense of community belonging and cultural life. Social integration seems to be the most important contribution of PICs to the society, of particular relevance when located in small towns or rural areas.

From this point of view, PICs are conscious of the social dimension of their mission -the digital illiteracy reduction- and play their educative role in a variety of ways, normally adapting their training strategies to the different target audiences that frequent the centres, "customizing" the contents, methodologies or procedures to help users embark more easily in the digital world.

Training in PICs is not official or formal (with a few exceptions), so a user's motivation is the key element to obtaining successful learning experiences. To keep participants motivated, PIC staff have created many innovative training strategies that have little to do with normal lessons in a traditional classroom, and which sometimes overcome the limits of a training activity or a centre to become a social project (like the collaborative edition of an Atlas of Memories in Catalonia) or a social event (like special training activities for Grandfathers' day in Andalusia).

There are a variety of elements that make needs and motivation different from PIC to PIC, i.e. the geographical location of the centre (needs change in big, medium or small cities or in rural areas) or the local population (the needs of digitally disadvantaged people change depending on each context). PIC staff take into account these local differences when designing their activities, which is a key to success, as the studied cases seem to demonstrate.

Apart from these general notes, which are valid for the whole population involved in PICs, we found some contrasts and similarities between models in different countries when going deeper into our analysis, as explained below.

3.2 Comparative Analysis of PIC's Educational Approaches by Country

3.2.1 Adult Education offer

The training offer of all the interviewed centres in Spain is focused on the ICT/Technological literacy field and a few of them -especially in southern Spain- extend their offer to socio-cultural and vocational/labour fields, but rarely to language teaching. In other words, Spanish PICs are specialised in Digital Literacy.

Interviewed Czech PICs are, like in Spain, specialised in ICT/Technological literacy. Some of them also cover other subjects, as follows (by quantity of cases): i) vocational training / labour market insertion; ii) languages; iii) entrepreneurship/self-employment; iv) socio-cultural promotion or integration.

The Italian offer not only covers the ICT/Technological literacy field (in all cases except one), but also a varied range of subjects: languages (in half the cases), vocational training / labour market insertion (almost half the cases), entrepreneurship/self employment (almost half the cases) and socio-cultural promotion or integration (in half of the cases).

In Germany, apart from a couple of PICs devoted exclusively to ICT/Technological literacy, all the other centres not only cover this field but also socio-cultural promotion or integration (two thirds of the cases), vocational training / labour market insertion (half the cases), languages and entrepreneurship/self employment (in a few cases each).

In France, the training offer is varied depending on the nature of the PICs. The main idea behind the creation of national and local networks such as the Cyber-Bases was to bridge the digital divide. In most PICs, the main focus is ICT/Technological literacy. Existing structures have also started to offer adults some ICT initiation activities to support their traditional missions such as the local employment agencies or popular education associations. Besides the traditional mission of PICs, most of them propose other activities and other mandates either in partnership with other structures or by their own initiative. Nearly all the interviewed centres have developed special attention towards the unemployed, others focus on social inclusion (ID 351), artistic creation and cultural development (ID 351), distance training (ID 279) or disadvantaged public (ID 244 and 246). Language teaching is not significant in the PICs.

3.2.2 Personnel at the public's disposal

Field analysis in Spain reveals the presence of a highly extended profile, locally called a "Dinamizador", which is rather socially-oriented and refers to personnel playing an active animation/facilitation role which includes the promotion of the activities inside and outside the centre (i.e. Catalonia's OMNIA points, Extremadura's NCCs and Andalusia's Guadalinfo centres). There are, in any case, some slight differences between models identified in Catalonia, Extremadura and Andalusia: the team of "Dinamizadores" in Catalonia is composed of professional workers with access to Vocational Training in social, pedagogical and technical subjects, and the team in Extremadura is also composed of staff prepared to deal both with technical and socio-cultural issues, whereas there is a mixture of volunteers and professionals working in Andalusia, mainly oriented to deal with intercultural issues (due to the fact that there are so many migrants now residing in the region) and they sometimes play a more clear teaching role than in the other two models.

As Mr. Josep Toda (a Catalonian Government representative for the Catalonia Telecentres network "Xarxa de Telecentres de Catalunya" or XTC) explained during the workshop held in Prague, the XTC is a mix of different kinds of PIC communities or sub-networks that illustrate very well the variety of roles that a Dinamizador can assume in a certain area, adapting him/herself to the characteristics and needs of each network or community.

The XTC is composed of four sub-networks or communities: "Òmnia" (which is considered as a separate chapter in this research), "Teletreball" (Teleworking), "Ciutadania-FesInternet" (Citizenship-MakesInternet) and "Programari Lliure" (Free Software).

While the role of the Dinamizador in the OMNIA community is the closest example in Catalonia to the southern ones, we can also find Dinamizadores playing either a more active role inside the Ciutadania-FesInternet community, due to the "connectivity and access to ICT in the whole territory" a concept which is at the basis of the community; but even here there is a range of different situations to attend.

As for the other cases, two more specialised communities, "Teletreball" and "Software Libre", were created with different scopes but with an active and dynamic perspective, the Dinamizador approach which could be expected to be rather more "on request" (as is common to see in other European regions), is instead very active, as these three examples from "Teletreball" demonstrate:

1) The Callús PIC is the centre where the innovative project to create digital contents in a collaborative way, Atlas of Living Memory, was born;

2) The Solsonès PIC follows a variety of quite different initiatives devoted to give support to users' e-Learning activities (like forestry management courses), for which the PIC in question is in charge of looking for and selecting the most accurate courses coming from the European Union, the Spanish ministries, etc;

3) The Televall de Ribes de Freser PIC brings the training offer near to the places where it is required by means of a "mobile unit" (composed of a set of laptop computers).

Personnel in Italy is composed of staff and volunteers in the same proportion and both categories coexist in some of the PICs. They predominantly cover the role of Assistant which quite often is played by social/cultural animators and/or guidance experts. Their job profiles also include animator/facilitator tasks. Teachers are present in a third of the cases, normally working together with Assistants.

In all the German cases, the role of Assistant is regularly present in PICs, while the other pre-identified roles -Teacher and Animator/Facilitator- are completely absent (with only one exception). The German scenario seems to be closer to the Italian one and further from the Spanish one in this aspect. They are well prepared in technical issues (more than a half of them) more than in socio-cultural issues (a third of them), in languages (a fifth) or they are not specialised at all (a fifth).

Like in Germany, the role of the Assistant is constantly present in the Czech centres (with only one exception) while the other pre-identified roles - Teacher and Animator/Facilitator- are absent (again, with only one exception).

In France, most of the PICs have at least one part-time professional who acts as animator/facilitator, and sometimes one or more volunteers. The animators generally have initial training in ICT or social animation. According to the type of PIC, their mandates can vary. Some national or regional networks organise specific training for their staff such as ERIC or Cyber-base. But most of the persons interviewed said they did not have enough time to completely answer the public's needs due to the diversity of their mandates and that continuing education could be fostered due to the progressive nature of ICT.

As an initial conclusion we can observe that while in some countries the predominant role in a PIC is the Assistant (Germany and the Czech Republic), in others it is the Animator/Facilitator (Spain and France), or there is a combination of both profiles (Italy), whereas teachers are only occasionally involved in the learning processes of the centres. On the other hand, the role of "Dinamizador" synthesizes an idea that could be

"exported" from Spain to other geographical contexts (mainly Objective 1 regions), in order to get more personnel inside the European PICs devoted to the task of "dynamizing" a centre's activities through promotion, helping users to learn, providing assistance upon request and favouring socialisation (collaborative learning even by virtual means) as well as making an intensive use of technology (digital literacy by means of a full immersion process).

3.2.3. Educational methodologies

The preferred methodology to guide the learning process in Spain, France and the Czech Republic are regular lessons carried out by a trainer, while Blended learning is applied only occasionally in these countries. In contrast, Blended learning[2] is the more recurrent methodology used in Germany, while there is no clear prevalent educational methodology applied in Italy (as Regular lessons, Self-learning and the combination of both are applied in similar proportions).

There is a general convergence in all the studied countries about Tutoring/users' assistance: i.e., being mainly carried out on a group basis, and occasionally on an individual basis. It calls our attention the fact that in some contexts tutoring is not offered at all, like in half the Catalonian cases in Spain or in a few Italian and German cases.

Regarding Learning Communities/Collaborative Learning, most of interviewed PICs in the five countries concerned declared that it was based on collaboration among classmates attending the same PIC. Some particularities are that virtual distance collaboration with people from other places was verified in many PICs in Spain, while in Italy and Germany collaboration (face to face with users or virtually) is significantly absent in a fourth part of the interviewed centres.

The evaluation strategy seems to be the more chaotic component of stu-

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2. The American Socierty for Training and Development (ASTD) defines Blended Learning as those learning events which combine on-line didactic sessions with face-to-face lessons.

died PICs' education models.

With reference to Spain, an evaluation does not seem to be regulated by the models or typologies to which the PICs belong, but to be an individual decision of each PIC. When evaluating users' knowledge, it is more common to carry out an evaluation during the training, despite a few initial or final evaluation cases.

In Italy it is more common to carry out an evaluation of users' knowledge, at the end of the training (in about two thirds of the centres), differently from Spain, where there is a continuous evaluation during the training, which is the preferred method.

In Germany there is an incredible homogeneity about the different options: evaluation before, during or at the end of the training, or no evaluation at all. And in many centres several different types of evaluation are combined (at the beginning and at the end, etc.).

In France, the evaluation methodology varies according to the PIC. In the P@Ts, for instance, an evaluation is planned throughout the training (before, during and after).

Only in the Czech PICs there seems to be a consolidated tendency to apply the Evaluation at a specific moment of the training path -at the end of the learning activity or course- probably induced by the model that gives support to the interviewed centres (it is to be kept in mind that most of the centres belong to a local partner's network). This is different from Spain, Italy and Germany, where the evaluation does not seem to be regulated by the models or typologies to which the PICs belong.

4. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

Even if the structure and types of centres, responsible organisations, financial support for the PICs and the quantity of centres may be different from one country to another, there are similarities in PICs' models or typologies that are worth mentioning.

Probably due to the Spanish Statute of Autonomies which regulates the political life in Spain, this is the target country where there is a more evident distinction between regional typologies of PICs (XTC/OMNIA Points in Catalonia, NCC in Extremadura or Guadalinfo centres in Andalusia). All of them are models created by regional governments -usually co-funded by European programmes- that are to deal with the different priorities that the regional authorities have defined for their territory in terms of integration to the Information Society. Indeed, regional autonomy is the factor that makes each one of the three mentioned typologies unique; while the Catalonian model (XTC, to which OMNIA belongs) is quite different from the other two in southern Spain, due to its fully decentralised management model (since the Regional government only provides general support to the PIC networks), there is a shared model in the south (created in Extremadura and later adapted for Andalusia) but its implementation in each region responds to different needs and political situations, so the older example (Extremadura) is more participative and oriented to urban areas (due to the partnership of the regional government with the Popular University to carry on with the NCC initiative) while the second one is centrally addressed and, for this reason, easily duplicated in hundreds of small towns (which were defined as the main beneficiaries of the Guadalinfo initiative).

As an example of a successful model, NCC (Extremadura) aims to promote ICT access, development of innovative actions, dissemination of local culture and tradition, creation of social and cultural spaces, creation of collaborative networks and massive use of videoconferencing and on-line radio, development of multimedia products; each NCC centre has become an ICT point of reference for the local population and the surrounding towns, i.e. unemployed people looking for work on-line, parents looking for scholastic software so as to help their children with their ICT based homework, etc., growing interest in e-administration services (which are explained in all digital literacy workshops), collaborative networks and virtual exchange of experiences, dissemination of local and regional culture, technical advisory for citizens, etc.

More information is available at:
http://www.pic-project.eu >> Best Practices >> PIC Typologies

Italy follows a similar tendency as Spain (it has many regional models, even if participation from the national government is stronger than in Spain). Nevertheless, differently to the Spanish case, in Italy the most effective identified PIC models are strongly linked to a combined action of Public and Third System organisations and, in some cases [i.e. the pioneering initiatives targeted to the most excluded layers of the population], Third System Bodies have started positive action to reduce digital and social-health exclusion that are recognised and/or subsequently backed by Public Authorities.

Such cooperation appears to be more frequent and effective in those regional areas that apply a Community Welfare Model whereby Third System bodies are regarded as agencies offering services of general interest because of their mandate, their legal status and their closeness to citizens' desires/expectations.

In the Czech Republic -the smallest and newest of the EC's countries of our study- strategy relies on promotion of the Information Society by its central government.

In France there are very important national networks (P@T, Cyber-Base) linked to the centralised nature of France (specific public, mission, etc.). Some regional networks such as ERIC in PACA have also appeared, which are more or less developed according to regions. Finally, we find some local or intercommunal networks.

All these "official" models, when put into practice, show some gaps and weaknesses (i.e. on evaluation strategies, as explained in our comparative analysis above) which are more evident when applied to concrete local contexts (i.e. on reaching the right target groups). This is when the individual PICs' innovation emerges, thanks to a PIC's personnel's initiative and creativity, but their original solutions to local problems normally remain unknown to PICs from other latitudes (and this is one of the reasons that justifies the elaboration of this study, which intends to give visibility to innovative practices that can be imitated in other regions).

In parallel to official initiatives, other networks or models of PICs have been growing in Europe (even before governments took the initiative, or where intervention is less evident, like in Germany or France), normally as an answer to needs that are very concrete, limited to a specific geographical area or population, probably with scarce funds and which faces all types of financial problems to survive and lacks a realistic model to become sustainable. These "spontaneously" generated models also offer a variety of original approaches to be maintained as they are normally more target-oriented than the official ones.

In other words, when thinking about transferability, these complementary perspectives have to be taken into account so as to define whether an innovative model or practice can be adopted in another context:

- Social context & structural-organisational framework: which typologies facilitated which type of innovation

- Local context: in which conditions innovation is produced in individual PICs (type of PIC, type of target audiences, economic aspects, access, rural/urban, etc)

Coming back to our analysis in the precedent paragraphs, we were able to extrapolate some further conclusions:

Learning is easier when related to users' interests, and adaptation to personal interests demonstrated to be essential for a PIC's training success. This is why we think that a stronger linkage between Digital Literacy and other Adult education types of offer (languages, vocational training / labour market insertion, entrepreneurship/self employment, socio-cultural promotion or integration, etc.) would help attract the interest of people who are still e-illiterate.

In Italy and Spain (but probably also in other European countries), it has also been observed that PICs fostering the use of free software [i.e. LINUX and similar] seem to be more "user-friendly" either by taking into account the high costs of Windows original programmes and accessories or the highest "democratic space of action" provided. This brings us to another crucial issue: the promotion of an aware and conscious use of Internet facilities is a key-element to help potential users distinguish between PICs operating with non-profit goals from those that are profit oriented and to explain the level of popularity/success of the PICs identified with this Study.

A centre's personnel at users' disposal can be indistinctly staff or volunteers as long as this aspect does not affect his/her professional level. There is an important lack of PIC personnel's preparation to deal with the social, cultural, ethnic or religious characteristics of the audiences coming to the centres (while the same does not apply as regards technical aspects).

Even if assistants are the most recurrent role found in most of the European PICs, we think that the Animator/Facilitator role could be more appropriate for a PIC's mandate and type of audience (probably having a better pedagogical preparation and an improved socio-cultural understanding, as explained above). Participation of more Teachers on a discretional basis would also contribute to improve the adult learning process which is already an on going activity in the centres.

As discussed in Prague, the question about which kind of staff is more appropriate to carry out a PIC's activities, professionals or volunteers, is not as relevant as their level of experience and training. In fact, a remarkable conclusion from the Prague workshop was the shared vision that despite the fact that PIC staff are paid or not for their work, what really makes an impact on the quality of the offered service is the level of adequate preparation this staff member achieves. It is for this scope that a network's/PICs' investment in staff training is essentially the key factor for successful implementation.

Another remarkable conclusion drawn by the participants at the Workshop in Prague, was that the Spanish "Dinamizador" role could be exported and adapted to other regional contexts in Europe. It was judged to be a very complete and balanced role that can deal with the diversity of PICs' mandates and activities, and most importantly, its focus on promoting users' participation and involvement as well as providing the link with the local context, were evaluated as valuable approaches to be adopted at a broader scale.

It seems that there is no sense in speaking about digital literacy but, while blended learning is becoming the preferred model for learning in the modern world, we still find a lot of centres that do not take advantage of the possibilities that e-learning provides to favour and accelerate the learning process. We think it is necessary to determine the causes of this phenomena (the results of which would be part of a separate and specific study) and take the initiatives to expand blended learning practices among European PICs.

By joining previous results, we can imagine that PIC staff in the future will be specialised in socio-cultural animation, capable of attracting users and keeping them interested in the whole learning process (not only in ICT), and they would also be specialised in blended learning processes to provide users with pedagogical assistance or guidance that could help users **learn to learn.**

Finally, we have observed that the Evaluation strategy seems to be the more instable component of the studied PICs' education models, so it has to be carefully analysed and promoted in such a way that must find a way to aggregate a specific value to the PIC-based adult learning process.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOW TO EXPAND THE RELEVANCE OF PICS' CONTRIBUTION TO DIGITAL LITERACY AND ADULT EDUCATION IN EUROPE.

Exchange of experiences and good practices is normally limited to a first level of links with similar centres. Individual PICs are formally linked to other PICs through their networks -from which they have taken their own model-, and share experiences almost exclusively with colleagues from these networks and/or from other PICs located in the same geographical area. At the same time, we note a high level of isolation among the different networks or models working in this field, which is almost absolute among different countries' networks.

In our opinion, it is necessary to set out articulated initiatives so as to enlarge the "natural borders" of this knowledge exchange process, for example:

• identification of the state-of-the-art at the national and European levels in this field through:

  - this study;

  - specific research devoted to PIC networks, as the first of this kind in Spain about Telecentres, recently published[3];

  - research that we know that the DG Education and Culture of the European Commission has recently initiated in 25 EC member countries and some other countries from the rest of the world;

• promotion of linkages of PICs with other PICs that are not directly related through:

  - targeted events to bridge the gap and "introduce" PICs to each another at the national and European levels, like:

    · the annual meeting of Telecentres in Spain

    · the meeting organised in April 2007 in Prague by the present part-

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3. PEIRÓ RUBIO, K., "Las redes de telecentros en España. Una historia por contar.", 2007. Publication sponsored by Asturia's Telecentres Network and the Government of the Principate of Asturias.

nership, to test and promote tools created under the umbrella of this project, for the benefit of European PICs dealing with Adult Education/Digital Literacy, Evaluation & Quality and Non-Discrimination practices;

· specific European multilingual PIC databases similar to existing national databases of 8000 PICS elaborated by the Digitale Chancen Foundation in Germany;

- the creation of a Community of practices for PIC staff at the European level, etc.).

Apart from exchanging experiences, other procedures that can help reproduce identified best practices or produce new ones could be:

- definition of quality standards of PICs' services

- standardised methods for the Evaluation of Digital Literacy (a sort of ECDL, that is more simple in content but more oriented to the different disadvantaged target groups that need to become digitally included)

- promotion of E&Q practices by access to specific funds conditioned to implementation of previous standards and methods

- elaboration of a common pedagogical framework and methodologies for PICs, flexible enough that can be adapted to local and cultural characteristics of each place.