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The eParticipation Network

**Deliverable 11.1a: Practitioner Stakeholder Engagement Framework
for the eParticipation Community of Practice**

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Abstract: The core objective of WP 11 is to establish closer working practices between DEMO_net research experts and the eParticipation practitioners. This deliverable documents the overall scope of the eParticipation community of practice (ePCoP) and it details the various Specific Interest Groups (SIGs) covered by the ePCoP. Hence, D 11.1a provides a sustainable involvement strategy for integrating the different stakeholders. The general approach for how the Specific Interest Groups' works can be seen individually and in their collaboration are described in terms of an overall framework (Memorandum of Understanding, MoU). The MoU details per Specific Interest Group: the mission statement, the engagement of the practitioner stakeholders with the eParticipation research agenda, the contributions to eParticipation advancements in DEMO_net, the contribution to the sustained eParticipation network of excellence beyond the DEMO_net funding period, and a work plan to implement tasks and results aimed at in the engagement of the SIGs. Also the benefits for the SIG members and for DEMO_net are detailed.

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Table of contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
1 INTRODUCTION.....	6
2 THE EPARTICIPATION COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE FRAMEWORK	8
2.1 GENERAL AIMS OF THE EPARTICIPATION COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE	8
2.2 MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING FOR THE EPCoP.....	11
2.2.1 MISSION STATEMENT.....	11
2.2.2 ENGAGEMENT WITH THE EPARTICIPATION RESEARCH AGENDA	12
2.2.3 CONTRIBUTIONS TO EPARTICIPATION ADVANCEMENTS IN DEMO_NET.....	12
2.2.4 CONTRIBUTION TO THE SUSTAINED EPARTICIPATION NETWORK OF EXCELLENCE BEYOND THE DEMO_NET FUNDING PERIOD.....	13
2.2.5 WORK PLAN (TASKS AND RESULTS).....	13
2.2.6 BENEFITS TO DEMO_NET	13
2.2.7 BENEFITS TO SIG MEMBERS	14
3 SIG “INDUSTRY”.....	15
3.1 MISSION STATEMENT.....	15
3.2 ENGAGEMENT WITH THE EPARTICIPATION RESEARCH AGENDA	15
3.3 CONTRIBUTIONS TO EPARTICIPATION ADVANCEMENTS IN DEMO_NET.....	16
3.4 CONTRIBUTION TO THE SUSTAINED EPARTICIPATION NETWORK OF EXCELLENCE BEYOND THE DEMO_NET FUNDING PERIOD	16
3.5 WORK PLAN (TASKS AND RESULTS)	17
3.6 BENEFITS TO DEMO_NET	17
3.7 BENEFITS TO SIG MEMBERS.....	18
4 SIG “POLITICIANS AND ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES”.....	19
4.1 MISSION STATEMENT.....	19
4.2 ENGAGEMENT WITH THE EPARTICIPATION RESEARCH AGENDA	19
4.3 CONTRIBUTIONS TO EPARTICIPATION ADVANCEMENTS IN DEMO_NET.....	20
4.4 CONTRIBUTION TO THE SUSTAINED EPARTICIPATION NETWORK OF EXCELLENCE BEYOND THE DEMO_NET FUNDING PERIOD	20
4.5 WORK PLAN (TASKS AND RESULTS)	20
4.6 BENEFITS TO DEMO_NET	21
4.7 BENEFITS TO SIG MEMBERS.....	21
5 SIG “GOVERNMENT AND EXECUTIVES”	22

5.1	MISSION STATEMENT.....	22
5.2	ENGAGEMENT WITH THE EPARTICIPATION RESEARCH AGENDA	22
5.3	CONTRIBUTIONS TO EPARTICIPATION ADVANCEMENTS IN DEMO_NET.....	23
5.4	CONTRIBUTION TO THE SUSTAINED EPARTICIPATION NETWORK OF EXCELLENCE BEYOND THE DEMO_NET FUNDING PERIOD	23
5.5	WORK PLAN (TASKS AND RESULTS)	23
5.6	BENEFITS TO DEMO_NET	24
5.7	BENEFITS TO SIG MEMBERS.....	25
6	SIG “COMMUNITY INTEREST GROUPS”	26
6.1	MISSION STATEMENT.....	26
6.2	ENGAGEMENT WITH THE EPARTICIPATION RESEARCH AGENDA	26
6.3	CONTRIBUTIONS TO EPARTICIPATION ADVANCEMENTS IN DEMO_NET.....	26
6.4	CONTRIBUTION TO THE SUSTAINED EPARTICIPATION NETWORK OF EXCELLENCE BEYOND THE DEMO_NET FUNDING PERIOD	27
6.5	WORK PLAN (TASKS AND RESULTS)	27
6.6	BENEFITS TO DEMO_NET	27
6.7	BENEFITS TO SIG MEMBERS.....	28
7	SUPPORTIVE INFRASTRUCTURE	29
7.1	VIRTUAL RESOURCE CENTRE	29
7.2	ANNUAL WORKSHOPS FOR THE EPARTICIPATION COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE.....	29
7.3	ENGAGEMENT IN DEMO_NET THEMED WORKSHOPS	29
7.4	OTHERS.....	30
8	CONCLUSIONS	31
	REFERENCES.....	33
	ATTACHMENTS	34
	ATTACHMENT 1: NOTES FROM INDUSTRY ADVISORY PANEL (IAP – SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP “INDUSTRY”) MEETING ON 16 TH JULY 2007	34
	ATTACHMENT 2: MINUTES OF THE DEMO_NET INTERNAL MEETING ON THE INTEGRATION STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT ON 9 TH OCTOBER 2006	40

Executive Summary

Work package 11 seeks to establish closer working practices between DEMO_net research and eParticipation practitioners. The specific objectives include:

- To develop an overall framework for sustainable engagement and integration of eParticipation practitioners;
- To build relationships with practitioners in the public, voluntary and community sectors, in civil society generally and with the ICT industry to assist in shaping research activity and priorities. This shall be done by:
 - Establishing an eParticipation Community of Practice (ePCoP) starting with creating four Specific Interest Groups (SIGs): one on industry, one on elected representatives, one on the government executives and one on the third sector (NGOs, NPOs, citizen community groups, etc.)
- To create regular communication channels with practitioners with the aim of facilitating sustainable networking among research and practice in the field;
- To promote the implementation of the outputs of research activity in practitioner organisations;
- Develop the processes by which research results are introduced into widespread application.

The deliverable at hand addresses several of the above aims. It documents the overall scope of the eParticipation community of practice and it details the various Specific Interest Groups covered by the ePCoP by providing a sustainable involvement strategy addressing the needs of integrating the different stakeholders. The general approach for how the Specific Interest Groups' activities will be performed individually and in their collaboration is described in terms of an overall Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Also, the MoUs detail per Specific Interest Group: the mission statement, the engagement of the practitioner stakeholders with the eParticipation research agenda, the contributions to eParticipation advancements in DEMO_net, the contribution to the sustained eParticipation network of excellence beyond the DEMO_net funding period, and a work plan to implement tasks and results aimed at in the engagement of the SIGs. The benefits for the SIG members and for DEMO_net are detailed. Finally, the needs for a supportive infrastructure to keep the ePCoP and the SIGs active and engaged are formulated.

1 Introduction

The core objective of WP 11 “Engaging and Integrating Practitioners” is to establish closer working practices between DEMO_net research experts and the eParticipation practitioners as this is key to achieve momentum in advancing eParticipation research towards the implementation and application levels, and because this need was elicited both, in a DEMO_net stakeholder workshop of WP 1 (see report D 1.1) and in an internal work package leader and practitioner partner workshop held in October 2006 (see documentation of results in Attachment 2).

To engage and integrate eParticipation practice with DEMO_net research, a proper framework for sustainable engagement and integration has to be developed. DEMO_net seeks to establish an eParticipation Community of Practice (ePCoP), which shall consist of four Specific Interest Groups (SIGs): one for industry, one for elected representatives, one for the government executives and one for the third sector (NGOs, NPOs, citizens community groups, etc.). These SIGs aim to facilitate and nurture regular communication with practitioners with the aim of facilitating sustainable networking among research and practice in the field of eParticipation.

Deliverable 11.1a documents the overall scope of the eParticipation community of practice and it details the various Specific Interest Groups covered by the ePCoP. It further plans and develops a sustainable involvement strategy addressing the needs of engaging and integrating the different stakeholders. The general approach for how the Specific Interest Groups work can be seen individually and in their collaboration among the SIGs (i.e. the ePCoP).

Because this deliverable is the basis for the ePCoP, it defines an understanding for engagement, integration and involvement. The Oxford Dictionary defines these terms as follows¹: Engagement is the action of engaging or being engaged, which means for the various stakeholder groups to actively take part in the Specific Interest Groups. Integration is the action or process of integrating, which means equal participation in an institution or body, the Specific Interest Groups. Involvement refers to sharing experience or to participate in an activity or situation.

In this deliverable we focus on the general aims of the eParticipation Community of Practice and the framework for the four Specific interest Groups. The report at hand describes the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the ePCoP and per Specific Interest Group in terms of: the mission statement, the engagement of the practitioner stakeholders with the eParticipation research agenda, the contributions to eParticipation advancements in DEMO_net, the contribution to the sustained eParticipation network of excellence beyond the DEMO_net funding period, and a work plan to implement tasks and results aimed at in the engagement of the SIGs. Also the benefits for the SIG members and for DEMO_net are formulated. The level of description of the MoUs for the SIGs is kept at a general level. More elaborated descriptions of the MoUs per Specific Interest Group will be worked out in subsequent deliverables (D 11.2 for the SIG “Industry”, D 11.3 for the SIG “Governments and executives” and others following in phase III of DEMO_net).

¹ <http://www.askoxford.com>

This framework subsequently feeds the business plan of DEMO_net² and the supporting technical infrastructure (Virtual Resource Centre; VRC)³ with specific requirements. It is envisioned that for each SIG, the VRC provides a collaboration space with a number of services and facilities to get (and keep) the members engaged in eParticipation. Other supportive infrastructures to motivate engagement and dialogue among research and practice are joint SIG workshops (and engagement of SIG members in DEMO_net themed workshops, cf. WP 13) and the development of common executive summaries and white papers on topics of interest for both, eParticipation research and practice.

² See deliverable 10.1, due to end of September 2007

³ As it will be implemented in work package 10 of phase II of DEMO_net funding, due to end of June 2008

2 The eParticipation Community of Practice Framework

Work package 11 seeks to establish closer working practices between DEMO_net research and eParticipation practitioners. The specific objectives include:

- To develop an overall framework for sustainable engagement and integration of eParticipation practitioners;
- To build relationships with practitioners in the public, voluntary and community sectors, in civil society generally and with the ICT industry to assist in shaping research activity and priorities. This shall be done by:
 - Establishing an ePCoP starting with creating four SIGs: one on industry, one on elected representatives, one on the government executives and one on the third sector (NGOs, NPOs, citizen community groups, etc.)
- To create regular communication channels with practitioners with the aim of facilitating sustainable networking among research and practice in the field;
- To promote the implementation of the outputs of research activity in practitioner organisations;
- Develop the processes by which research results are introduced into widespread application.

The deliverable at hand addresses several of the above aims. The main objective, however, is the first one, i.e. the development of an overall framework for sustainable engagement and integration of eParticipation practitioners via the establishment of an eParticipation Community of Practice.

In the following sections, the general aims of the eParticipation Community of Practice (ePCoP) and a framework for the Specific Interest Groups' activities are introduced. While the implementation of the ePCoP starts with the setting up of the SIGs, and the first round of ePCoP activity is planned for spring 2008, this document outlines the general mode of activity of the ePCoP. It is to be noted that the members of the ePCoP are not necessarily consortium partners of DEMO_net. Instead, the members of the SIGs come from different eParticipation stakeholder groups which are not consortium members of the Network of Excellence. It is aimed that these members register as interested parties or associated institutions in DEMO_net thereby expanding the actor community of DEMO_net. While the set-up and initial activities of the different SIGs will be supported during the funding period of DEMO_net, these SIGs and the overall ePCoP will form a critical body of actors in the sustained organisation beyond the DEMO_net funding period.

2.1 General aims of the eParticipation Community of Practice

eParticipation was stressed in the frame of eGovernment as one of the strategic objectives in the i2010 eGovernment Action Plan of the EU (Commission, 2005, 2006). This policy priority was explicitly included also in the new *Lisbon Ministerial Declaration 2007*. In this declaration, Member States have politically committed themselves to eParticipation via the policy priority "4. *Transparency and democratic engagement*". There, the need to

reach momentum in eParticipation is expressed as the need to “*explore new ways of public participation and increased transparency enabled by innovative ICT for democratic engagement and transparency.*” (Commission, European Union Member States, Accession States, & Candidate Countries, 2007). As it was agreed in Lisbon, the implementation of the above policy will engage Member States in a transformational change enabled by technology. This process will have impact and cut across all areas of government. The Ministerial Declaration further states that Member States will need to encourage, support and manage the process of re-engineering and innovation in this respect. By the end of 2008, Member States should have identified and exchanged information on such national initiatives, which aim “*to make intensive use of electronic means to increase participation and public debate*”. (ibid)

In support of the policy priority of the EU, the aim of the ePCoP⁴ of DEMO_net is to engage practitioner stakeholders in eParticipation.

The idea of an ePCoP is related to practice alliances of people, who work together in a network and have to solve similar responsibilities. The community acts to a large extent self-organized with one another for exchange of practices and findings, and to provide mutual support. According to (Lave & Wenger, 1991), an important goal of a Community of Practice is the learning advancement of individuals and also the learning process as a whole in a community. Existing knowledge and experience can be developed further to make a more efficient treatment of tasks possible. For an effective community there is a necessity for an intensive communication and a common interest. Wenger defined the following list of criteria that qualify a group of actors working together to be called a Community of Practice (Wenger, 1999):

- sharing historical roots
- having related enterprises
- serving a cause or belonging to an institution
- facing similar conditions
- having members in common
- sharing artefacts
- having geographical relations of proximity or interaction
- having overlapping styles or discourses
- competing for the same resources
- sustained mutual relationships – harmonious or conflict
- absence of introductory preambles, as if conversations and interactions were merely the continuation of an ongoing process
- very quick setup of a problem to be discussed
- knowing what others know, what they can do, and how they can contribute to an enterprise
- specific tools, representations, and other artefacts

⁴ For a detailed discussion on the term Community of Practice (CoP) see (Lave & Wenger, 1991)

- local lore, shared stories, inside jokes, knowing laughter, jargon and shortcuts to communication as well as the ease of producing new ones

The same ideas are picked up for the DEMO_net ePCoP. Members of the ePCoP are expected to learn from one another, and to contribute with the specific expertise of every individual. Tasks within the ePCoP can be seen individual.

According to (Wenger, 1999), a common community of practice has a structure, where people are not voted for a role. Instead they are there because of their expertise and their acceptance or rejection through the other members of the group. Out of the process of communication are several more active or inactive members, moderators and experts. There can also be several subgroups or external persons as guests in this community.

The approach to reach sustainable engagement and integration in eParticipation is to establish different eParticipation Specific Interest Groups (SIGs), which collaborate in this eParticipation community.

To build relationships with practitioners in the public, voluntary and community sectors, in civil society generally and with the ICT industry to assist in shaping research activity and priorities, four Specific Interest Groups will be set up in the course of WP 11 activities:

- SIG ICT-industry (see chapter 3)
- SIG Governments and Executives (see chapter 5)
- SIG Politicians and elected representatives (see chapter 4), and
- SIG Community interest groups (third sector; see chapter 6).

The setup of a community of practice can be seen in three different phases (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). The *first phase* is characterized by a small number of persons, which are involved in the subject matter (the DEMO_net partners who described the ePCoP establishment in WP 11 in the work programme for Phase II). The *second phase* is for the creation of a funded structure, where aims, tasks and communication possibilities will be discussed. This is the actual working phase and will be described in this deliverable. The *third phase* is the real work, which needs to be done by the community: knowledge development and knowledge transfer. Through the activities the number of members may increase. The aims, tasks and communication possibilities of the ePCoP and SIGs need to be proved and refined by the contributions and requirements of the members.

To establish a long lasting community, maintenance is a crucial factor. Wenger et al. (Wenger et al., 2002) stress several criteria for sustainable CoPs: The *design of evolution* is a necessary strategy to manage constant change and evolution of the CoP, adaptation to new members, introduction of new members, changes of resources, changes of problems of members or changes in the structure of the Community of Practice. An open *dialogue between inside and outside perspectives* in the community creates the main reason why people get involved in the community. Some core activists working together do not yet form a community. New and younger people need to be involved in *different levels of participation*. Even if there are several people involved in different groups there is a need to *develop both public and private community spaces*, where e.g. problems between people can be discussed out of the whole group. Often these discussions lead to new aspects in the Community of Practice. The *focus on value* or quality is another main aspect of the community. Two further aspects for maintenance of the community are the *combination of familiarity and excitement* and the *creation of a rhythm for the community*.

The DEMO_net eParticipation Community of Practice shall work according to the above introduced understanding of a CoP. It shall create an environment for a sustainable CoP of eParticipation, which ensures a close link between research and practice to commonly advance the development and usage of ICT to reach more active citizen participation in policy making and democracy. The Specific Interest Groups will play a key role in getting key stakeholder groups engaged in specific thematic discussions among research and practice. To get a better understanding of how DEMO_net will set up the interaction among research and practice (engaging and integrating with practitioners), a framework is used to describe the setup and the aims, activities and outcome of each SIG. The subsequent section details this framework for the ePCoP.

2.2 Memorandum of Understanding for the ePCoP

To develop an overall framework for sustainable engagement and integration of eParticipation practitioners (Memorandum of Understanding), all interest groups need to be involved in the process. Specific Interest Groups help members with common interests to come together and share ideas, challenges and concerns across all boundaries. Through networking, developing technical papers, teleconferences and collaborative work on specific projects, members are provided with a unique opportunity to learn from one another and to grow together⁵.

It should be the aim of the ePCoP Specific Interest Groups to hold at least one annual meeting, probably in conjunction with an eParticipation conference or workshop in order to nurture networking among the groups.

To start getting the practitioner stakeholders active, the second phase of (Wenger et al., 2002) is to define the aims, tasks and results of the ePCoP and of each SIG. In the subsequent section, the MoU for the ePCoP is detailed. This part serves also as the template for the MoU descriptions of each SIG, which follow in chapters 3-6.

2.2.1 Mission Statement

The Mission Statement describes the overall aims of the SIG, and what it wants to achieve in terms of results and impact to the eParticipation research and practice communities.

Mission Statement for the ePCoP:

As eDemocracy moves up the eGovernment agenda for local and national governments across Europe and beyond (cf. i2010 eGovernment action plan (Commission, 2006)), there is urgency to the work of DEMO_net. There is a need to speed the time-to-market of eParticipation applications based on research activity and bringing in the experience of practitioners. DEMO_net seeks to achieve this by promoting closer and more active working between researchers, industry, government and civil society practitioners by creating and maintaining a lively platform for more active engagement of the practitioner stakeholders.

A key issue for participants is to establish a mutual understanding of the topic. Frequent exchange of information about progress and interesting developments (including lessons

⁵ Some examples can be seen at: <http://www.pmi.org/GetInvolved/Pages/default.aspx>

from current developments and projects) will help to speed time-to-market of eParticipation applications, and to exchange findings. This way, the DEMO_net ePCoP will support the strategic plans of the key eParticipation stakeholders in application and ICT usage in democratic decision-making and policy intervention.

Means for collaboration are on the one hand a common virtual shared discussion and knowledge exchange platform provided via the Virtual Resource Centre (see aims of WP 10). On the other hand, physical meetings, and exchange of ideas at workshops and conferences shall be means of active collaboration. Supportive contributions of the ePCoP will be the compilation of white papers and scientific research contributions.

2.2.2 Engagement with the eParticipation research agenda

This aspect details how the practitioner stakeholders of the SIG will get involved in the eParticipation research agenda (both within DEMO_net and beyond the NoE activities as well as at a larger scale).

ePCoP's engagement with the eParticipation research agenda:

The ePCoP shall engage with the DEMO_net and eParticipation research agenda in several ways. First of all, a platform of dialogue shall be created to actively discuss eParticipation issues of research and practice. The participation of SIG members in specific workshops of the DEMO_net research activities may be envisaged as points of engagement. Also joint executive summaries of research outcomes, white papers on specific implementations and collaborative project activities beyond the DEMO_net activities are envisaged, which are motivated by DEMO_net's upcoming research needs identified.

Another point of engagement is to collaborate in terms of research exchanges, i.e. members of the SIGs may provide opportunities for researchers (PhD students, senior experts) to conduct field research in a practical environment or to conduct surveys to collect empirical material from practice.

The ePCoP may also serve as a body to assess and monitor the research activities of the field and to encourage streamlining and focusing specific demands from the side of practice and strategic levels.

Finally, the ePCoP may be perceived as a key node of contact for the research experts to learn about practical implementations and applications of eParticipation tools and technologies. A collaborative platform to support the exchange of knowledge and the expression of needs is, therefore, a crucial demand to support a lively and active dialogue.

2.2.3 Contributions to eParticipation advancements in DEMO_net

Here, the contributions of the SIG to the DEMO_net activities are outlined. This will comprise different results such as white papers, learning material, needs of practice which needs to be investigated by research, common discussion with DEMO_net research experts, common scientific papers, opportunities for placements of PhD students and researchers with practitioner organisations, involvement in new and ongoing projects, etc.

ePCoP's contribution to eParticipation advancements in DEMO_net:

The engagement of the ePCoP in eParticipation research as introduced in 2.2.2 bears a crucial contribution to the eParticipation advancements in DEMO_net. In the case, where these discussions and dialogues also result in executive summaries, contributions of

knowledge to the VRC and white papers or scientific paper, further value-added contribution is provided by the ePCoP members to DEMO_net.

2.2.4 Contribution to the sustained eParticipation network of excellence beyond the DEMO_net funding period

The contributions of the SIG beyond the DEMO_net funding are a key for the sustainability of an excellence eParticipation community. Each SIG will elaborate means and results to contribute to the sustained eParticipation network of excellence beyond the DEMO_net funding. Examples may be like in 2.2.3.

ePCoP's contribution to the sustained eParticipation network:

Engagement of the ePCoP in eParticipation matters as introduced in 2.2.2 and in 2.2.3 shall be secured also beyond the DEMO_net funding. For this, a lively and active community per SIG has to be created and ensured. It needs to be made clear that the benefits for being member of the SIG are visible and arguable also beyond the funding of DEMO_net.

2.2.5 Work plan (tasks and results)

Each SIG will elaborate a detailed work plan per period. The duration of a period of activity has yet to be settled (for the funding period, it will be 18 months equal to the phases of DEMO_net). The work plan will describe in detail, what activities will be carried out, for what purpose and with which results. Also the efforts estimated will be detailed.

ePCoP's work plan:

The ePCoP's first activity was to develop the framework at hand for the ePCoP.

Further activities of the overall ePCoP will be to support the establishment of the four SIGs in the stakeholder groups and to organise an annual meeting of all SIGs with the research community to streamline dialogue and to motivate exchange and collaboration.

To realise this, the task 11.1 will also communicate the respective needs of a shared workspace of each SIG at the VRC.

Supportive activities such as maintaining a list of contacts and a close collaboration with key experts organising relevant conferences and workshops in the field will help the work of the ePCoP.

Also, the interaction among the DEMO_net research experts and the ePCoP members shall be motivated.

2.2.6 Benefits to DEMO_net

In this topic, the SIG and the ePCoP will detail the benefits the CoP and SIG activities will bring to DEMO_net. This shall include benefits to the eParticipation advancements in the network as a whole as well as benefits to specific expert groups (researchers, practitioner groups) in DEMO_net. Discussions shall include monetary and intangible benefits.

ePCoP's benefits to DEMO_net:

A key benefit for DEMO_net from the engagement and establishment of the ePCoP is the motivation of an inter-regional level of co-operation between public bodies, industry and researchers in knowledge creation in the field of eParticipation.

Such relationships with practitioners in the public, voluntary and community sectors, in civil society generally and with the ICT industry shall assist in shaping research activity and priorities. They shall also facilitate sustaining the network beyond the DEMO_net funding period of the EC by creating a unique and value-adding point of reference and of access to knowledge and expertise in eParticipation.

Other benefits from the ePCoP are the opportunities to promote the implementation of the outputs of research activity in practitioner organisations and to introduce such research and implementation results into widespread application.

2.2.7 Benefits to SIG members

The activities of SIG members must also have a benefit to the members themselves. In this section of the framework, each SIG and the ePCoP will detail the benefits for their single members (from DEMO_net and external to DEMO_net) and their institutions.

ePCoP's benefits to SIG members:

The benefits for DEMO_net can be formulated likewise for the members of the SIGs: A key benefit for the SIG members is to engage with other public bodies, industry and researchers in knowledge creation in the field of eParticipation. By directly communicating research needs and priorities to the eParticipation research community, direct benefits can be gained in facilitated transfer of results and joint elaboration of challenges through the engagement with the research community.

The unique and value-adding point of reference and access to knowledge and expertise in eParticipation via DEMO_net is another benefit for the SIG members.

Finally, opportunities to promote own implementations and solutions and to collaborate with research in the discussion of issues and challenges adds value to the membership and engagement in a specific SIG and in the ePCoP overall.

In the following chapters, the draft Memoranda of Understanding for the four SIGs in the ePCoP will be outlined. These MoUs will be further detailed by the individual SIGs as one of their first activities. While the SIG "Industry" has already been established, the SIG "Government Experts" shall be founded in early 2008. The other two SIGs shall be established in phase III of DEMO_net.

3 SIG “Industry”

3.1 Mission Statement

The Industry Specific Interest Group of DEMO_net looks to assist eParticipation researchers and strategic decision-makers in shaping the research agenda; it will bring in the expertise and advice of industry practitioner partners on areas including:

- Advice on research areas of commercial interest
- Identifying industry and other practitioner partners to engage in specific research projects
- Promoting the exchange of researchers with practitioners
- Information on market readiness for particular products
- 'Shaping' outputs for widespread application including scalability
- Market-specific requirements
- Increasing DEMO_net network connectivity and in particular contributing to implementation chains of researchers, industry and practitioners
- Sustainability of DEMO_net activity and contribution to the Virtual Resource Centre (a core tool for the sustainability of work on eParticipation after the end of the project in December 2009).

The SIG Industry members are likely to be appointed to reflect a spread of interests from a range of European Member States, content and technology industry, large and small businesses.

3.2 Engagement with the eParticipation research agenda

The Industry Specific interest Group will engage with the research agenda in a number of ways. In particular, the role of DEMO_net in providing an overview of research worldwide is felt to be a major contribution in engaging industry partners and provides a sound context for the work of the Industry Specific interest Group. As part of its occasional⁶ meetings, the Specific interest Group will identify particular topics which it would wish to explore in more depth. Exploration of these issues will include presentations from DEMO_net researchers on current research activity, contributions from industry specialists, debate on priorities and key issues and the production of notes on the observations of industry practitioners on the topic.

A second area of interest is the comparison of the research agendas of the ICT industry partners with ongoing work in DEMO_net. Subject to commercial sensitivity, the industry partners consider it will be possible to bring together an insight into the work going on

⁶ It is intended to organize two meetings of the SIG per year.

in the laboratories of the major companies and this will prompt consideration of research gaps and priorities by both parties. The opportunities for collaboration will be explored.

The Industry partners will be invited to specific DEMO_net conferences and activities and will be asked to contribute their expertise to deepen the understanding of industry issues amongst academics and other practitioners (cf. other three SIGs in the context of the ePCoP).

Briefing papers ('Executive Summaries') setting out the issues being addressed by DEMO_net will be circulated to Industry Specific interest Group members and representative bodies. Contributions and expressions of interest will be invited.

Consideration will be given to involving relevant Industry partners in research projects and programmes as appropriate.

3.3 Contributions to eParticipation advancements in DEMO_net

The major contribution to be offered by the Industry Specific Interest Group is interpretation and understanding of eParticipation (and the tools to deliver it) from the perspective of industry partners. Within the industry players, eParticipation does not yet feature strongly as a topic for product development. However, many of the basic tools of eParticipation (including social networking tools, mobile phones, biometrics, security and personalisation products) are subject to major investment by industry. The Industry SIG will assist in identifying the relevant components of eParticipation applications and in enlisting industry players.

The different drivers within industry and the research community mean that priorities, contexts and required outputs will be at variance. The SIG provides the forum, not to resolve these differences (which are inherent to the different arenas in which partners are operating), but in increasing understanding of the nature of the differences and the validity of the perspectives of partners in DEMO_net. This is seen as a fundamental contribution to furthering progress in eParticipation.

The major contribution to be offered by the Industry Specific Interest Group is interpretation and understanding each other. The Industry SIG will bring together industry partners in different aspects of eParticipation. This is particularly important in promoting dialogue between large and small companies – the industry view is that eParticipation applications will require collaboration between major companies and smaller companies (some locally-based), first to introduce the range of specialisms (i.e. skilled knowledge and approaches in small areas of expertise) necessary and second, to address markets using local language and culturally appropriate solutions (i.e. specialisations). This will allow more rapid progress in developing products and services and will also contribute to ensuring there is diversity to allow wide-spread adoption, particularly in the New Member States.

3.4 Contribution to the sustained eParticipation network of excellence beyond the DEMO_net funding period

The Industry SIG considers the network should look to sustaining its activity by genuinely adding value – to look to industry for direct funding support would deflect from this aim, but more particularly, would mean the loss of independence for the network activity.

The independence of the Industry SIG and any subsequent activity is seen as extremely important in keeping both large and small companies in dialogue and vital to provide an arena in which collaboration potential can be explored. This would not preclude the development of paid-for services being provided by the network.

Subject to the DEMO_net period being successful, the Industry SIG would see no reason why the benefits of the activity would not continue into the longer term and it is anticipated that the industry partners would continue to make a similar contribution to ensuring the benefits continue.

3.5 Work plan (tasks and results)

The work agenda for the Industry SIG is relatively straightforward. The SIG identifies priorities as it progresses – the current topic identified for further exploration is Security and Privacy. It will meet at least once per annum, with additional meetings on specialist topics as it sees fit. In addition, members of the SIG will be invited to specific DEMO_net events and the opportunity will be taken to spend some time at these events to allow the Industry SIG to take its own view on the particular topics of discussion. The SIG will produce papers to inform the eParticipation community of the outcome of its considerations.

To support the work of the SIG, occasional Executive Summaries will report progress or areas of interest in the DEMO_net research agenda.

In addition to its own meetings, the Industry SIG will meet with other practitioner groups (notably government, politicians and also community interest groups) to further enhance the cross-sectoral understanding of the key issues in eParticipation.

Some tasks are:

- Meetings of Industry SIG generally and to discuss identified priorities
 - Two meetings per annum, late Autumn and early Summer
 - Production of Industry SIG reports on topics of interest (3 per annum)
- Production of Executive Summaries of aspects of the work of DEMO_net; summaries to be tailored to the target audience (3 per annum)
- Occasional joint meetings with other SIGs (1 per annum)

3.6 Benefits to DEMO_net

There are many benefits for DEMO_net from engaging with Industry partners and a major contribution will be made by introducing an understanding of the market into the prioritisation of research activities and outputs. In addition, a knowledge of industry trends and, in particular the identification of relevant platforms for applications (whether mobile technologies, software, volume social networking etc.) will open up possibilities for DEMO_net to research new applications on the basis of industry contribution to add to work already being carried out to identify social trends affecting eParticipation.

The Industry SIG will contribute an understanding of the public sector market. This will enhance dialogue with government-based practitioner partners.

The SIG Industry will also contribute with executive summaries, white papers and discussion points to add value and understanding to the Virtual Resource Centre as the leading future knowledge base on eParticipation.

To make the major gain from dialogue with industry partners, DEMO_net will need to emphasise the independent nature of the Industry SIG – it is not the province of one or two major players; is not funded by the major players; it brings together large and small businesses alike.

3.7 Benefits to SIG members

A particular role was seen for benchmarking. Alongside the continuing monitoring of research activity in institutions across the world, the Industry SIG considers that benchmarking eParticipation take-up is vital to inform both research activity and industry investment (and it will also be of major benefit to practitioners in government and the political sphere). The benchmarking activity would be extremely valuable alongside a ‘foresight mapping’ exercise so that there was a shared understanding between all DEMO_net partners of direction and progress in the development of eParticipation activity across Europe.

The Industry SIG will provide a neutral arena for large and small companies to consider advances in eParticipation research, to consider collaborative requirements and to build long-term alliances between cooperating businesses to meet what may be a complex market or series of markets.

The opportunity to discuss progress in key areas of research was felt to be a major benefit participants could expect. DEMO_net provides a focus for a relatively disparate variety of businesses to come together with a focus on eParticipation (e.g. via members’ access to a community of practice shared workspace at the VRC). Whilst it is unlikely that eParticipation products will form a major commercial line in their own right, they will provide very important content to add to new platforms and technologies.

DEMO_net provides an extremely valuable group of leading researchers who can act as a ‘sounding board’ for new concepts from the industry and can advise on the main issues to be considered in developing and implementing new eParticipation products.

4 SIG “Politicians and elected representatives”

4.1 Mission Statement

DEMO_net defines eParticipation as efforts to broaden and deepen political participation by enabling citizens to connect with one another and with their elected representatives and governments using ICT. With regards to political policy-makers a core objective of DEMO_net is to disseminate DEMO_net research and raise awareness amongst eParticipation stakeholders. Another respective aim is to collect the proper understanding of needs and challenges of eParticipation implementation and application practice to advance the field by targeted research.

The aim of the SIG Politicians and elected representatives is to create a community space where political actors and decision-makers can share experiences and search for ideas on how to enhance public participation using ICT. The core aims of the political policy-makers interest group are:

- To form a common ground for engagement of politicians interested in enhancing citizen participation in democratic deliberation and strategic decision-making
- To promote the exchange of findings and the dialogue among researchers and practitioners, especially politicians
- To enable dissemination of research results and to advance research agenda by promoting new research into areas of interest to the SIG Politicians and elected representatives
- To bring in the expertise and advice of the policy-makers for future research and commercial tool development
- To contribute to the know-how selection and evaluation bank of methods and tools for practitioners (users) taking into consideration issues such as digital divide, gender, culture etc.
- To secure the Sustainability of DEMO_net activity and continuing contributions for knowledge sharing to the Virtual Resource Centre.

4.2 Engagement with the eParticipation research agenda

By creating a community of politically interested, those using ICTs to promote participation in decision-making aim

- To promote the information exchange of researchers with practitioners/politicians and enlarge the knowledge pool.
- To engage in advancing the research agenda by promoting new research of pragmatic interest.
- To bring in the expertise and advice of the policy-makers for future research and commercial tool development.

4.3 Contributions to eParticipation advancements in DEMO_net

By promoting the usefulness, impact, effectiveness, convenience and usability of ICT to enhance political participation at local, regional, national and European levels, the SIG aims to make visible the importance of research in the area both for learning and as an element to spread excellence to policy-makers and industry. This will be communicated to colleagues in the political sphere and other practitioner areas. In such communication and awareness raising, DEMO_net will be the first point of reference to give when seeking information on the past and present experiments and projects using ICT in participation, when looking for the appropriate tools and methods for particular areas, when searching for advancements in applying ICT in political debates and democratic deliberation or simply just a virtual meeting place for interested parties. The SIG will maintain a virtual shared workspace at the VRC and will contribute its visions, ideas, contributions in terms of experiences and good practice projects, needs and challenges of research to the VRC knowledge base, which serves the practitioner and research communities for mutual benefits.

4.4 Contribution to the sustained eParticipation network of excellence beyond the DEMO_net funding period

The contributions of the SIG beyond the DEMO_net funding are a key for the sustainability of an excellence eParticipation community. The SIG Politicians and elected representatives will elaborate means and results to contribute to the sustained eParticipation network of excellence beyond the DEMO_net funding. Examples are the continued active participation and dialogue among research and practitioners in the DEMO_net ePCoP and this respective SIG, contribution with policy support and awareness rising via pointing to DEMO_net as the point of reference for eParticipation advancements.

Also the consumption of consultancy services, the ordering of research studies, and the communication of targeted research challenges may be contributions from this SIG. The importance of closer involvement of politicians and elected representatives in the field of eParticipation research must not be underestimated, for at the end of the day the decision of enhancing public participation in the political arena with ICTs lies with the political representatives.

4.5 Work plan (tasks and results)

The main aim of this group is to enhance the interest of politicians and elected representatives in using ICTs for participation and to share knowledge with researchers.

Some crucial topics of interest are:

- eParticipation challenges, opportunities and expected benefits
- The state of eParticipation; introducing the DEMO_net findings to politicians and elected representatives, such as eParticipation areas, methods and tools for eParticipation and socio-technical implications of ICT in citizen participation.

The SIG will work online and with some physical meetings for bonding. The group will hold an annual meeting, with additional meetings on specialist topics as issues of importance raise.

In addition, members of the SIG will be invited to specific DEMO_net events and meet up with members of the ePCoP, such as the industrial and civil society partners for particular topics of discussion.

The SIG will produce Memos or Executive Summaries to inform the eParticipation community of the results of its deliberation and key learning points for the respective areas of interest in the DEMO_net research agenda.

The SIG will produce a set of indicators and success criteria for eParticipation from the political point of view.

To attract member to the SIG DEMO_net partners will attend events where politicians interested in enhancing participation are likely to be, such as Eurocities meetings, give introductory presentations and distribute leaflets.

Information will be disseminated using networks of Political origin such as political parties, networks of local governments, European Parliament, Council of Europe, as well as the Political networks of NGO's.

The SIG aims to be up and running by the end of March 2008 with the first physical meeting planned in the spring of 2008.

The SIG "Politicians and elected representatives" defines a pilot activity which will be at local, regional and national level.

4.6 Benefits to DEMO_net

Research in the area of governance is in most cases badly tied to practice, in that it neither learns much from practitioners' experiences nor inspires changes in practice. The creation of this SIG within the ePCoP is of major importance in showing the value creation potential of a common communication ground for researcher and policy makers so that new results can be used to stimulate a significant performance increase in eParticipation performance by cutting time to market both of knowledge and tools.

4.7 Benefits to SIG members

A key benefit for the SIG members is the increased awareness on opportunities of adopting eParticipation solutions and policies that proved successful elsewhere. Apart from that the exchange of knowledge and information on how to assess policy transferability is seen as a useful benefit. Finally to be able to communicate with other politicians on setting the agenda for improved participation in Europe in such a simple manner should be seen of major importance and timesaver.

5 SIG “Government and Executives”

5.1 Mission Statement

The need to fix a common understanding of the area of cooperation has arisen from several dialogues of distinct stakeholders (cf. several workshops and panel discussions during the previous months of the DEMO_net work (DEMO_net, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2007a, 2007b), Attachment 1: Notes from Industry Advisory Panel (IAP – Special Interest Group “Industry”) Meeting on 16th July 2007 and Attachment 2: Minutes of the DEMO_net internal Meeting on the Integration Strategy Development on 9th October 2006).

In specific, the SIG will investigate the eParticipation facilities brought up by research and practical implementations, and it will assess its transferability of solutions to respective areas of application. This assessment will also be done in respect to existing policy documents and in respect to the SIG members’ eParticipation implementation contexts.

5.2 Engagement with the eParticipation research agenda

The SIG Government Executives will experience a good opportunity to get involved in the DEMO_net research agendas and in carrying out joint works of empirical work with researchers of DEMO_net. This may include new challenges to be addressed to realise the i2010 Policy Action “4. Transparency and democratic engagement”, as agreed by Ministers at the Lisbon Conference in September 2007.

Another opportunity to get engaged with the eParticipation research agenda is to communicate research needs on e.g. competence and skills development, and on technological deficiencies.

As such, this kind of activity may have a wider social effect as facilitating community development and involvement of experts from practice into the European research space, which will bring benefits to DEMO_net as well.

Some reference documents making links with government executives as recommended readings are:

- Declaration of the 4th Ministerial eGovernment conference in Lisbon, September 2007 (Commission et al., 2007);
- Guide to Regional Good Practice eGovernment; eris@, September 2007 (IANIS, 2007);
- European eGovernment 2005 – 2007: Taking stock of good practice and progress towards implementation of the i2010 eGovernment Action Plan, September 2007 (Millard, 2007)

5.3 Contributions to eParticipation advancements in DEMO_net

The dialogue with this SIG will enhance the deliberative research space. It will prepare the ground and practical support for other SIGs, too.

5.4 Contribution to the sustained eParticipation network of excellence beyond the DEMO_net funding period

Getting involved in closer relations with researchers will create added value for the members of this SIG. Higher interest from a wider circle of government executives will help DEMO_net to cooperate with them according to the business plans beyond the funding period of DEMO_net.

5.5 Work plan (tasks and results)

A first draft of a work plan, of tasks and of potential results is suggested as follows:

1. To elaborate a short state-of-the-art profile of the SIG members/Common characteristics of members of SIG Government/Executives.
2. To describe the role of government executives in the forthcoming period of Transformational Change in relation to eParticipation research.

The role of government executives in the forthcoming period of Transformational Change is crucial especially taking into account their hard position as responsible for the everyday work, reporting to politicians results and facing in the front-line demands of citizens.

3. To set up the basics for meaningful communication with this stakeholder group, since representatives of this group may have probably very limited flexibility in their personal choices (because they belong to government organisations, which are supposed to reflect existing or just prepared strategies, action plans and programmes (national, regional or local), based on existing legal environments). They need to be, on the other hand, very effective, and efficient in their work, to be able to ensure Public Values as well as to use relevant technologies.
4. To organise the first physical meeting of the SIG in January 2008
 - a. To build a supportive group for recruiting potential members of the SIG Government Executives
 - b. To prepare a list of the core group of the SIG members of the Government Executives for the first meeting - in October 2007
 - c. To create the agenda/speakers for the 1st SIG Government Executives face-to-face meeting
 - d. To prepare a set of background documents for the first mailing to potential SIG members
 - e. To agree on the date, facility and budget with WP partners
5. To agree on a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

- a. To send out the text of a draft MoU to all potential SIG members, to get their feedback before January, 2008
 - b. To elaborate the Memorandum of Understanding of the SIG for the meeting in January, 2008
 - c. To agree on who will be leading the SIG
 - d. To reach agreement on the Memorandum of Understanding among the SIG members after the meeting in January 2008
6. Clarification of steps, effort and results undertaken.
 7. Reaching a final agreement on members of this SIG (including expansion policies) and expectations of their involvement (can range from national and multinational decision-making, to local and regional government executives with different competences for cooperation).
 8. Prepare a specific workshop of the SIG (or of the ePCoP as a whole) on a relevant topic of eParticipation at the eastern European eGov Days in April 2008 (22-25), with presentations and a structured panel discussion.
 9. To settle the SIG Government Executives' community space at the VRC till Month 28.
 10. Assessing the impact and contributions of the work of this SIG to DEMO_net and to eParticipation advancements in general.
 11. To develop a pilot activity within a topic of interest to the government executives, e.g. the health sector⁷. A point of discussion could be: how do governments provide improved services to citizens in the health sector. Today, we experience much talk about health issues where there is a need for active response from citizens in combating e.g. life style diseases. The discussion could go along the arguments of how to improve the public services and how to ensure citizens' involvement. This could be an example of eParticipation to be researched within DEMO_net at national/regional level depending on the topics chosen.

5.6 Benefits to DEMO_net

The dialogue with governments and executives will:

- facilitate and support the building of knowledge on eParticipation
- enhance the deliberative space through own experiences and knowledge sharing among the SIG members
- facilitate community development among government executives and with other SIGs
- enrich the directions of future research
- give feedback from essential parts and types of stakeholders
- support visibility to the effort of the DEMO_net consortium in general

⁷ <http://www.patientopinion.org/>

- help to clarify relations between eParticipation and broader eGovernment activities in Member States (for priority policy areas)
- enrich research-based evidence of the role of ICT in the formation of the broader social networks that incorporate government officials and politicians as well as citizens, communities, NGOs and industry representatives
- promote bringing new research into areas of interest of the SIG

5.7 Benefits to SIG members

Benefits SIG members can expect are among others:

- The group will gather members with common interests to come together and share ideas, challenges and concerns on eParticipation
- SIG members will have a chance to understand properly the policy context for eParticipation as driven bottom-up and top-down.
- SIG members may be prepared better for realisation of the Policy Action 4. Transparency and democratic engagement, as agreed by Ministers at the Lisbon Conference in September 2007.
- SIG members will have advantage in their effort to identify and exchange information on national initiatives, identified under the Policy Action 4.
- SIG members involved in the Transformational Change will be able to find the proper balance between competences and responsibilities, using appropriate social networking technologies (e.g. Web 2.0) and responding to the needs of all stakeholders involved.
- SIG members will bench-learn, how to enhance the dialogue with citizens (e.g. provision of tools to better analyse citizen's contributions or providing relevant feedback to them). They may realise benefits and risk assessment of citizen's involvement and of the use of different devices for different democratic contexts.
- SIG members will benefit from using the DEMO_net integrated European knowledge base (VRC) for their everyday work (harmonisation of terminology and overall semantics in different cultural context)
- SIG members will be able to enhance their knowledge as well as identify gaps in their skills to use new ICT tools for participation. At the end they will be able to provide their political representation with well structured support in building trust to all levels of governance.

6 SIG “Community interest groups”

Basically, this specific interest group is less unified than the previously described groups. Hence, it rather represents a more heterogeneous group of stakeholders such as representatives of the general public, civil society, and the informal or third sector. From an organisational or institutional perspective these actors are mostly active in NGOs, public interest groups, citizen panels or juries, as well as in ‘public’ associations (e.g. chambers, unions).

6.1 Mission Statement

To establish a platform and SIG with a dual core function:

- integrating perspectives, knowledge and reflections from the general public, citizens and civil society into eParticipation development (covering issues such as practical demands, views, experiences, knowledge etc.)
- and for transferring DEMO_net results into civil society practice

in order to contribute to the overall engagement of practitioner experts from community interest groups in the ePCoP and, hence, in DEMO_net.

6.2 Engagement with the eParticipation research agenda

It is the principal purpose to raise awareness of and enable participation in DEMO_net research activities. Apart from that, the co-operation among “community interest groups” and DEMO_net shall facilitate vivid exchange. Moreover, knowledge transfer from DEMO_net (knowledge of best practice cases, tools, evaluation results, other resources) to SIGs shall be enabled and promoted.

Through direct input from potential users and user side perspectives, the DEMO_net research agenda shall be enriched by communicating relevant practically grounded research demands. This will involve elements of user participation in the process of identification of research demands (agenda setting), tool development, user feedback and evaluation.

6.3 Contributions to eParticipation advancements in DEMO_net

The SIG pursues the goal to contribute to an embedding of eParticipation research and practice into society. Given that this SIG represents a crucial segment in the process of political participation, it further contributes to a holistic understanding of eParticipation. However, close co-operation shall also result in productive, constructive deliberation on eParticipation challenges, needs and barriers which shall also become manifest in other SIGs and in DEMO_net as a whole.

6.4 Contribution to the sustained eParticipation network of excellence beyond the DEMO_net funding period

Constant co-operation among the SIG members, the ePCoP as a whole and with DEMO_net and the future organisation will provide a reliable basis (organisational structure, interested actors, established trust, etc.) for a sustained integration of community and civil society interests with the eParticipation network of excellence beyond the DEMO_net funding period.

6.5 Work plan (tasks and results)

The draft work plan of steps, tasks to be solved and envisaged outcomes can be outlined as follows:

1. plan for an appropriate mix of SIG members, SIG core group and recruitment process (type of organisation, geographical scope, activity profile/thematic focus, etc.)
2. document SIG member profiles (organisational characteristics, missions, communication co-ordinates, etc.) and agree on communication mechanisms after successful recruitment
3. elaborate mutual role expectations and memorandum of understanding for SIG core group and DEMO_net
4. organise a first meeting with SIG members at the beginning of 2008 for detailed exchange of mutual expectations, memoranda of understanding and planning of activities.

6.6 Benefits to DEMO_net

The establishment and integration of a specific interest group from the civil society will:

- strengthen the ties between the DEMO_net research community, representatives of the civil society and practitioners from the third sector
- help identifying research needs and priorities in eParticipation
- enrich the orientation of the research agenda with perspectives of citizens and user needs
- contribute to user-oriented design of eParticipation tools based on the specific needs of SIG interests and demands
- increase practical relevance of DEMO_net research activities
- learn from practical experiences with offline and online participation in civil society
- disseminate information on DEMO_net activities and contribute to increased public awareness of DEMO_net as well developments in eParticipation

6.7 Benefits to SIG members

Members of a specific interest group for community interests can expect the following benefits:

- learn about new opportunities and latest developments in eParticipation
- exchange expectations, experiences and knowledge within the SIG, with DEMO_net and with other SIGs
- extend knowledge on political contexts of eParticipation and constraints set by political structures and processes
- present and discuss the views of the SIG (in terms of needs, challenges, and barriers) on future-oriented eParticipation with a network of international experts in political participation

7 Supportive infrastructure

7.1 Virtual Resource Centre

The Virtual Resource Centre is a technical infrastructure of the DEMO_net organisation and its future sustained network, through which a main access to knowledge and virtual communication activity shall take place.

The VRC shall provide a broad set of eParticipation related research material, policy documents and other relevant resources, which have already been collected and will further be collected through DEMO_net activity and through the activities of the ePCoP.

A key feature of the VRC should be that it provides a shared workspace for each SIG and for the ePCoP. This shall also include subscription functionality for new interested parties.

The services and functionality to be provided through the VRC are elaborated in work package 10 and will not be detailed here.

7.2 Annual workshops for the eParticipation Community of Practice

In order to maintain a lively and active community, it is important to maintain frequent contact. Hence, a crucial point of community exchange will be the organisation of joint workshops of the SIGs and of the ePCoP as a whole.

It is planned to have at least one workshop or meeting per SIG per year as well as one joint workshop. The meetings and workshops shall always address a specific topic of the SIG or joint themes of all SIGs (i.e. then organised as the umbrella event of the ePCoP).

The WP 11 and future work packages will establish the procedures and list of contacts for the SIG members and for organising the events in the most effective and at low cost format.

It is the aim that these events are organised adjoined to other events of the eParticipation and eGovernment communities of practice and research. In this way, focused exchange with a broader community may be envisaged, and dissemination synergies may be used as well.

7.3 Engagement in DEMO_net themed workshops

To get engaged with the research agenda of DEMO_net, the ePCoP SIG members will be informed on focused workshops of the research work packages. For specific themes, the SIG members may be involved and get engaged to contribute to the DEMO_net themed workshops with their views and challenges they have to face from practice.

Close collaboration with work packages 12, 13 and 14 is envisaged in this respect.

7.4 Others

Since members of the SIGs are encouraged to contribute to the work of DEMO_net, it is envisaged to develop joint white papers and executive summaries in collaboration with the DEMO_net research community.

The respective SIG task leaders and the ePCoP leaders will take responsibility to communicate opportunities and needs from both sides, e.g. as outcomes of joint workshops or of virtual discussion in the shared workspace of the VRC.

8 Conclusions

The eParticipation Stakeholder Engagement Framework is vital to the success of the Network of Excellence. eParticipation is a practical activity and strong interaction between researchers, industry suppliers, governmental and civil society organisations and political representatives is necessary to ensure progress in this fast-developing field. The ePCoP seeks specifically to address:

- An active dialogue among DEMO_net research and eParticipation practice by
 - creating Specific Interest Groups with common interests and common goals towards which these SIGs work to advance ICT usage in policy making and democratic decision-making
- Supporting the sustainability of the DEMO_net network
- Contributions by Specific Interest Groups to determining research themes and priorities
- implementation of research outputs at both pilot and roll-out levels.

The four SIGs cover the main areas in which interaction is sought: Industry, Politicians and Elected Representatives, Government and Executives and 'Community'. It is anticipated that there will be some overlap between the activities of the different SIGs; joint meetings will serve both to explore the overlap and also to ensure that fruitful interaction takes place between all those with an interest in furthering eParticipation. The work programmes of the individual SIGs and of the umbrella ePCoP address this issue.

The number of practitioners joining the DEMO_net network is encouraging (cf. e.g. list of associate members at the DEMO_net website www.demo-net.org, and the list of participants at the first SIG Industry meeting – see attachment 1), but this is only an initial membership. Interest in eParticipation is growing very strongly amongst practitioners (as amongst academics) and the Specific Interest Groups will need to move rapidly to accommodate this growth. In particular, the ability to deal with large numbers of registered practitioners will be required and both the registration process and communication activity will need to accommodate this. Regular monitoring and reporting of numbers and categories of registered practitioners shall be instituted.

The overall work of DEMO_net is now progressing quickly and the SIGs will need to make rapid input to assist in the continuing process of developing/shaping the future eParticipation research agenda. Some of this work is under way in the SIGs and substantial input has already been achieved during Phase I of DEMO_net. Further input will need to be arranged as an early priority as the remaining SIGs are constituted.

There is a common theme in all SIGs about the sharing of good practice, learning from pilots etc., but it is perhaps early in the development of eParticipation tools to be describing large-scale roll-out of solutions. This topic will need to come to the fore at some point during the life of DEMO_net. It is a theme which could usefully be led by the Industry SIG with the other groups providing valuable input and feedback.

As eParticipation starts to draw together disparate fields into a well-defined research topics, implementation will need to follow a similar path. Some aspects of implementation will be eParticipation-specific; others are the widespread adoption of common tools and

platforms (including mobile phones, web 2.0 etc.) which can then be adopted to develop eParticipation solutions.

The development of DEMO_net processes to deal with the practitioner groups has a high importance. Coordination is necessary in managing the content of the SIGs' activities. The required processes and facilities include amongst others:

- production of briefing materials appropriate to each SIG
- improved registration processes
- dedicated communication channels
- benchmarking of eParticipation take-up
- news scans of items relevant to eParticipation and eDemocracy generally (e.g. new findings in research, advanced developments for ICT industry, outstanding eParticipation projects and initiatives from practice)
- FAQs and contact points.

Some of these processes are already planned and have been described above, others have to be detailed in the individual SIGs when these will be established.

Beyond the ePCoP framework described in this report, there are a few further issues which will need to be addressed during the continuing activity of DEMO_net:

- To assist in bringing new registrants rapidly into DEMO_net activity, some specific mapping work – with practitioners in mind – should be carried out to provide a continuing statement on the progress of DEMO_net and the understanding of eParticipation generally.
- whilst effective communities of interest largely sustain themselves if the work they are doing is considered to be of value to the participants, some modest core funding is necessary after the end of the DEMO_net funding period to provide the tools for continuing collaboration (maintaining the network, providing collaboration materials, setting agendas/timescales etc.). This could be provided by one of the participants, via the Virtual Resource Centre, or otherwise, a proactive role does need to be fulfilled.

The creation of the SIGs represents a significant step in the growing maturity of DEMO_net as an active research network that lines up with the application practice. However, there is a considerable amount of work to do to bring vitality to the SIGs, to coordinate their activities and to ensure they have a continuing life as elements of a network adding value to researchers and practitioners operating in the field of eParticipation. The issue of integration with the research work of DEMO_net is paramount – practitioner engagement (rather than mere cooption) will be a real measure of the success of DEMO_net. The stakeholder engagement framework introduced in this report provides the structure to do that; the challenge now is in its implementation.

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Attachments

Attachment 1: Notes from Industry Advisory Panel (IAP – Special Interest Group “Industry”) Meeting on 16th July 2007

Introduction

George Hall, Chairman of the meeting, welcomed attendees and introduced Professor Ann Macintosh, Scientific Director of DEMO_net, the Sixth Framework Network of Excellence on eParticipation.

DEMO_net Background and Progress

Ann Macintosh presented a brief overview of DEMO_net, referring to the complexity of the topics in the field of eParticipation, the interdisciplinary demands and the fragmented nature of research activity. Her presentation described progress since the start of the Network in January 2006. DEMO_net has 20 partners in Europe and the University of Southern California. Reference was made to the collation of research activity from 108 research institutions in 33 countries, to the definition mapping work carried by DEMO_net partners and to the creation of the Policy Advisory Panel hosted by the Vice President of the European Parliament. Particular challenges envisaged were scalability – essential for moving pilot projects to full scale implementation – and sustainability of the Network at the end of the four-year funding period.

An issue was raised about the low number of non-academic organisations as partners in the Network (there are three) and Ann described the requirements of the Network of Excellence funding regime which has its focus on academic integration.

Role of the Industry Advisory Panel

John Shaddock, Joint Workpackage Leader, ‘Integrating Practitioners’ in DEMO_net, set out some of the dimensions to the role of the Industry Advisory Panel. He referred to the need to bring the ICT industry, practitioners and academia together to progress the eParticipation agenda and the input of the industry was particularly sought to bring expertise and advice in a number of areas. These included advice on research areas of commercial interest, information on market readiness for particular solutions, specific market requirements, technology advances, presentational issues and shaping outputs from DEMO_net. It was felt that a major contribution could be made to the creation and sustainability of the network and active participation in projects carried out by partners would help in exchanging research and industry skills and experience, including making better links with practitioners. Reference was made to the major rise in interest in eParticipation amongst practitioners – a recent information day for a Call for Proposals had attracted 150 registrations compared with around 20 only a few months previously. It was hoped that the Industry Advisory Panel would engage all sizes and aspects of the ICT industry.

Initial views of Industry Partners

As an immediate reaction to the presentations, a number of issues were raised for further consideration:

Skills

The development of appropriate skills to engage in eParticipation was felt to be extremely important, not only to assist in overcoming the digital divide, but also to ensure citizens were able to engage fully and confidently with democratic applications. Thus eSkills (including ECDL) could be seen as basic requirements, but there was also a need to build eParticipation into basic training programmes.

Understanding the Market

Reference was made to the lack of information about the demands for eParticipation applications from practitioners, both in government and the community more widely. There was also a lack of information about the availability of eParticipation products. It was considered that it would be important for the Industry Advisory Panel to examine the potential value which could be added by the development of benchmarking exercises.

Information Management

Whilst the title of the network was 'eParticipation', Panel members felt it may be useful to consider 'Tools for participation' rather than just 'Tools for eParticipation'. The relationship between technology tools and other processes of participation was felt to be at the core of the development of successful applications. It was suggested that the overall theme of eParticipation was really 'Making information make sense'.

Scoping of eParticipation

An early objective for the Panel should be to provide a particular perspective on the scoping of eParticipation. It was considered that the industry is currently investing in projects with no major roll-out potential, due to lack of understanding of the market (and lack of awareness of potential applications by practitioners). It was considered that eParticipation applications may not represent a market product or range in their own right, but may come to comprise add-on applications which sit on existing hardware and software platforms, including mobile phones.

The Discussion

After a general discussion of potential benefits of cooperation between academia and industry in the area of eParticipation, comments on DEMO_net activity and progress and issues of sustainability, the Industry Advisory Panel considered:

Interoperability

Interoperability was felt to be an important issue, but one with no short-term resolution. There were aspects where joint activity could assist in making progress and areas identified for exploration were not all technology-related and would include, for example, semantic standards, recognition of cultural differences, problems of competition within the industry and within academia etc.

Benchmarking

Throughout the discussion, issues of measurement arose. It became clear that, central to progress on eParticipation, there was a need to collate metrics to allow progress to be measured, to allow market demand to be assessed, to chart the rise of new applications and methodologies, to gauge take-up etc.

The Public Sector Market

The Panel discussed the nature of the public sector market for eParticipation products. The current primacy of the 'Shared Services' agenda and Transformation is seen as likely to continue for some time, together with a continuing focus in eGovernment on cost reduction. The introduction of results-based accountability systems could be used as a driver for the introduction of eParticipation programmes, but outputs from DEMO_net would need to address this topic directly.

Increasing deinstitutionalisation (via outsourcing, but also of services like Education) will continue, as will the development of public/private partnerships. These factors will put additional pressure on IT departments and will add both to the complexity of eParticipation as a topic, but also make it difficult to mark out space on the IT agenda in government.

It was stressed that there is a significant difference between the public being addressed as 'citizens' and as 'consumers', with eParticipation focusing on the former, where the eGovernment agenda remains more consumer-oriented. Is eParticipation an IT or a Community Development issue for local governments? Whilst there is an interest in the 'citizen engagement' arms of government, there remains a clear need to engage IT Managers.

Understanding eParticipation

eParticipation and Political Power

What will the role of politicians be in developing eParticipation programmes? The experience of UK Online was quoted, where good levels of participation were not converted into political engagement 'because nobody in power read the contributions'. It was considered unlikely that politicians will take a strong lead, but there may be a new breed of politician (possibly single-issue rather than party-based) able to capitalise on the availability of eParticipation technologies.

Active Participation

Engaging the public tends not to be a major line of expenditure in the development of eGovernment projects generally; there are also complications in developing appropriate tools – how do you join a discussion which began a week earlier and how is a long debate kept alive? There are issues relating to moderation and the role of the semantic web.

There are further issues relating to community-based rather than individual participation which require different approaches.

Social Networking

What are the 'right' areas to research? This is a fast-moving field with a number of 'dead-ends', where initiatives fail to progress and, in contrast, unexpected applications thrive. From the research point of view, the area is of considerable interest (including in DEMO_net). One area to be monitored was the extent of criminal involvement in this whole topic.

Issues facing the Industry

Diversity of eParticipation

eParticipation is a very wide field and no single provider is likely to be able (or want to) cover the field. Solutions are likely to be produced by consortia of small, possibly local specialists and the major players. It will be extremely difficult for the industry to establish a strong focus and DEMO_net could be a powerful force to give assistance in this area. The need to sustain a large number of innovative activities is likely to be difficult to sustain – adding focus will make progress both more meaningful and more rapid. Essentially the industry will focus on the mass market, volume areas of activity.

Cultural differences between local markets mean that local (probably small) players will be needed to deliver useful products (or at least to replicate products) for community- and national-based applications.

eParticipation as an Industry topic

The industry will have some difficulty in conceptualising some industry products as eParticipation applications – wireless networks, mobile phones, security and authentication products, biometrics etc. all have a role to play, but eParticipation applications are not central to any of these. 'Volume social networking' probably encompasses many of the technology areas of interest and could be used as a focus for relevant industry partners.

Security and Personalisation

The security and personalisation issues pose major problems. On the one hand, authentication is needed for some applications, for others even a requirement to log on may be a barrier to participation. There will be a range of different solutions for different applications and there is a need to develop some consensus on appropriate means to deliver appropriate levels of security.

Outputs from the Industry Advisory Panel

The meeting considered what outputs were needed from DEMO_net and from the Industry Advisory Panel to achieve the best effect:

Executive summaries

It was agreed that there was a need to provide briefing notes for the wider industry – general overviews initially, but with more specialist notes later.

George Hall/John Shaddock/Ann Macintosh to prepare one-page 'flyer' for Industry Advisory Panel to use amongst their partners/members etc.

Strength of the Network

A number of aspects from the presentations and discussion were felt to be important:

- Stress the links with eris@, Elanet and Eurocities/Telecities
- Highlight the resource offered by DEMO_net of providing an overview of research in eParticipation world-wide
- Emphasise the independence from industry players; the independence will be of real value as work progresses and there is a need for collaboration between companies
- Stress the role of the Industry Advisory Panel as a platform for increasing understanding and bringing elements of the industry together in this developing field

Partner perspectives

Some issues need to be addressed directly, not with a view to resolution, but to clarify the nature of the debate. The first of these is the different stances of academia and industry. Where industry is looking for 'something solid and fundable', the research community may feel academic freedom and independence are in danger of being compromised. The second issue is the importance of an inclusive approach. Progress will be made if the needs of large and small businesses are recognised alongside the research needs. There may not be compromise, but there needs to be understanding.

Future Activity

It was agreed that there was considerable scope for future constructive cooperation through an Industry Advisory Panel. The following recommendations were made in respect of future work:

- Move to themed meetings to retain focus on specialisations (security and privacy issues were seen as an early candidate)
- Identify areas requiring further research/liaison activity
- Focus on collaboration to make progress
- Identify relevant work going on in the laboratories of major ICT companies
- Possibility of another meeting in Autumn 2007
- Ensure range of large and small enterprise representation continues
- Arrange a joint meeting with politicians
- Develop 'Foresight mapping' approach

Attendance

George Hall	Chairman	United Kingdom
Professor Ann Macintosh	DEMO_net and University of Leeds	United Kingdom
Hugo Kerschot	Indigov	Belgium
David Dickinson	Manchester University	United Kingdom

Hans Hagedorn	Zebralog	Germany
Mathias Hatakka	DEMO_net and Orebro University	Sweden
Jonathan Taylor	Cisco Systems	United Kingdom
Roman Winkler	DEMO_net and ITA	Austria
Joanna Knast	Motorola	Poland
Benoit Muller	Business Software Alliance	Belgium
Hugo Lueders	CompTIA	Belgium
Martin Schraa	ETNO	Belgium
John Shaddock	DEMO_net and Local Government Yorkshire and Humber	United Kingdom

Other Panel Members

Gordon Mackenzie	Microsoft	United Kingdom (Scotland)
Tilmann Schulze-Wolf	Entera	Germany
Dana Eleftheriadou	DG Enterprise	European Commission
Rufo Guerreschi	Telematics Freedom Foundation	Italy
Robert Ling	Yorkshire Forward Regional Development Agency	United Kingdom
Max Mickelsen	Microsoft	United Kingdom
Mark McGann	European ICT Association	Belgium
Richard Allan	Cisco Systems	United Kingdom
Vittorio Alvino	Democrazia Elettronica e Partecipazione Pubblica	Italy

Attachment 2: Minutes of the DEMO_net internal Meeting on the Integration Strategy Development on 9th October 2006

DEMO-net WP1 workshop on the integration strategy

Brussels, October 9th 2006

Organised by WP 1 leaders

John Shaddock and Maria A. Wimmer

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Aim of the workshop

- Common understanding of integration needs and measures in Demo-net
- Reflection of contributions from individual workpackages to the overall integration of Demo-net
- Reflection on integration needs in eParticipation research
- Reflection on integration needs and activities of the practitioner partners of Demo-net
- Reflection on integration needs and activities of practitioner networks

Expected results of the workshop

- Sketch key aspects of integration
 - Content
 - Measures and activities
- Draft an integration strategy including
 - Integration of research disciplines and institutions
 - Integration of research and practice
 - transferring expertise and concepts from research to practice
 - learning from practice
 - communicating needs of research from practice to research
 - Reaching a wider impact of citizen participation in policy issues through larger eParticipation projects
 - Integration of PhD students in research and practice
 - Execution of joint projects to reach out further than current pilots

Measures to Reach the Objectives of Demo-net

- Co-ordinating & integrating research activities clustered around the research objectives
- Analysing existing eParticipation research across Europe
- Mobilising relationships among all stakeholders
- Achieving co-operation between government & academia to improve quality of research & understanding
- Providing a technology platform for discussion, co-operation & data exchange
- Disseminating research outcomes for the benefit of researchers, government & citizens
- Ensuring growth and sustainability

Demo-net Virtual Centre of Excellence

- Sustainable eParticipation research community that advances ICT applicable to eParticipation
- Environment that encourages collaboration
- Significant contribution to PhD development
- Critical exposure of researchers to pressing democratic problems
- Significant input to government policy development for citizen engagement both in individual EU countries and the EU as a whole
- Reference point for practitioners

Agenda of the day

10:00 Intro + objectives of the workshop

10:10 Presentation of challenges and barriers

10:30 Presentation of contributions from individual workpackages

Questions:

- *what input is being delivered from your WP towards the integration task?*
- *how do you think this can be integrated?*

Presentation of the contributions from the practitioner partners
and from the networks

Questions:

- *how do you think research (and what kind of research) can be fed into practice*
- *which means of integration would you suggest?*

11:45 Discussion of challenges and barriers and inputs of WPs, practitioners and networks

12:30 Lunch break

13.30 Splitting up in three groups to discuss an integration strategy

each group to discuss:

- a common understanding of integration
- what should / can be integrated, and how,
 - including integration of PhD students, projects, and expansion policy

Discussion to focus on qualitative integration: measures, instruments, methods of collaboration.

The groups are:

Group 1: integration of research among disciplines and institutions

participants: Anders, Ann (Moderator), Clive, Kim, Andreas

Group 2: dialogue with practice – from practice to research

participants: John (Moderator), Minna-Maija, Nanna, Naoum

Group 3: dialogue with practice – from research to practice

participants: Asta, Birgitte, Maria (Moderator)

15:00 Break

15:30 Plenary: Reporting back the main discussion results

16:30 Brief wrap-up

Overall problems and barriers

- Lack of understanding of the complexity and the multifacetedness of the field
- Lack of understanding of the socio-technical nature of the field
- Single disciplines investigating multidisciplinary contexts in isolation
 - Fragmented research
- Weaknesses in the transfer of knowledge
- Lack of interaction and integration among research and application

WP 1: Integration - Barriers, challenges, needs and opportunities in eParticipation research. Reflecting results from the Edinburgh Stakeholder Workshop on 14th June 2006 (Demo_net 2006a)

Challenges and barriers elicited in the stakeholder WS (Demo_net 2006a) along the following dimensions:

- Success / failure
- Relevance of methodologies, tools and instruments to whom / for what
- Impact of technology to Government and Democracy
- Stakeholders (who / what are their needs)

- What kind of technology is out there / may emerge
- Social context
- Organisation
- Business case
- Political sphere
- Cultural sphere
- The public / society

1. Political-strategic challenges and barriers:

- General aspects on political debates, principles in models of democracy, engagement of people
- Aspects of impact of eParticipation and citizens' engagement in political decision making
 - including the impact of technology in participation
- Issues of considering political support for eParticipation
 - at local level and top down
- Lack of trust in political institutions as a barrier for participation in political decisions
- Lack of trust in technology
- Need to know the target groups in eParticipation and to get those groups involved
- Need for a fast feedback to citizens
 - Making citizens aware that their opinions are being considered
- Need to provide sufficient funding for eParticipation projects

2. Organisational (incl. Legal) challenges and barriers

- Organisational structures of governments
 - challenges of networked governments
 - who is responsible for what in the eContext of participation
- Participatory processes in the context of eParticipation
- Stakeholder issues such as
 - skills required by the participants
 - resource management
 - responsibilities and
 - cooperation in democracy
 - language problems to overcome
 - exploiting the potentials of ICT

3. Challenges and barriers for public value generation

- Understanding the added value and impact of modern ICT to generate public value, e.g. for
 - Development, implementation and evaluation of policies and regulations
 - Management of public finances
 - Guaranteeing democratic political processes, gender equality, social inclusion and personal security
 - Management of environmental sustainability and sustainable development
- Defining proper business models for eParticipation
 - where can participation really make a difference ?
- Distinguishing capabilities and benefits
- Understanding the mutual reinforcement of social integration/social capital and eParticipation

4. Challenges and barriers in social dimensions

- Aspects of individuals and communities in their societal environment
- Individual behaviour, community aspects, process transparency or the raising and education of young, eEnabled citizens
- Impact of a change of democracy models
- (Direct) influence in policy making on individuals and society

5. Challenges and barriers in socio-economic dimensions

- Effects and expectations in terms of economic influence on social situations
- Success factors – lack of methods for quality measurement on eParticipation (qualitative/ quantitative)
 - when is eParticipation successful and when does it fail?
- Value expectations in respect to social circumstances and measurement of them in eParticipation
- Changes in online communication
- Involvement and the economic effects of technologies used
- ... “eParticipation options which are supposed to be socially inclusive shall also be explicitly offered to those who are less heard in society”

6. Challenges and barriers in socio-technical terms

- Understanding of technology developments and their impact on society, organizations and context
- Technology impact on society
 - eInclusion ... digital divide
- Changes in social behaviour through technology usage

- Interaction through technological means, etc.
- Accountability
- Scalability
- Knowledge and Data management
- Usability

7. Challenges and barriers in technical matters

- Technology and tool design for eParticipation
- Retrieval and visualisation of information
- Specific web technologies for eParticipation
- Channels and devices
- Analytical support in eParticipation areas and management of large data volumes
- Data integration – combining systems of different organisations – and interoperability
- Long-term archiving
- Lack of trust in sustainability, usability and technology

8. Deployment challenges and barriers

- Introduction of new means and technologies into particular environments
- Full-scale implementation
- Impact on the work of stakeholders and interfaces to systems in context
- Issues of funding and revenue
- Aspects of security, robustness and scalability of already implemented [large] applications
- Issues concerned with future implementation
- Approaches to systems engineering, monitoring and evaluation are to be assessed and probably developed (adapted) for the context of eParticipation
- Knowledge and best practice transfer
 - Transferability of solutions into distinct contexts

Barriers and challenges identified in other sources

(OECD study, UK local government study, DEMO_net eParticipation panel discussion at the Eastern European eGov Days 2006, DG.O 2006 eParticipation workshop)

- Integration and responsiveness
- Reaching the public
- Involvement of elected representatives
- The right tool for the context

- Evaluating eParticipation
- The problem of scale
- Building capacity and active citizenship
- Ensuring coherence
- Ensuring commitment
- Evaluating eParticipation
- Understanding and scoping the area
- Design and scalability
- Navigation and orientation
- Analysis of stakeholder input
- Security and privacy
- Evaluation
- Need for multi-discipline research
- Scalability
 - Tools and applications
 - Concepts and methodologies
- Capacity and active citizenship
- Overcoming the cognitive obstacle
- Issues of representative democracy
- Turnout of eParticipation
- Importance of using the new channels to reduce costs of government
- eParticipation matters - inclusion is of benefit to all
- Ensuring relevance of the results
- Applied research not always fully recognised
- We need visions, new technologies
- Dialogue between research and practice crucial

Results from the group discussions

Group 1: Integration of research among disciplines and institutions

1. Key aspects of integration

- Group1 focus is 'research' therefore need to consider:

- other research organisations
- PhD-students

- We have to
 1. **Attract** interested research parties

The website is our main dissemination mechanism therefore this implies there needs to be a close relationship between WP1 & WP7)
 2. **Actively integrate**

Ensure they are involved in our work and events relevant to their interests
 3. **Keep them**

Ensure that they remain part of our network, ie that the integration is sustainable.
- a. Attractions for interested parties (benefits and infrastructure)
 - Information
 - Give them a good view on what Demo-net is about
 - Website should serve as a knowledge repository of results and information
 - Website should list contracted partners and associated partners on public page
 - Need mailing list for the non-contracted partner members
 - Advice
 - Possibilities to ask questions – should there be an FAQ on the website?
 - Researchers want international peer review
 - Research organisations as well as practitioners could be attracted by the best PhD students (as future new recruits)
 - Main attractors:
 - We should host world class events in eParticipation research
 - Website should get more identity (everybody should put in pictures, better organised profile for members with research activities)
 - The international basis of Demo-net as an attractor
 - Demo-net’s website should become Europe’s “most wanted [visited] page“ with an international outreach
- b. Active integration of new partners (into the work of Demo-net)
 - Associate member status should be a benefit and a motivation for new partners!
 - Ask them questions before they are accepted as members, that gives us information whether to accept them as members
 - Ensure they complete the survey so we expand our research contact list

- Ensure we understand their interests and they tell us which aspects of the demo-net work they want to join
- New and initial partners should act as face and identity for Demo-net
- Profile of new partners at the web page to know
 - what these people's interests are and
 - what they want to do (where they want to work / contribute in Demo-net research activities)
- PhD students research integration

c. Sustainable mechanisms to integration

- Key persons (liaison partners, not WP leaders) that are integrators for the people in respect of a certain topic
- Liaison partners forming families of newcomers around original Demo-net partners
- Integrate PhDs on the web site (they are requesting it, e.g. publishing their presentations)
- Strong leaders in the work packages to encourage new partners to join in

d. Web portal as an important means for integration

General goals:

- New round of gathering requirements for the web portal functionality
- Well structured and well populated knowledge base of the Demo-net website
 - Rich content
 - International network and community
 - Added value of visiting the Demo-net website in respect to other eParticipation websites
- Ontology integration
 - ontology as a grand schema for the web site and the basic structure for the Demo-net virtual centre for excellence
 - we need forms/tools of navigation in ontologies
 - every work package should be able to describe itself keeping with the ontology
 - PhD students integration into the web portal

Definite actions:

- Every partner should use the existing tools for self-expression as efficiently as possible (picture and description on the personal profile page)
- New and better means of profile presentation have to be implemented
- New partners should place a welcome at the webpage ... "Hi, I am ..., I do ... etc." (-> initial partners should also do this!!!)

- Surveys should be integrated in the web site
- Endnote library – e.g. partners filling in a form to insert a literature into the library
→ some procedure of approval by the WP 3 lead (lit db and ontology)

e. Further Questions

- Before the first annual review (in January), the website must be up to date and attractive! What can we accomplish by then?
→ time pressure
- Do we want mechanism in Demo-net business model where our research ideas could be transferred to practitioners or commercialized?

Group 2: Dialogue with practice – transferring knowledge from practice to research

Some challenges ...

- Language can be a barrier if certain conditions apply
 - Academic terminology can make understandings difficult
 - Need to introduce practitioner language and concepts
 - The English language may be in many contexts a barrier
 - national languages are important for joint understanding and reaching a wider audience
 - Request for multi-lingual spaces especially from local government officials
- Making clear what the economic, organisational and political benefits will be of the participation services
 - researchers could provide to governments
 - governments could provide to citizens and politicians
 - economic benefit for practitioners e.g. increased take-up of electronic service delivery

a. Four levels of integration

- National and European Level (top down)
- Regional and Local Level (bottom up)
- Involvement of ICT Industry
 - Industry Advisory Panel
- Other government actor networks to integrate with Demo-net (including research arms, where they exist)
 - Eurocities, Elanet, Eris@, CINEFOGO
 - Subject networks e.g. Health, Environment

b. Web portal with value-added content

- Best practice cases
- Who are the champions?
 - Database of interested people
 - Mailing list
 - Alert system to inform people about activities, updates and changes in the knowledge base

c. Integration through training concepts

- Concerted personnel interchange – researchers in government, practitioners in research
- Traineeship concept
 - Government trainees in Universities
 - Student placements in Government
- Training material (WP8) for knowledge transfer
- Adult training programs can help exchanging ideas and experience using tutors as conduit
- Structured plan is needed as regards to what & when exchanges and trainings should take place

d. Aspects of collaboration

- Standards, scalability, evidence for advantages, added value for politicians need to be understood very clearly
 - Governments may ask for support from research
 - Response needs to be in relevant timescales
- Working groups of standards at EU and national levels often are quite closed for participation
 - E.g. driven by ICT Industry and governments, without research or without a wider participation option
 - Need to engage with dialogues that already take place
- Private-Public Partnerships (PPPs) may help the process
- Need to harness practitioner conferences
 - Run workshops for more solid engagement
- The mission statements of government organisations could point to directions of interest for researchers.
- Integration with regional innovation programs should be secured
 - Some governments are not aware of the synergies and benefits of a mutual dialogue between research and practice
 - Some governments are not engaging with innovation activities

e. Alignment of timescale

- Mapping and definition of research programmes and expected outputs needs to be tied to timescales
- Practitioner definition of timescales needs to influence research priorities and scheduling
- Research and ICT industry need to share timescales to allow production of marketable suites of applications
- DEMO-net needs to develop the capacity to respond to live issues – comment on relevant news topics and develop an authoritative voice on eParticipation issues

Group 3: Dialogue with practice – transferring knowledge from research to practice

Key questions:

- Communication problem
 - Media consultancy in terms of what info is being conveyed
- When is the right time to address a problem or to introduce a solution?
 - Demo-net to become the most attractive site to search for value-added information
 - Need to sex up our products of eParticipation
 - E.g. Demo-net ontology and multidimensional search would make the search of content much more attractive
- Problems of catching up with the needs and advancements in developments
 - Researchers / Politicians / Practitioners
 - Demo-net helping to lower the threshold for introducing and using new emerging technologies
- Demand needs to be nurtured at the practitioner side by awareness raising
 - Proactive dialogue with practitioners
 - Practitioners involvement / engagement in research projects
 - Exploitation of synergies among research and practice approaches to eParticipation

a. Knowledge transfer as an important integration activity

- Knowledge transfer via
 - Comprehensive multidisciplinary teams active in the process of designing eParticipation
 - Research studying, assessing and evaluating eParticipation projects
- PhD students carrying out such studies
- Joint projects (for both) having to solve a problem in real life

- not remaining on the theoretical level
- ... eParticipation is applied research (reminder)
- Lessons learnt cycle to catch up with the experiences that can then be shared with others as well
 - e.g. a template to collect and assess such lessons (positive and negative)
- Transformation from [empty] words (lots of paper works) to innovative products
 - Research delivering a “tangible product”, whereas the product can be of various shapes (methodologies, tools, technologies ... Something that practice can use)
 - Value creation / value proposition

b. What needs to be done

- Research needs to create demand on the practitioner side
 - We need to make our results attractive -> demo-net site should be such a place attractively conveying new demands
 - Virtual centre of excellence to be THE eParticipation site to be consulted
 - A real community of practice where people
 - share experiences, minds, solutions and
 - commonly create new knowledge
- Execute a proactive way of attracting practitioners' interest in research results
 - Famous A4 memo page to resume the results you want to „sell“
- Keep practitioners' and politicians' attention span lasting
 - Requires something of interest appearing
 - Keep a steady flow of new input
- Integrate practice with research in all stages of lifecycle
 - research attracting practice for a certain demand
 - demand taken up by practice and further explored commonly

Visions of WP 1 for the continuation

- In the next project phase, integration will still be a big issue, for it brings together the results from all the other workpackages into a joint product
- This product can then be ported into a virtual portal that spreads out widely and helps networking with the practitioners and researchers
 - Virtual Center of Excellence