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ECHO FACTS FOR USERS — EUROPEAN MULTIMEDIA CONTENT (EMC)

4 |98

INFO2000 Conference

"Interactive Multimedia beyond the Year 2000"
Technical Museum, Maria Hilfer Strasse, 212, Vienna, 29 November 1998

High ranking Commission officials and high level speakers gathered together at the Technical Museum in Vienna in an event which presented results of the INFO2000 programme and which provided a platform from which to discuss future perspectives beyond the INFO2000 pro- gramme. Over 500 participants - actors and potential entrants interested in the field of the multimedia content industry - attended this prestigious event. They travelled to the city of Vienna in order to hear, first hand from the experts, speech- es covering just some of the following topics: "INFO2000 and beyond: A step into Europe's multimedia future"; "Chal- lenges for publishers and media compa- nies in the migration from the informa- tion age to the knowledge age" and "Content and Commerce Driven Strategies in Global Networks". Printed copies of the Conference Proceedings were distributed at the event and are now available for downloading from the I*M-Europe server at:

- http://www.echo.lu/info2000/en/ imm2000conference.html/

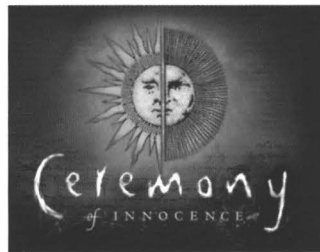# EuroPrix MultiMediaArt 98 Gala-Winners' night

The winners of the EuroPrix MultiMediaArt 98 were made public and celebrated at a glamorous Gala Event at the Technical Museum in Vienna on the evening of 29 November 1998.

The EuroPrix MultiMediaArt - an initiative of the Austrian Ministry for Economic Affairs on the occasion of Austria's first EU presidency - is sup- ported by the European Com- mission's Directorate-General XIII/E in the framework of sup- port for the European multime- dia industry. After the presen- tation of the 29 EuroPrix nominee products at Frankfurt Bookfair the final selection of the winners of the EuroPrix MultiMediaArt 98 was made by a Grand Jury - composed of eminent personalities of the multimedia world - under the chairmanship of Mr. Peter Kabel. As a result, the overall winner, the winners in each of the five EuroPrix categories, as well as the winner of the Stu- dents' Award were identified. In addition two products received from the jury a recog- nition for special achieve- ments.

And the winners are...

The overall winner of the EuroPrix
Product:
"Ceremony of Innocence"
Producer: *REAL World Multimedia Ltd.*
Country: *United Kingdom*
http://www.realworld.on.net

"Ceremony of Innocence" - the overall winner of the EuroPrix MultiMediaArt 98 - is a mysteri- ous love story, told through an interactive correspondence of 70 postcards and letters, based upon the "Griffin and Sabine" trilogy by Nick Bantock. Interna- tionally renowned actors and actresses such as Paul McGann, Isabella Rossellini and Ben Kingsley guide the user through the narrative. The use of a film- like screen and sound design

intensify the experience of "Cer- emony of Innocence" and draw the user deep into its story. The jury described "Ceremony of Innocence" as a very special product which moves multimedia beyond what is generally expect- ed and seen on the market, especially in terms of innovative content, quality, user engage- ment and marketability.

The winners in the five EuroPrix Categories
Knowledge and Discovery
Product: *"Sokrates"*
Producer: *Everscreen Mediateam Oy*
Country: *Finland*
http://www.everscreen.com
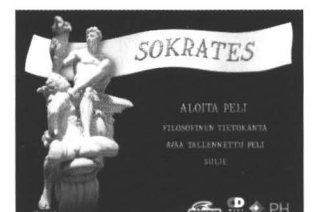
Socrates is back from the dead! He has returned to earth from Hades to study philosophy at university. Unfortunately, a

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member of the philosophy faculty has been murdered and Socrates is the prime suspect. Just as in his first life, Socrates is tried before court. The player now has the choice between proving Socrates' innocence, or helping the prosecution and, ultimately, having Socrates executed. Either way, the key to success is writing one's own Book of Aphorisms, aided by the Museion, the philosophic database of Sokrates. The jury was impressed by the outstanding interface, content, technical realisation, and in particular by the invention and brilliant humour incorporated in this product.

2. Valorisation of European Culture
Product: *"Charles Rennie Mackintosh - Art Architecture & Design"*
Producer: *Wigwam Digital Ltd.*
Country: *United Kingdom*
http://www.wigwamdigital.co.uk
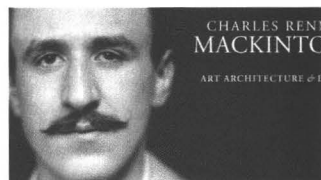
This CD-ROM presents the life and work of the Scottish architect and designer Charles Rennie Mackintosh and contains materials from every major international Mackintosh Collection. Charles Rennie Mackintosh was arguably one of the world's greatest architects and designers. Born in Glasgow in 1868, his work was exhibited in many European cities such as Liège, Venice, Berlin and Moscow. More than 540 pages, more than 700 images and 2 hours of narrative and music organised in seven chapters promise an entertaining introduction to the life and work of Charles Rennie Mackintosh. The jury praised in particular the broad scope and range of content provided by this product, which works at different levels and is easy to navigate.

3. Supporting SMEs in the Market Place
Product: *"provoice 97"*
Producer: *pro idee TonproduktionsgmbH*

Country: *Austria*
http.//www.proidee.at

Imagine that you are looking for a pleasantly sounding Austrian speaker for a multimedia production. You can either spend the next three days on the phone or you can simply take a look at "provoice 97". One can combine up to 56 criteria such as "gender", "languages" or "dialects" to find speakers with voices and skills fitting your requirements. Three and a half-hour of sound recordings give a good idea of the voice of each of the 132 listed speakers. The jury was convinced that this attractive and clear product, which significantly saves time and money for users, contains a lot of potential for further development.

4. Improving Democracy with Multimedia
Product: *"politics.ch"*
Producer: *TA Media AG*
Country: *Switzerland*
http://www.tamedia.ch

The product "politics.ch" introduces users to Swiss politics – the government, the political system and the decisions taken by the parliament. The Web-Site answers frequently asked questions such as "Which Member of Parliament represents my interests best?" by documenting the voting behaviour of each MP. The site contains an extensive database that allows users to easily access the information they desire. The results of a database search are graphically illustrated so as to improve navigation. The jury regarded this product as exemplary for other European

Parliaments, being a very good model for government interaction with citizens. It provides a huge amount of information, direct comfort and excellent search engines.

5. First Steps in Multimedia
Product: *"Snow White and the Seven Hansels"*
Producer: *Tivola Verlag GmbH*
Country: *Germany*
http://www.tivola.de

Every child knows the three famous fairy-tales "Little Red Riding Hood", "Snow White" and "Hansel and Gretel". This CD-ROM puts that knowledge to the test, as only those children who really know the fairy-tales will succeed in this game. Otherwise Snow White ends up eating the gingerbread cottage of the witch from "Hansel and Gretel". The designers paid particular attention to avoiding violence in this programme aimed at children aged 4 to 10. All of the characters survive the game unhurt. The jury emphasised the value of this well designed and cartooned product for the whole family as it represents some of the very best of European story telling, using the possibilities of the multiple media to its maximum extension.

## The winner of the Students' Award
Product: *"Born with a broken tongue"*
Producer: *Martin Casey, Dublin Institute of Technology*
Country: *Ireland*
http://www.dmc.dit.ie/maimm/98/mcasey

This product explores personal insights into the fears and shames of stuttering in a gentle and almost poetic manner. The user is encouraged to examine a blank screen. When moving the mouse over the screen, hidden links appear. The designer uses this imperfection of the navigation to emphasise the situation of people affected by stuttering. Personal experiences take the place of medical explanations, aiming at creating greater understanding for people suffering from this condition. The jury felt that the interface, sound and image design of the product was exceptional, conveying in a highly personal and unique way the difficulties of the individuals affected.

Recognition for special achievements

Product: *"Wanås - Contemporary Art in the Castle Woods of Wanås"*
Students' Award
Producer: *Universität Bremen*
Country: *Germany*
http://www.informatik.
uni-bremen.de
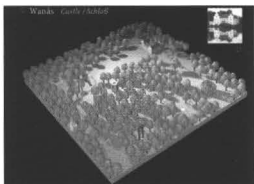
Every spring, Castle Wanås in Southern Sweden presents modern art. Internationally renowned artists are invited to create works of art at the castle and to exhibit them to the public in the castle's forest. The CD-ROM gives users the opportunity of taking a walk through this forest and experiencing the works of art produced at Wanås. It offers no given way of presenting the works of art, but rather enables the user to decide on how to view them. The jury appreciated the achievements provided by this product in relation to the resources available.

Product: *"TeLL me More"* (France)
Category: *Knowledge and Discovery*
Producer: *AURALOG*
Country: *France*
http://www.auralog.com

Created by a team of experts on language acquisition, "Tell Me More" takes full advantage of multimedia and computer technology. The CD-ROM comes with a set of headphones and an integrated microphone. Eight different games, grammar exercises, dialogues and videos contribute towards creating an enjoyable atmosphere in which to learn a foreign language. "Tell me More" stands out in the way that it is the result of many years of research and development and is based on speech recognition technology. All the products are presented on the EuroPrix web service and the I*M-Cool multimedia gallery of the I*M-Europe server.

The Gala Event

The EuroPrix MultiMediaArt 98 was designed to improve the conditions for combining creativity, cultural diversity and new technologies – a combination which gives tremendous potential and opens up new opportunities for Europe's multimedia industry, as well as for its citizens. The Gala Evening in Vienna demonstrated this symbiosis in an impressive way. With the Technical Museum in Vienna, a splendid turn-of-the-century building, a special venue was chosen for the announcement of the EuroPrix winners. Especially for the Gala Evening, the museum was transformed into a magnificent Multimedia Palace. The creative achievements of the EuroPrix nominees were presented by means of an interactive and futuristic technique. In this context, the interior installation "Digital Market Place" demonstrated new forms of digital video communication.

Prominent guests celebrated the EuroPrix winners

The Gala evening - which attracted an audience of about 1000 people - was moderated by the popular TV presenter Barbara Stöckl. The awards for the six best European multimedia productions were conferred on the winners by eminent personalities of public life. Besides the patrons Dr. Hannes Farnleitner and Dr. Martin Bangemann, Mag. Brigitte Ederer, Vienna's Town Councillor for Finance, Mr. Joachim Kehl, Director of the Frankfurt Book Fair, as well as other prominent guests were present on this occasion. The award in the category "First Steps in Multimedia" was conferred on the winner by the youngest of the special guests: Krishan Raia from Kenton who is, at a tender age of seven years, Europe's youngest graduate in informatics. Dr. Bangemann handed over the award to the overall winner.

This Gala Evening featured some of the highlights of international showbiz, music and culture, including performances from the internationally celebrated pianist and composer Friedrich Gulda, from the famous musical, opera and popstar Sarah Brightman, as well as from the popular Italian singer Gianna Nannini. A modern dance show, put on stage by the ballet of the State Opera in Vienna, choreographed by its director Renato Zanella, rounded up the programme, setting it perfectly within the classical ambience of the venue.

The Gala will be broadcasted on prime television on 12 December (20.15 hrs.) by the satellite channel 3SAT. Further contributions are foreseen in the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (Österreichischer Rundfunk - ORF) on 4 December, inter alia. In February 1999 comprehensive information on the results of the EuroPrix MultiMediaArt 98 and the Gala event will be provided by a DVD production, which will be obtainable from the INFO2000 Central Support Office. Due to the enormous response the EuroPrix MultiMediaArt 98 received from the European multimedia world a EuroPrix MultiMediaArt 99 is envisaged. Further information on the EuroPrix MultiMediaArt may be obtained from the EuroPrix web service.
● http://www.europrix.org
● http://www.echo.lu/cool

CEF : XIII /57

CONDRINET

Information Society Forum:

Moving public administrations closer to the citizens in the digital age

The Information Society Forum was established in July 1995 under the chairmanship of the European Commissioner for industrial affairs, information technologies and telecommunications, Dr. Martin Bangemann, with the objective to contribute to open debate and reflection on the challenges of the Information Society. The group is composed of representatives of users, social groups, industry and European institutions. On 16 November 1998 the Vienna Information Society Forum adopted a declaration, giving a number of recommendations on the communication between public administrations and the citizens in the digital age. The Forum emphasised that new applications of telematics should facilitate better decision-making and create more effective and coherent links between national administrations, and between them and European institutions. It was recommended that governments establish rules for accessing public information as far as possible without charge and for exploiting new services derived from that access. These rules should assure secure communications between the citizen and public administrations through adequate data protection, authentication and electronic signature systems. The Forum suggested that governments and the European Union should promote best practices and public/private partnership for supplying public information.
● **http://europa.eu.int/en/comm/ spp/me/me981113.html**

CONDRINET - CONtent and Commerce DRIven Strategies in Global NETworks

Speeding up the revolution of the "network economies"

The economies of the Member States of the European Union and many other nations in the world are in the earliest stages of a revolution. They are facing a transformation of their markets towards "network economies".

At the request of the European Commission's Directorate-General XIII/E, in the framework of the INFO20000 Programme, Gemini Consulting has undertaken to describe this economic transformation and examine its complex dynamics. The CONDRINET Study concentrates on the role of content as a driver for the development of an electronic trading market place and gives recommendations concerning medium and long-term strategies for the multimedia content industry and EU content policy actions for the period 1998-2003 (see also ECHO facts for users 3/98, pp. 1, 3).

The results of this study were officially unveiled at the Frankfurt Book Fair on 7 October 1998 during a strategic meeting of European heads of publishing houses and related industries. Keynote speeches were given by Mr. R. Frans de Bruïne, Director of DG XIII/E of the European Commission, and Mr. Pierre Hessler, Chairman of Gemini Consulting. As a starting point, the study emphasises that the Internet has emerged as the most rapidly adopted technology in history - it required only four years to reach 50 million users. These market "explosions" and increases in Internet penetration, it is found, have occurred first in the North American and Nordic markets — markets where access fees have been comparatively low.

Businesses in the network economy face reduced transaction costs, an increased reliance on content, blurring industry and market boundaries, a shift in power from producer to consumer, accelerated competition, and new business models. The study describes these transformed industry structures in the network economy by means of an "Interactive Content Value Web", which places the end user in the centre of an "ecosystem" of component firms that join through the network to create and deliver products and services. The "Value Web" is a dynamic system with competitive processes and constantly shifting "clusters" of activity. Value is created and flows through the web in a series of transactions, whereby the value to content creators (e.g., those selling targeted advertising or portal services such as Yahoo!; hosts of comic Web sites, etc.) may be purely psychological. The global network has thus put end users at the centre of their own value webs, capable of satisfying their own needs.

The dynamics of the value web are based on six business characteristics of the network economy:
● it lowers transaction costs;
● it makes content more critical;
● it blurs boundaries;
● it shifts power;
● it speeds competition;
● it creates the need for new models for success.

The CONDRINET study finds that content plays an important role in the network commerce buying process. For some companies, content is the primary offering, while for others the content provided may be a digital representation of their primary product, a complementary content product, or an unrelated content product used only to attract attention. However, many firms have not yet learned how to derive revenues from content presented over a network, and, frequently, content overload occurs on the Internet. Content providers — who sell content through editorial, design and marketing skills — are still needed.

In broad terms, the study concludes that the future economic, social, and political health of the European Union will crucially depend on the ability of European firms and citizens to compete in the global network economy. However, most European countries are lagging behind North America and other major developed countries in network penetration, usage, awareness, adoption by business and infrastructure spending. The study thus calls upon Europeans to foster market infrastructures that promote network commerce, for example by providing inexpensive access to the network and related services, and by setting up business infrastructures which encourage innovative and entrepreneurial firms to experiment with new business models and technologies. Europe's diverse cultural heritage is seen as a significant advantage in the global marketplace, if that diversity can effectively be migrated to the network. All CONDRINET material, as listed on page 2 of this issue, is available via the MIDAS-NET nodes. For a list of MIDAS-NET nodes, please consult
● **http://www.echo.lu/info2000/midas/ nodes.html**

Further details on the CONDRINET Study may be obtained from the INFO2000 Central Support Team:
Tel.: +352 401162-222
Fax: +352 401162-234
E-mail: info2000@echo.lu
● **http://www.echo.lu/condrinet**

Project Showcase

Call for Proposals Exploiting Europe's Public Sector Information—1997

EVA

The European Visual Archive

Since the invention of photography in 1839, photographs have been providing a reflection of our cultural heritage. This project will offer a century of visual recollections through digitised archive collections of photographs taken between 1900 and 2000 from two European collections.

The EVA project will provide Web-based access to over 20,000 photographs from the London Metropolitan Archives and Stadsarchief Antwerpen.

Objectives

The ultimate objective of EVA is to improve the functionality of large-scale repositories of photographic content by providing rich and powerful interactive features, navigation and search tools as well as advanced management techniques for European digital archives.

To achieve this, the EVA team will:
- set up guidelines and adopt existing standards for description of digital photographic content ;
- develop standard measures for archival quality of digital images for multimedia material;
- make the content available in a range of European languages (including translation to English from Chinese, Japanese and Arabic);
- recommend best practice on copyright issues and promote common pricing policies and charging systems;
- select efficient search and navigation tools to promote interoperability and accessibility;
- set up a pilot based on an open architecture and develop a commercial working model;
- promote the work of the project to the multimedia industry.

Products

A prototype Web-site will provide access to a digitised collection of photographs, with descriptions and indices. This will be an easy-to-use system enabling single enquiries to retrieve information across international collections, regardless of location or system used. In addition, a number of written reports (on copyright, issues, quality of digital images, description and context information standards) will be published. Workshops will be held and symposia attended to promote the work.

Users

As well as professionals and the multimedia industry, the Web-site is intended for use by the general public. The published reports will be made available free-of-charge to the European archives, who will be able to use the results of the project to make their archival information available to the multimedia industry.

Partners

Gesellschaft für Multilinguale Systeme (GMS), (a division of Lernout & Hauspie), Germany;
London Metropolitan Archives (LMA), UK;
Nederlands Instituut voor Wetenschappelijke Informatiediensten (NIW), The Netherlands;
Stadsarchief Antwerpen, Belgium;
Stichting European Commission on Preservation and Access (ECPA), The Netherlands;
Telepolis, Belgium (Co-ordinator).

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● http://www.echo.lu/info2000/en/eva.htm

FIRM

Delivering Information for the Foundation of Firms

Even at a national level, finding appropriate information to support the process of founding a company is a time-consuming process. For those wanting an international perspective on their business plans, the task of finding relevant data is even more difficult. This project will provide a platform for efficient access to such information for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), via Web technology.

Objectives

- to achieve a co-ordinated way of searching for information related to setting up companies;
- to analyse the needs of company founders at a regional, European level;
- to evaluate appropriate existing tools and tools under development;
- to set up a common structural framework for information related to setting up companies;
- to organise the information based on this framework;
- to develop prototypes of service delivery based on leading-edge, user-oriented multimedia technology;
- to build links to, and share best practice with, other related projects.

Products

Prototype systems will be developed and tested via field trials to validate the solutions. The project is heavily oriented towards usability engineering procedures.

Users

FIRM is targeting SMEs, since this sector is more liable to failure due to lack of information than large, internationally-recognised companies. Initially, FIRM will focus on the service and production industry sector. The information available through FIRM will also be available to the general public.

Partners

Center for Usability Research and Engineering (CURE), Austria;
Deutsche Industrie-und Handelstag, Germany;
Institut der Deutschen Wirtschaft (IDW), Germany;
Hellenic Organisation of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises and handicraft (EOMMEX), Greece;
Multimedia Laboratory of the Athens University of Economics and Business, Greece;
Temmel & Seywald Communications GesmbH, Austria (Co-ordinator);
Wirtschaftskammer Österreich, Austria.

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Further projects will be showcased in issue 1/99 of ECHO facts for users.

The IST Programme

Fifth RTD Framework Programme (1998-2002)

The UK's Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) organised a successful Information Day entitled "Creating a user-friendly Information Society" in the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre in London, on 23 October of this year. Around 500 people from industry, research and the public sector attended presentations by George Metakides, Director, DG XIII, European Commission, other Commission staff and UK speakers, following an introductory video message from MP Peter Mandelson, Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

The Information Society Technologies (IST) Programme is expected to get underway from early 1999, once the overall decision-process for the Fifth Framework Programme (FP5) is concluded, and will cover research into information and communication technologies, systems, applications and services in FP5. IST's strategic objective is to realise the benefits of the Information Society for Europe, both by accelerating its emergence and by ensuring that the needs of individuals and enterprises are met. The full potential of the creativity and culture of Europe's Information Society will be exploited through collaborative projects involving organisations of every kind - industry, academe, public sector and research organisations. For the essential technologies and infrastructures that form the building blocks of the Information Society, the IST Programme will target at improving their usability and interoperability and take actions to stimulate their take-up in Europe. The programme will also call for specific activities on longer-term and higher risk research on future and emerging technologies with a potential industrial and social impact, and encourage research networking throughout Europe for the benefit of research and education.

The full potential of the Information Society cannot be realised in Europe using only today's technologies and applications. Key requirements such as usability, dependability, interoperability and, above all, affordability are far from being sufficiently met for the broad deployment of IST (e.g., information and communication technologies, systems, applications and services) in all areas. Continuous efforts are required in research, technological development, demonstration and technology take-up. It is these issues which will be addressed by IST.

The complementary Key Actions of the IST Programme are as follows:

1. Systems and services for the citizen: includes specific RTD in the fields of health, special needs (including aging and disability), administrations, environment, transport and tourism.

2. New methods of work and electronic commerce includes: the development of IST enabling European workers and enterprises, in particular SMEs, to increase their competitiveness in the global marketplace, while improving the quality of the individual's working life through the use of IST; providing work flexibility and freedom from existing constraints, such as time and distance. This will include electronic payments, smart cards, mobile systems, software for business process modeling and enterprise and human resource management, training facilities and consumer protection.

3. Multimedia content and tools: includes improving the functionality and usability of future information products and services to enable linguistic and cultural diversity and to contribute to the valorisation and exploitation of Europe's cultural patrimony, to stimulate creativity, and to enhance education and training systems, in particular for lifelong learning. Work will cover new models, methods, technologies and systems for creating, processing, managing, networking, accessing and exploiting digital content, including audiovisual content. Focus will be on future publishing systems, such as interactive electronic publishing.

4. Essential technologies and infrastructures: includes promoting excellence in the technologies which are crucial to the Information Society, to accelerate their take-up and broaden their fields of application. The convergence of information processing, communications and networking technologies and infrastructures will be addressed. The focus will be on technologies and infrastructures common to several applications, while those specific to one application only would be addressed in the context of that application in other parts of FP5. This part will receive 36% of the IST budget.

The specific activities for **generic research and development of technologies** will focus on emerging technologies and will cover research that is of a longer-term nature or involves particularly high risks - compensated by the promise of major advances and the potential for industrial and societal impact. Such research will typically be either transdisciplinary or in an emerging discipline. The objective of **"support for research infrastructures"**, or "research networking" is to facilitate the supply of trans-European broadband interconnections between national research, education and training networks, at capacities and of a quality matching the aggregated need of Europe's academic and industrial researchers as well as to keep the resulting network at the forefront of the state-of-the-art. This implies upgrading of the existing capacity of 34 Mbits/s via 622 Mbits/s to gigabits/s, including support for different levels of 'quality of service' and the necessary connectivity to third countries, in the context of the global evolution of the Internet. The overall aim is to facilitate effective European collaborative research, education and training activities (including the creation of "virtual laboratories" and "virtual institutes"), enabled by the deployment of state-of-the-art Internet-based applications within the academic and industrial research communities. This work will support research in all fields and therefore the whole FP5.
● http://www.cordis.lu/fifth/src/305b-e-1.htm

IST is symbolic for a **new strategic approach** under FP5 which provides for greater flexibility. Under FP4, research into IT and communication technologies and applications took place under three separate programmes: Esprit, ACTS and Telematics

Applications. In FP5, these programmes will be integrated into the wider IST Programme. Areas concerned with information handling and creative content have been strengthened. These moves are in response to the convergence of technologies and media, products and markets. The IST Programme differs from its predecessors in many other important aspects:

- Objective-led Key Actions ensure more **multidisciplinary** than sectoral activity;
- **Cross-programme themes** (e.g., interfaces, mobility or satellite-related activities in cooperation with the Commission's Space Coordination Group), going beyond the research framework and relating to the deployment of IST, will offer proposers more flexibility to present their ideas;
- **Socio-economic research** will be integrated throughout the programme, in response to changing industrial and societal needs, e.g., the aging population, the necessity to remove discriminating factors (such as gender bias), the need to contribute to increasing resource efficiency and reducing environmental impact;
- Greater emphasis on **user-involvement**, and the **exploitation of project results.**

Reflecting the global nature of the Information Society, **international cooperation** will play a major role in the development and take-up of IST. This will be reflected in the participation in and operation of this pro-

gramme, including support for international initiatives such as IMS (Intelligent Manufacturing Systems) and its linkages with the programme on 'Confirming the international role of European research', which addresses support for organisations from third countries. There will be further links with the COST and EUREKA frameworks, with the programme 'Innovation and participation of SMEs', with Trans-European Network actions and other Community research-related instruments.

How to find international partners: The highly successful search service developed for the Esprit Programme — now called **Ideal*IST** - is being extended in FP5. This a free service will cover all areas of the new IST Programme, so that organisations which previously participated in the ACTS and Telematics Applications Programmes can now also find partners through Ideal*IST.

● **http://www.cordis.lu/esprit/IST98/ idealist.htm**

Details of the IST work programme, information days and Calls will, as always, be published on the Web.

● **http://www.cordis.lu/fifth/home.html**

The current European Commission enquiry point for the IST Programme is:
Fax: +32 2 296 83 88
E-mail: ist@cec.be

Inter-Regional Information Society Initiative (IRISI) Network

The final report of the Inter-Regional Information Society Initiative (IRISI) Network, has recently been published by the European Commission, DG XIII. The IRISI Network involved six of Europe's less favoured regions: Central Macedonia (Greece), Nord Pas de Calais (France), NorthWest (UK), Piemonte (Italy), Saxony (Germany) and Valencia (Spain). The IRIS initiatives were designed in order to encourage the development of consensus and partnership amongst key regional players around a Regional Information Society Strategy and Action Plan. This included the promotion of inter-regional collaboration in Europe's first regional Information Society network. The experience and lessons learned from this experimental pilot action are now examined in the report with a view to learning whether and how regions might use the Information Society as a new paradigm for regional regeneration and development. The document is accompanied by a CD-ROM, which contains many of the basic documents, as well as accompanying reports produced in the context of the IRISI network.
● http://www_iris.polito.it/

Educational programmes and multimedia

The Rotterdam Market for educational programmes and multimedia will be held for the third year from 18 to 21 April 1999. This event is a unique TV and multimedia educational market open to independent producers, broadcasters and multimedia developers. The market is run under the auspices of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) and consists, among others, of open pitching sessions and workshops for co production proposals between independent producers and EBU public service broadcasters. Screening sessions for new productions allow all producers to show off their new content to the major European stations. The submission of informative documentaries, as well as historical, scientific, cultural and environmental programmes with an educational content, is welcome.
● http://www.echo.lu/telematics/ education/en/news

Information Day provides interactive forum for potential proposers

An Information Day on the Information Society Technologies Programme will be organised by the European Commission in Paris (France) on 15 February 1999. This event (for which planning is at an early stage) will be arranged to encourage a maximum of interaction between potential proposers and Commission staff and between potential proposers themselves. The Information Day will consist of:

1. A short plenary session focussing on: The contents of the first call for proposals (expected to be early in 1999); The calendar of calls planned for 1999 (road-map); The basic call submission and proposal evaluation procedures; and information sources.
2. An information fair, presenting an exhibition space filled with booths, one for each discrete part (Action Line) of the 1999 work-programme, with each booth staffed by project

officers from the Commission. Complementary booths for national contact points and other programmes in the Fifth Framework Programme are also provided. Advance registration will be required. There will not be a registration fee, but the Commission will not be liable for any reimbursement of travel and other expenses for this occasion.
● http://www.cordis.lu/ist/ infoday. htm

Showcasing MIDAS-NET Activities

MIDAS-NET's successes make it one of the most influential European Commission networks

After almost two years of operation the results of the MIDAS-NET nodes and their activities were analysed at the mid-term review of the INFO2000 programme. The analysis highlighted the impact of the MIDAS-NET nodes on the market, demonstrating the staggering success of the network in its relative infancy.

This 23-node network of proactive advisory centres — involving in total 108 organisations - has stimulated great interest and awareness, and has demonstrated new products in the multimedia market. MIDAS-NET has assisted information user groups in business (e.g., software, computing), industry and trade (e.g., associations, chambers of commerce), and in particular small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as well as citizens (through libraries) to exploit the potential of multimedia content. It has thus showed businesses and citizens how to benefit from multimedia information, and has guided them towards the most relevant sources so as to satisfy their information needs — always in their local language.

There is no doubt that its intensive user support via human help-desks, electronic help-desks (e-mail, on-line conferences and discussion fora) and WWW interface have played a central role in fulfilling this task. The network has also produced a range of information material, both printed and electronic (newsletters, leaflets, fact sheets, CD-ROMs, Web sites), as well as other promotional gizzits, to reach national markets and target groups, while respecting a common corporate image, which makes it easy for the user to identify the network at a glance.

Figures are highly supportive of the network, clearly demonstrating its ambition, efficiency and importance:

• MIDAS-NET nodes have answered 36 767 helpdesk queries;
• in response to requests, 20 667 documentation packs have been sent out to target groups;
• 1 917 events have been organised, reaching 59 549 individuals;
• 329 exhibitions have been attended, demonstrating MIDAS-NET to wide audiences, estimated at several million visitors.

As an awareness network with such demonstrable success, MIDAS-NET nodes have collaborated with European initiatives and have often been asked for their assistance in reaching the market through their well-established channels. They were, for example, used for distributing the study on Strategic Developments for the European Publishing Industry towards the Year 2000 (El Pub 2). As a direct result of involving the nodes, the Executive Summary has become required reading on a publishing course run by the London Business School. One hopes for similar successes with the CONDRINET Study. The nodes were also key instruments in the promotion of the EuroPrix MultiMediaArt 1998. The MIDAS-NET nodes have equally assisted those wishing to make contact with other European networks, such as the Innovation Relay Centres, BC-NET, Euro Info Centres and NetD@ys . Through their wide-ranging collaborative activities, they have also helped establish contacts to other national initiatives through (inter alia) organising events, writing and distributing newsletters, providing multimedia training, and disseminating study and project results.

The MIDAS-NET Central Support Team (CST) in Luxembourg has been essential to the network in the sense that the national nodes do not operate in isolation. The CST's day-to-day coordination of MIDAS activities, and its support in terms of information supply, help desk, awareness materials, tools and documentation has greatly facilitated the exchange of experience across Europe within the network. The Luxembourgish node, for instance, helped the English and Welsh ones in the set-up of their Web site. There were also exchanges of network resources between nodes (e.g., PowerPoint presentations, key URLs) via a 'private' dedicated space on I*M-Europe, or the joint organisation of an event by Portugal and Finland on interactive writing with a professor from New York University.

Continuous direct contact with the Commission and the CST in Luxembourg has furthermore guaranteed, for example, that anybody interested in participating in pan-European projects involving multimedia has been kept up-to-date with the latest calls for proposals/tender. But the MIDAS-NET information channel reaches beyond the INFO2000 Programme, so that nodes have also been able to provide information on multimedia-related activities within the Commission's Fourth Framework Programme of Research and Technological Development (1994-1998), the Multilingual Information Society (MLIS) Programme, and other relevant initiatives. Nodes therefore have first-hand knowledge of new reports, studies, project results, etc., and details of forthcoming events which are of interest to an ever widening public. Access this information by contacting your local MIDAS-NET node or link directly to I*M-Europe!

Following a collaborative spirit, the network has created a pan-European WWW network on the Internet, linking the home pages of the individual MIDAS-NET nodes. In addition, common projects undertaken by groups of nodes have lead to a valuable exchange of experience and know-how. Users have benefited considerably from this experience in establishing contacts with companies and organisations in other countries, and in finding out what is available in terms of multimedia information at European level.

Contact your local MIDAS-NET node and learn how you can benefit from new multimedia services and products!
● **http://www.echo.lu/info2000/midas/support.html**
● **http://www.echo.lu/info2000/midas/nodes.html**

MIDAS-NET has also provided valuable information and training through the organisation of events, such as seminars and workshops related to multimedia content, being an integral activity of the MIDAS-NET nodes. Of the almost two thousands events organised so far, one can gain an impression by looking at a few representative examples: the INFO2000 Information Days which took place after Calls of proposals/tenders for the programme were hosted in almost all the "node countries"; a one-day training session on how to use Internet in business in Noisy le Grand in March and again in April this year; a seminar discovering the relations of banks with enterprises in the electronic age in Luxembourg in May this year; the seminar and/or series of weekends targeted at women/girls to introduce to them the Internet and multimedia-based technologies, which were organised in many node countries; or the even more specialised events, as for example organised in Austria, offering electronic commerce solutions for the wood processing sector. The German node has organised a high-level political event, the Irish node (amongst others) an event targeted at children, and many other events are being prepared all across Europe. Many exhibitions have also been attended — examples range from the French node's organisation of

MIDAS-NET

an exhibition on the environment and multimedia, and tourism and multimedia fairs, the German node's attendance of the Interprise Textilia 1997 Fair and the Greek node's participation at the Textile Exhibition in Thessaloniki, to the Swedish node's presence at the "Women Can" annual medical fair in Älvajö. Where appropriate, one-to-one sessions with SMEs have been arranged.

Have a look on the MIDAS-NET Web server for more details on forthcoming events
● **http://www.echo.lu/info2000/midas/events.html**

In addition to regular awareness and support activities, nodes have often undertaken specific projects in order to reach their target markets in the most effective manner. There are many citations of this in the network. Examples are: a CD-ROM of Internet tools, produced by the Greek node for SMEs in their country; a CD-ROM of projects undertaken in Iceland which included high-level political support; a brochure on the entries and winners in the Austrian State multimedia prize; an 'Agriculture and Multimedia' CD-ROM, produced by one of the French nodes; photographs of the double-decker bus, which is used to reach SMEs around Spain, demonstrating the potential of the Internet. The new node in Switzerland is also bringing a pertinent example to the network — FRED (Fashion Radically Enters Digitality). The node is looking forward to sharing experiences with others on this fashion project. Many nodes have undertaken other related projects complementing their MIDAS-NET activities. One example is the new book economy project undertaken by Amitié in Italy, who, within this activity, developed four training modules related to the use of multimedia and electronic technologies, targeting publishers and librari-

ans. Having such experience enhances their abilities to fulfil the objectives of MIDAS-NET, and spreads the message of INFO2000 further. The Irish node had another idea: it undertook a survey of the 500 largest companies in Irish industry, revealing the take up of the new multimedia based technologies. Other nodes have since undertaken such surveys, following the lead of the Irish.

MIDAS-NET/MLIS node activities

Through the organisation of multifarious awareness activities, e.g., national/local workshops the MIDAS-NET/MLIS nodes have demonstrated tangibly the objectives of the MLIS programme, by increasing awareness among businesses of the need to be responsive to the language characteristics of their markets in Europe and abroad, and to allow citizens to ask for services in their own languages. Surveys among users of language products and services have been carried out in some countries. In others seminars demonstrating MLIS tools have been organised to show the potential of language technology and best practice in multilingual documentation. All nodes now have dedicated MLIS websites with links to multilingual issues of national interest. During their (almost) two-year-existence, the MIDAS-NET nodes have thus developed a European network specialised in multimedia content and electronic information issues, offering valuable and ever-expanding services to its varied groups of clients.
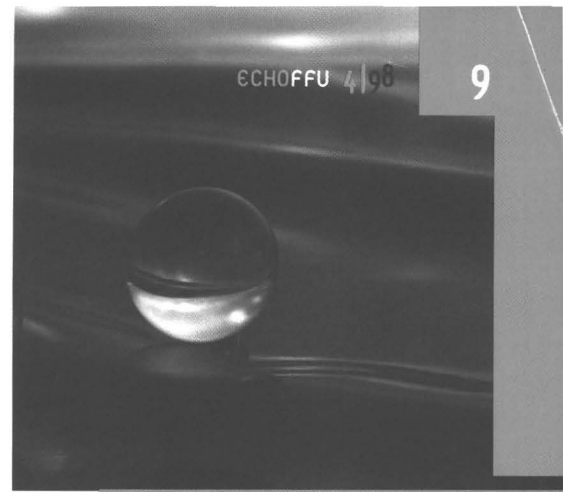For further information, please contact:
INFO2000 Central Support Team
E-mail: cst@echo.lu

● **http://www.echo.lu/info2000/midas/**
● **http://www.echo.lu/mlis/**

ESPRIT project eSCAPE: Electronic landscapes as virtual environments

A project supported under the ESPRIT programme, entitled eSCAPE investigates the exploration and development of the concept of an electronic landscape as a virtual environment that provides interconnections to other virtual environments. An electronic landscape is a place where inhabited information spaces meet. The eSCAPE project is developing the future paradigms essential for the use of Virtual Reality (VR) technology as a means of providing inhabited information spaces. Part of the eSCAPE research programme forms a series of focused public events where demonstration of the thematic spaces and multimedia installations will be given. eSCAPE , ESPRIT
● **http://www.escape.lancs.ac.uk/**

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midas net

Creating a European Library Space

As Europe's libraries continue to act as gateways to information and resources, work within the European Commission's DG XIII continues to support the vital role of libraries within the modern society. This includes the creation of a modern infrastructure for networked libraries - A European Library Space.

The long-term objectives of DG XIII incorporate actions and programmes focusing on the modernisation of European libraries through new technologies and information resources.

Traditionally, libraries ensure access to materials containing the intellectual achievements of our time. They provide support for learning and research, society's cultural heritage, public information, lifelong learning and knowledge and the information needs of industries and SMEs.

Presently, and in future, libraries are embracing the new infomation tehnologies through services based on accessing electronic databases and digital resources. Ideally, all European libraries should be able to provide access to the Information Society, as well as establish and sustain firm collaboration with libraries and cultural institutions in other countries.

DG XIII is currently working under the Fourth Framework Programme for RTD (1994-1998) - building on the actions mobilised under the Third Framework Programme (1990-1994) - which promotes the development of networked library services through three focus points:
• networked internal services and electronic collections (the library in its local context);
• interconnected library services (networking between libraries);
• access to networked information resources.

The Library Scene in Europe:
• Over 96,000 libraries.
• Over 400,000 books published in 1996.
• Over 240,000 library staff.
• Over 1.2 billion book holdings.
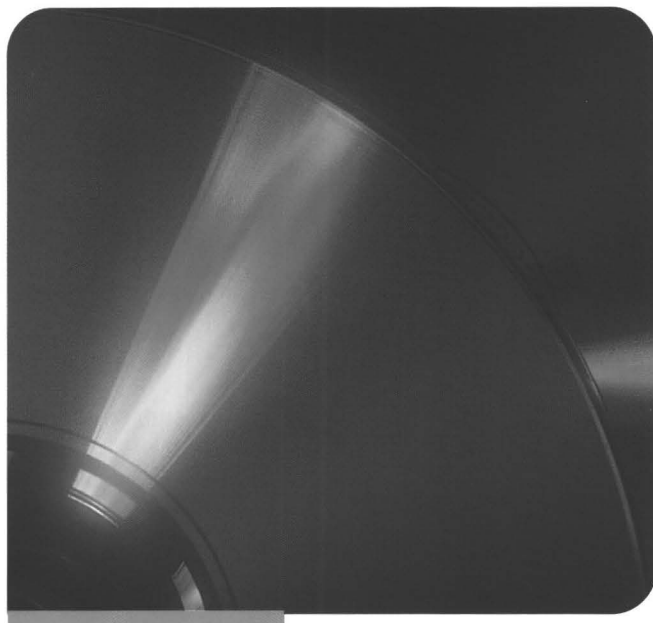
Users

Examples of how different users are addressed through various projects:

Chemistry: FASTDOC
Aerospace: EURILIA
Mathematics: EULER
Economics: DECOMATE II
Environmental sciences: BALTICSEE WEB
Music: JUKEBOX, HARMONICA
Citizens-in rural areas, adult learners: PLAIL
SME's: LIBERATOR
Children: CHILIAS
Visually impaired: EXLIB, TESTLAB

The third point emphasises the extension from the Third Framework Programme to develop the role of the Internet within libraries. There are, however, hurdles to overcome. In an effort to bring libraries throughout Europe closer together, the diversity of library cultures must be taken into consideration.

There are over 100 projects funded by the European Commission within the libraries sector. There are a number of very important projects and actions that address the most important issues to the library and cultural heritage society of Europe. A total of 624 participants from 431 individual organisations participate in these projects. Some of the key areas addressed are: electronic document delivery and electronic publishing, SR/Z 39.50 projects, distribution of library services, multilingual issues, resource discovery and retrievalCopyright is a common problem resulting from the multitude of new information sources. ECUP and ECUP+ (European Copyright User Platform) are concerted actions to enhance awareness among information professionals on copyright use. Coinciding with this is CECUP (Central and Eastern Europe Copyright User Platform) and TECUP, (Testbed implementation of the ECUP framework).

The work carried out in national university and public libraries through these programmes of the European Commission has resulted in furthering the creation of a European library space. In doing so, European library co-operation has been established in what was before a traditionally fragmented field. This results in multi-sector library services across national boundaries and the evolution of library infrastructures based on technology, standards, quality and shared services. There is increased access to electronic collections and, in general, value added services to citizens and the local community as a whole.

Although the beginnings of a European library space has been established new challenges lie ahead for organisations to tackle together. These will be addressed in the Fifth RTD Framework Programme. There is a specific Programme for the User-Friendly Information Society that will incorporate projects involving libraries, museums and archives.

Sound collaboration between libraries and all cultural institutions will guarantee that accesses to their resources can flourish and be sustained at the highest level.

For more information about the Telematics for Libraries programme, please contact:

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Multimedia Publishing in the Information Engineering Sector

Multimedia publishing has made significant strides in recent years with new technologies and services utilising both on-line and off-line delivery mechanisms. To further encourage the development of the information content industries, the Commission is supporting a series of pilot applications for multimedia publishing, distribution, information management and retrieval within the Information Engineering (IE) sector of the Telematics Applications Programme. Through RTD activities it is striving to develop and test the next generation of tools to aid the development of the Information Society. Some 64 projects since 1994 have been funded to support the European electronic publishing industry. Access to the results of these projects and related studies is being made available through a specially developed web site (El.Pub) and at thematic workshops organised by the sector support project IESERV2.

The calendar of meetings is especially targeted at a mixed audience of IE, TAP and Industry players. The meetings have covered Usability, IPR, Standards (e.g. XML), Exploitation and Venture Capital planning and Web issues. Several of these have been organised in collaboration with thematic communities - such as an industry interest group - associated with the specific focus. Reports on the events can be found on the El.pub web site.

Early results from the programme have demonstrated the importance of incorporating User Centred Design into system development and lead to the creation of a network of Usability Centres by the INUSE project which are accessible to any organisation seeking assistance. Another useful resource derived from programme activities is the recently published multimedia design guidelines book from the EUROPE-MMM project concerned with remote and online publication of multimedia.

Another focus of the programme is an investigation into the use of software agents for efficient search and retrieval of multimedia data from existing databases to enhance the European telematics industry and the application of electronic commerce. The recently completed MAGICA project has provided a demonstrator of these technologies for multimedia agent-based interactive catalogues.

In the culture domain the IE sector has also taken a leading role through its support for the AQUARELLE project that is providing a test for multimedia access to world cultural heritage. Similarly, the industrial design community is being supported by the MAID project that is creating new services to be tested over ISDN-ATM networks in eight countries. To learn more about the projects and general developments in multimedia electronic publishing you should visit the El.Pub site that provides a focus for Information Engineering and the electronic publishing R&D community. The site is maintained by the IESERV2 concertation support team. The content of the site is complementary to that on DG XIII sites such as I*M-Europe and CORDIS, that provide information on the European Commission's RTD programmes.

El.pub covers international developments in R&D, with technical news and lists of conferences and workshops updated twice weekly. There are sections on the components of electronic publishing such as standards, graphics, IPR and educational multimedia that link to the major resource sites of industry and universities. A directory of industry associations enables clients to find local support. The site provides short abstracts of the IE projects with links to their web sites and pointers to other projects in European and wider research programmes. Vendor links to product based sites are organised by application area.

Studies commissioned by DG XIII/E can be downloaded from the site and there are extensive resources on user centred design – a priority area of the IE sector.

● http://www.echo.lu/ie/en/iehome.html

MEDIA II programme:

Call for proposals on cooperation between audiovisual events and festivals recently launched.
A call for proposals relating to support for cooperation schemes between European audiovisual events and audiovisual festivals carried out in partnership has been published by the European Commission, DG X (OJ No C 339 of 7.11.1998, p. 28). Projects will be supported within the framework of the MEDIA II programme, aimed at supporting the development and distribution of European audiovisual works. The projects should encourage the showing, promotion and distribution of European audiovisual works, to promote public familiarity with such works and to raise the profile of Europe's film heritage. The final date for submission of proposals is 31 December 1998.

● http://europa.eu/comm/dg10/avpolicy/media/en/news.html

Log in to I*M-Cool, I*M-Europe's multimedia gallery, for a multimedia showcase of the winners of the EuroPrix Multimedia Art `98

I*M-Europe's Newsdesk

The Newsdesk is a gateway to IM (Information Market), ICT (Information and Communication Technology) and IS (Information Society) related news originating from the European institutions and servers supported by them. The service is updated Monday to Friday. Please forward any comments relating to the Newsdesk to: newsdesk@echo.lu

Telematics for Libraries:

Final issue of project synopses available

The fifth issue of the synopses of projects supported within the Telematics for Libraries programme of the Third RTD Framework Programme (1990-1994) has published by the European Commission, DG XIII (ISBN 92-828-4214-2). The synopses cover 13 selected projects from the first call for proposals issued in July 1991, 16 projects resulting from the second call for proposals of October 1992 and 22 from the third call launched in November 1993. Furthermore the concerted actions for the Computerised Bibliographic Record Action (CoBRA), the European Copyright User Platform (ECUP) and the European Forum for Implementors of Library Actions (EFILA) are described. Project information provided includes the key issues identified, the technical approach adopted, the project deliverables and impact, as well as contact details.

● http://www.echo.lu/libraries/en/libraries.htm

echo links

Winners announced at IST 98 Conference

The Chancellor of Austria, Viktor Klima, presented the 1998 European Information Technology Prize to three Grand Prize Winner companies during the IST 98 Conference in Vienna (30 November to 2 December). The Conference was organised by the European Commission and the Austrian Ministry of Science and Transport.

The Grand Prize Winners are:

- iD2 Technologies, a Swedish firm based in Stockholm, who produces a range of software for conducting electronic transactions over the Internet. The firm was rewarded for its "iD2 Certificate Manager", a system for the large-scale production of RSA-keys and digital certificates for secure identification with potential for public use on the Internet.
- MLS LaserLock International Inc., a Greek company, was awarded for "LaserLock", the first complete software copy protection system developed especially for CD-ROM. It is intelligently designed to prevent software piracy and consists of sophisticated code encryption software, a physical signature on the CD, and debug prevention engineering embedded in the software code.
- Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya and Sistemas Radiantes F. Moyano S.A., a Spanish collaboration between a university and a TV manufacturer, won with "Fractus", a new generation of multiband antennas for the base stations of the European cellular phone systems (GSM + DCS). By using a single Fractus antenna for both bands, the telecom operators reduce their costs and minimize the environmental impact.

Grand Prizes consist of ECU 200 000 and a trophy for each of the three winners. The European IT Prize rewards excellence and entrepreneurship, and is aimed at stimulating innovation and competitiveness in industry. Companies from 29 European countries and Israel participated in the 1998 prize competition, which also awards 25 Winner Prizes of 5000 ECU each. The Prize is an annual event organised jointly by the European Commission and Euro-CASE (the European Council of Applied Sciences and Engineering).

● http://www.echo.lu/news/magazine/en/magazine.html

Netd@ys 98 reported to be a major success

Learning in the Information Society

In a recent article published on the Netd@ys web site (see below for details), Mr. Alain Dumort of the European Commission DG XXII (Education,Training and Youth) reports that the total number of projects and events for this year's Netd@ys (17-24 October) was 5000 (five times more than in 1997). The article gives details of the impressive results of this action, and outlines the diversity and creativity represented by the projects. Interestingly, this year, Netd@ys was accompanied by twin initiatives all around the world in different forms. Some recommendations for the 1999 Netd@ys were also announced - the initiative enters its third consecutive year and promises to be even bigger than its predecessors. Among the recommendations is innovation in terms of themes covered in order to reach a wider public, and also putting more emphasis on involving places of isolation (e.g. hospitals, orphanages) in order to transform them, with the help of new technologies, to places of learning.

● http://www.netdays.org/
● http://www.netdays.org/en/info/results.html

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