

Romania



Knowledge Based Economy Project



GOVERNMENT OF ROMANIA
MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

economia bazata pe cunoastere
valoarea comunității tale

Romanian Ministry of Communications and Information Technology – Project Management Unit

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Why Does Romania Need a Knowledge Economy Project?

Romania has recently joined the European Family, and prior to that, through the adoption of the European Directives concerning ICT, the Government successfully finalized the legal framework required for completing the process of liberalization of the telecommunications market. Important progresses regarding both the information technology and communications were registered over the past years and citizens gained more and more access to latest IT&C services and technologies.

Still, there is a considerable digital gap between Romanian rural and urban areas.

To reduce the digital divide between big cities and communes, villages and small cities, the Government of Romania, through the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, initiated a series of projects aimed at offering access to IT&C infrastructure and services to all citizens:

- ❖ Extending eGovernment initiatives
- ❖ Piloting eLearning programs
- ❖ Training pupils in order to prepare them for global challenges

Among these initiatives, the Knowledge Economy Project is the most ambitious, addressing 17.7% of rural citizens and 8% of the total population of the country.

Project Description

The Knowledge Economy Project was initiated as a result of the common vision of the Romanian Government and the World Bank concerning both

- ❖ the need to accelerate the participation of access to information disadvantaged communities to the knowledge based society and economy
- ❖ the need to achieve the socio-economic development objectives generated by the alignment to the European standards.

The project is deployed in 260 communities, out of which 213 are communes and 47 cities below 30,000 inhabitants, disadvantaged from the access to information point of view. The concrete way of supporting these communities is the creation of Local Community Electronic Networks (LCENs), which connect to Broadband Internet the school, the secondary school, the public library and the Point of Public Access to Information (PPAI). These networks also include secondary schools from the isolated villages belonging to different communes.

The networks are assisted and supported by the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology during 3 years, between 2007 and 2010. After 2010, they will be transferred to the property of the local administrations and each community, at its sole discretion, will decide how to better use the Local Electronic Network for the benefit of the entire population.

The Knowledge Economy Project is a premiere. Depending on its success, the Government of Romania may multiply the project nationwide and the World Bank may consider replicating it in other countries with knowledge disadvantaged areas.

Objectives of the project

- ❖ To offer access to modern informational and communication technologies: computers connected to the Internet, copy machines, faxes;
- ❖ To train the citizens in using the computer, opening new professional opportunities;
- ❖ To ensure access to public services: the population will spend less time waiting for the documents issued by the Town Hall
- ❖ To modernize the educational process: equal chances for all students and teachers from the rural and small urban environment, through quality education;
- ❖ To develop the local business environment, through the promotion of the electronic commerce and the adoption of innovative solutions
- ❖ To offer access to information regarding financing for companies, public authorities or non-governmental organizations, through different programs

Fast Facts

1 Coordinator – The Ministry of Communications and Information Technology

2 Financers – The World Bank and The Government of Romania

3 Components – Computer assisted education, Public services based on modern technologies, Managing business with the help of the PC

4 Institutional Partners – The Ministry of Education and Research, The Ministry of Administration and Internal Affairs, The Ministry of Culture and The National Agency for Small and Medium Enterprises and Cooperation

69,4 million USD total budget

260 Town Halls connected to Broadband Internet

260 Public Libraries connected to Broadband Internet

260 Points of Public Access to Information installed in 260 communes and cities below 30.000 inhabitants

472 Schools benefiting from Broadband Internet connection and teaching methods based on latest technologies

520 specialists working for the project in the 260 communities: the manager and the IT administrator

125.000 Pupils enlarging their horizons through the access to information at early ages

1.700.000 inhabitants directly benefiting from the project

The Local Community Electronic Network



Project components I

1. Access to IT&C in Knowledge Disadvantaged Communities and Improved Digital Literacy

Subcomponents

- ❖ A. Improving Access by Establishing Local Community e-Networks (**LCENs**) – The Ministry of Communications and Information Technology installs 260 multi-purpose, integrated, Broadband Local e-Networks (LCeNs). They serve as “knowledge-centers”, providing information, services and benefits to citizens and businesses in selected knowledge-disadvantaged communities.
- ❖ B. Development of local community human resources - ensures a frequent and appropriate use of the services delivered through the LCEN and also facilitates the LCEN self-sustainability.
- ❖ C. Implementation of IT&C in schools - focuses on achieving an appropriate level of IT&C skills for teachers and students and the improvement of education through the integration of IT&C within the primary and lower secondary schools.

Project components II

2. Development and promotion of e-government services

Subcomponents

- ❖ A. Gateway for on-line registration and authorizations of local businesses - reduces the administrative burden currently placed on small local businesses and enables them to remotely file documents in electronic format and receive feedback directly from local authorities through the electronic system
- ❖ B. Integrated network for civil information and documents - enables Romanian citizens to apply for/request the issuance/renewal of Civil Service Certificates (e.g. birth certificates, marriage certificates) through the Internet.

Project components III

3. Promotion of e-commerce and innovation support for MSMEs

Subcomponents

- ❖ Portal for promotion of e-commerce and business networking – promotes the simultaneous interaction within the same virtual space of local business entrepreneurs, who will be given the chance to enhance their activity using IT&C in their activity
- ❖ B. Grant Facility Program - provides grants to AFP (self-employed individuals), family associations, MSMEs and clusters (or consortia of these clients) to facilitate e-business adoption and improve the competitiveness of Romanian firms in national and foreign markets.

Pilot Project

Between 2005 – 2006, the Knowledge Economy Project was implemented under pilot phase in 9 communities: 7 communes and 2 small cities. The communities benefited from the installation of the LCEN, training of staff (the manager and the IT administrator), training of teachers, training of public administration, unemployed persons, firemen etc.

The results of the pilot phase were remarkable, overcoming the previsions of the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology. The communities developed several value-added services, such as IT&C Literacy courses for the population, Online Tourist Information Point, Agriculture-oriented Courses etc. In some cases, the local network was extended to several other public institutions, such as the Police Station or Kindergarten.

During the summer holiday of 2006, the 17 schools included in the pilot-phase took part to the first edition of "e-Vacanta!", a project meant at attracting teachers and student to use the IT&C equipment even in their free time. Over 2.500 pupils and 150 teachers volunteered in the development of the program

- ❖ surfing the Internet
- ❖ writing essays and stories in which they described their community
- ❖ editing photo albums
- ❖ participating to online conferences, all with the help of the computer

The success of the first PC-assisted project lead to the development of "Waiting for Santa Claus" essay contest during the winter holidays of 2006. In 2007, the objective of "e-Vacanta!" is the extension at national level.

Future perspectives

2007 – Installation of the 251 LCENs

2007 – Launch of the Online Business Registration system addressed to local entrepreneurs

2007 – Development of educational politics, implementing IT&C equipments in the pre-university Romanian system

2007 – 2010 – Training of the LCEN staff – 520 specialists of the Knowledge Based Economy

2007 – 2010 – Monitoring and evaluation of access to information through LCEN

2007 – 2010 – Teacher training – over 3.500 teachers from approx. 500 schools will integrate into the Knowledge Based Economy

2008 – Use of IT&C Courses for over 5.200 inhabitants in the beneficiary communities

2008 – Launch of Civil Info system – a service Town Halls will offer who all citizens who need new civil status documents

2008 – Launch of eCommerce portal and business networks

2008 – 2009 – Launch of educational platform, to ease communication between schools

2008 – 2009 – 9 USD financing for the entrepreneurs who wish to adopt innovative solutions in their businesses

2009 – Renewal of all IT&C equipments within the LCENs

Pictures from the project



Contact

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