

Belgium

Country Profile

I. Information Society Indicators

- **Percentage of households with Internet access:** 60 % (2007)
- **Percentage of enterprises with Internet access:** 97 % (2007)
- **Percentage of individuals using the Internet at least once a week:** 63 % (2007)
- **Percentage of households with a broadband connection:** 56 % (2007)
- **Percentage of enterprises with a broadband connection:** 86 % (2007)
- **Percentage of individuals having purchased/ordered on-line in the last three months:** 15 % (2007)
- **Percentage of enterprises having received orders on-line within the previous year:** 18 % (2007)
- **Percentage of individuals using the Internet for interacting with public authorities:** obtaining information 20.7 %, downloading forms 10.7 %, returning filled forms 8.2 % (2007)
- **Percentage of enterprises using the Internet for interacting with public authorities:** obtaining information 44 %, downloading forms 35 %, returning filled forms 37 % (2007)

Source: [Eurostat](#)

II. e-Inclusion History

- (2008) **Recommendation of the Flemish Government** on Digital Flanders. Along with the transposition of the 2010 objectives of the European Commission, this document contains specific additional recommendations on e-inclusion and related areas such as e-health (extended to e-care) and e-work.
- (2008) The **e-Health-platform** is an integrated governmental platform for secure electronic exchange of information about patients, the care provided and the results of the care provided, and for the exchange of electronic care prescriptions between all relevant actors in the health care sector. Through this organised information exchange, unnecessary red tape can be avoided for all actors in the health care sector. For example, repayment of specific health care procedures can be done automatically. The platform is set up as a public institution of social security and it is managed by a board which consists of all stakeholders in the sector of health care.
- (2008) Government websites aim at obtaining the **Anysurfer Label**. This is a quality label for meeting the criteria on web accessibility based on international guidelines. Anysurfer is a private initiative of people with physical impairments. The label aims at providing accessible websites for people with disabilities and in particular for visually impaired people. The new Federal Belgian Portal is in the process of obtaining the Anysurfer label.
- (2008) The Commune of Waterloo, launches a European first – W@tson , the '**virtual local councillor**' available to answer questions from the citizens of Waterloo for 24 hours a day through a chat platform. Watson is able to direct users to find relevant information on the Commune's website by an intuitive recognition of key terms.
- (2007) Young Belgian job seekers holding an e-ID card are able to apply on-line for a '**first job card**' from the National Employment Office. The first job card holders are eligible for an initial employment contract which allows them to find work more easily in Belgium. Within 24 hours, the card is completed and sent by email in PDF format.
- (2006-2007) The '**Internet for All**' campaign consisted of providing one affordable package deal to potential buyers. The package consisted of a PC, an Internet connection and a training session. The package was offered by three consortia consisting of well-known PC manufacturers and ISPs. It was indicated that the project contributed to 16% of the increase of new Internet connections over a period of one year. The retailers estimated the slipstream of the project to be 50%. These are buyers that were initially interested in the package but they eventually opted for another (more expensive) commercial offer. As a sum, the project contributed to almost a quarter of the increase of Internet connections

between March 2006 and March 2007.

- The **Federal Plan for e-Inclusion** is an agreement between the Federal Government and the regional authorities (Flemish, French and German-speaking) of Belgium on integrated e-government and the construction, usage in the development of integrated services.
- (2006) **Easy-e-Space** is a joint effort of Oxfam and the Ministry of Social Integration to offer a free computer and Internet service offered in public spaces. Easy-E-Space is a computer network of five PC's, all linked with a powerful server. The network also includes a printer and a scanner. All the materials (except for the server) are refurbished second hand equipment and the software environment is open source (Edubuntu).
- (2006) The Walloon Region launches the EPN project (Espaces Publiques Numériques or **Public Computer Spaces**). EPN are public spaces that provide training to people willing to learn how to use ICT.
- (2005) After measuring the degree of computerisation in the federal administrations, the Belgian Ministry of ICT decided to create the Fed-eView/Citizen panel to **monitor** the citizens' (Internet and non Internet users) eGov needs and uses in 2005. The domains studied were e-Inclusion, e-Government, e-society and e-democracy. Panels from both groups were followed in several waves over 15 months, and the focus groups provided a list of potential applications to be developed. The federal Ministry of ICT is currently developing a general measurement framework (an eGov monitor) which allows following the evolution of several indicators in the long term.
- (2005) The Belgian Social Security administration launches the '**Communit-e**' application, aimed at simplifying the procedures of benefit applications of disabled persons while reducing the examination periods and improving cost control.
- (2003) People who are entitled to **complementary benefits on the basis of their social security status**, for instance a tax reduction, reduced telephone charges or a free pass for public transport, are no longer required to submit a certificate. The institution granting the complementary benefit has to consult the Crossroads Bank for Social Security in order to get information on a person's social security status. The automatic granting of benefits based on the social security status will be generalised, for example for price reductions in the energy sector. The service delivery in the social sector is multi-channelled and based on an integrated customer relation management; the services are personalised and self-service is promoted.

III. e-Inclusion Strategy

- ICT policy and e-Inclusion policy in Belgium is to a large extent demand and sector driven. This is partially explained by the institutional arrangements that govern the country. In social affairs many institutional channels exist through which social organisations and pressure groups can express their concerns. At governmental level, matters pertaining to e-Inclusion are dealt with by different ministries and administrations depending on their respective competencies.
- The federal structure of Belgium allows also for a regionally diversified approach. In the federal context, the 'Regions' are competent for matters such as town and country planning, nature conservation, housing, water policy, environment, economics, energy policy, local authorities, employment policy, public works and transport. The language based 'Communities' are competent for personal matters (health, welfare), cultural matters, education and training, and co-operation between communities and regions. Each Region and Community has its own legislative and executive powers in its respective fields of competence, and its own parliament and government to exercise these powers. However, the Flemish Region and Community merged their executive and legislative powers, and transformed into one Flemish Parliament, one Flemish Government and one public administration competent for community and regional matters.

IV. e-Inclusion Legal Framework

- All Belgian citizens will have an electronic identity card with digital certificates that allow for electronic authentication and electronic signatures. The legal framework of the electronic identity card is based on the Law of 25 March 2003 'modifiant la loi du 8 août 1983 organisant un Registre national des personnes physiques et la loi du 19 juillet 1991 relative aux registres de la population et aux cartes d'identité et modifiant la loi du 8 août 1983 organisant un Registre national des personnes physiques', the Royal Decree of 25 March 2003 'relatif aux cartes d'identité' and the Royal Decree of 1 September 2004 'portant la décision de procéder à l'introduction généralisée de la carte d'identité électronique'.
- The law of 15 March 2007 'fixant un cadre juridique pour certains prestataires de services de confiance'

defines a legal framework for certain providers of trusted services. It includes time stamping, electronic archiving, registered mail and transitory blocking of money transfers. By defining guarantees for the offering of these services, the law increases its legitimacy among the citizens.

V. Research in Practice

- (2008) How to get ICT embedded into everyone's life? A quantitative and qualitative survey in support of the design of a second **Internet for All campaign** using techniques of segmentation and differentiation to target non users, by the University of Ghent (MICT-IBBT) for Federal Agency for ICT (Fedict).
- (2008-2010) Research on Second Degree Digital Divide for the Federal Service for Scientific Research by the FTU (Work and Technology Research Centre)
- (2007-2008) **Audit** of the Federal Plan for e-Inclusion. This plan aims at co-ordinating the policies and actions endorsed by different governments (Region, Community and Federal). This audit has been conducted by the University of Namur (Interdisciplinary Group on Technology Assessment) in cooperation with Bart Cammaerts (London School of Economics – LSE)
- (2007-2008) viWTA (Flemish Institute for Technology Assessment) publishes several studies on ICT and poverty, youth and the ageing population.
- (2006-2008) Barriers and optimisation of **e-learning platforms**. Financed by IBBT (Flemish Research Institute on Broadband Technologies), in cooperation with the Flemish employment office VDAB. Research partners: COSIC, DstriNet, CUO & ICRI (KULeuven), MICT (UGent), EDM (UHasselt) and IBBT SMIT (VUB).
- VIN (2006-2008) - Technological innovations support and configure **sociality** within networks and communities, as well as empower and guide users in becoming (more) active in their social setting of everyday life and work. Project financed by IBBT (Flemish Research Institute on Broadband Technologies). Participating IBBT research groups: IMEC NES, COSIC, CUO & ICRI (KULeuven), IBCN, MMLab & MICT (UGent) and ETRO & IBBT SMIT (VUB).
- (2005-2009) Citizen Media - The Citizen Media project is an integrated project funded by the EU FP6 framework. The overall objective of the project is to investigate new ways on how to exploit the huge amount of **user-generated content** in innovative ways in order to support people in their daily lives and how technology will enable social change to strongly involve users for co-creating networked applications. Participating IBBT (Flemish Research Institute on Broadband Technologies) research groups: IBCN (UGent) and IBBT SMIT (VUB).
- (2005-2008) Surveys on ICT **appropriation** and use by people of 55 years and older and by teenagers between 12 to 18 years. The latter survey was conducted by the University of Namur (Interdisciplinary Group on Technology Assessment) in cooperation with the IBBT-SMIT (VUB) and The Department of Communication of the University of Antwerp.
- (2007) **Quantitative survey** of the 'Digital Divide in Flanders' covering both inequalities in the adoption and the use of ICT by the Research Department of the Flemish Government.
- (2007) Assessment of the policies and the actions endorsed by the CPAS (public agency for social and economic assistance) to promote the e-inclusion of excluded and poor people.
- (2007-2008) The construction of **computer competencies** and the reduction of inequality. Study for the Federal Agency for Social Integration by the FTU (Work and Technology Research Centre)
- (2006-2007) MONIT, MUTLIGOV & DASHBOARD are interrelated projects on the penetration, usability, etc. **alternative channels for e-government** as means of closing the digital divide. Financed by IBBT (Flemish Research Institute on Broadband Technologies). Participating IBBT research partners: CUO & ICRI (KULeuven) and MICT, IBCN and MMLab (UGent), EDM (UHasselt) and ETRO & IBBT SMIT (VUB).

VI. e-Inclusion Who is Who

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VII. e-Inclusion Progress by Riga Areas

- Data is currently being collected. Items concerning the Riga Areas have been added to the Eurostat Questionnaire. They should be available by the end of 2008.