



## UNDERSTAND

### European regions UNDER way towards STANDard indicators for benchmarking information society

#### Project background

UNDERSTAND starts with the conviction that regional benchmarking for the information society – in support of regional social and economic development – remains an urgent priority.

Regional investment on information society has increased dramatically over the last years. A recent report shows that “the Structural Funds can be expected to co-finance a total of just under EUR 16 billion of information society investment in the period 2000-06”. Such investment calls for adequate monitoring and evaluation tools. While at the national level “benchmarking eEurope” provides significant support to policy-making, at the regional level decision-makers lack basic data to understand the situation of their region and to evaluate the impact of innovative policies.

Partner regions started their work in 2003 to discuss and share their own surveys data. This effort showed that sharing data ex-post is not sufficient for comparability: regions have to share the same methodology from the beginning. For this reason, partner regions defined a **Memorandum of Cooperation** in which they agree to work towards common indicators, shared data and methodologies. The whole process was promoted and coordinated by the Emilia-Romagna Region in close cooperation with eris@

UNDERSTAND aims to give legs to this already launched cooperation, and to build tools which can easily allow enlargement towards other regions. It aims at building on the experience and the indicators of several benchmarking initiatives, such as eEurope, BISER, BEEP, ESPON and more.

#### Project objectives

UNDERSTAND main objective is to compare and evaluate regional development of the Information Society by defining and applying a set of **common regional e-indicators on Internet usage by citizens and business, e-government and broadband infrastructure**. This will enable policy-makers to better understand the impact of Information Society investment.

The specific objectives are:

- To analyse the state-of-the-art of the framework on the indicators for the information society at the regional level;
- To evaluate the eEurope indicators through the proactive involvement of regional policy makers;
- To define common indicators and methodologies (the benchmarking tool-kit), for at least 4 e-domains (government, companies, families/individuals, broadband);
- To create a network of Regions that benchmark on the development of the information society and thereby to provide policy-makers in these regions concrete support to investment decisions;
- To design and establish a trans-regional database for uploading of regional IS indicators for analysis and benchmarking/benchlearning;
- To build on hard data to detect HOW and WHY some regions perform better than other;
- To disseminate guidelines, methodologies and tools among all EU regions in order to create a common standard of regional e-indicators;
- To provide to EC and Member States with a regional perspective on benchmarking eEurope.



## Main outputs, results and impacts of the operation

UNDERSTAND main concrete *outputs* are:

- a **benchmarking tool-kit**, which includes 4 complete methodologies on 4 domains;
- an **on line database** to collect and analyse regional data;
- 2 **surveys** in each region per year:  $2 \times 9 \times 2 = 36$  surveys;
- 2 **conferences** and an official **website** (<http://www.understand-eu.net>)

The project main *result* is to enable decision makers to evaluate regional performances with a complete methodology of benchmarking on 4 domains and a comparable set of data.

To non-partner regions, UNDERSTAND provides a tested and ready-to-use methodology to carry out surveys, enabling them to compare with a consistent number of regions. It lowers benchmarking costs and increases its effectiveness (in terms of data comparability). The on-line database for benchmarking will enable full usage and uploading of data for interested regions - even non partner.

The long term *impact* of the project is to facilitate and disseminate the usage of benchmarking to support public investment decisions on Information Society, and to increase their effectiveness. Formal agreement with eris@ and the support of Italian Regional Centres on e-government are a clear sign of concrete take-up possibilities of this project results.

## Partners

Institution	Region	Country
Regione Emilia Romagna (leader)	<b>EMILIA ROMAGNA</b>	IT
CSP s.c.a.r.l.	<b>PIEMONTE</b>	IT
Aquitaine Europe Communication	<b>AQUITAINE</b>	FR
Investitions Bank Hessen AG IBH	<b>HESSEN</b>	DE
IBIT Foundation	<b>ISLAS BALEARES</b>	ES
OVSI Foundation (Valencian Office for the Information Society)	<b>COMUNIDAD VALENCIANA</b>	ES
Association of local authorities in the country of Vasternorrland	<b>MELLERSTA NORRLAND</b>	SE
Yorkshire Forward	<b>YORKSHIRE &amp; THE HUMBER</b>	UK
ISEU, European Business Management School, University of Wales, Swansea	<b>WALES</b>	UK
Marshal Office of the Wielkopolska Voivodship	<b>WIELKOPOLSKIE</b>	PL

## Timing and budget

30 months: February 2004 – July 2006

TOTAL BUDGET: 1.370.000,00 (ERDF funding: 816.625,00)

## How can your region be involved?

- By providing input in the first definition of indicators May 2004
- By using the draft Benchmarking Tool-kit to carry out surveys in your regions and compare with UNDERSTAND partner regions Winter 2004
- By providing feedback to improve indicators and methodologies February 2005
- By Using the complete Benchmarking tool-kit and uploading data in the on line database to benchmark with other EU regions Winter 2005

### For further information:

<http://www.understand-eu.net>

<http://www.interreg3c.net/>

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