

Rome Workshop (Nov. 16th) Report

Free Software for e-Inclusion and Education

Participants:

- Alfonso Molina – Consorzio Gioventù Digitale – www.e-inclusionsite.org
- Antonio José Sáenz Albanés – ISOTROL – www.isotrol.com
- Eva Pellegrini - Istituto Eduardo De Filippo
- Francisco Alcantud – University of Valencia – www.uv.es
- Giovanni Spagnolo – Projeto Software Livre Brasil – www.softwarelivre.org
- Klaus Stoll – ChasquiNet – www.chasquinet.org
- Mario Luis Teza – Rede Escolar Livre - <http://www.redeescolarlivre.rs.gov.br>

The participants agreed on doing a first round for exchange of experiences, so each one had the opportunity to tell something about their projects. The experiences were reported as follows:

Mr. Klaus Stoll started talking about his experience at ChasquiNet, an NGO based on Ecuador, founded on April 17th, 1998 in Quito. ChasquiNet aims to be a resource centre and an open space for community empowerment and ICT diffusion for poor areas in Ecuador. ChasquiNet works supporting individuals, communities and other institutions for ICT Development. They don't "own" projects, they help other people to realize their projects. In the last years they started working on Telecentres, spaces in which the community can meet, be trained and accede to the new technologies of communication and information, and to find practical alternatives for their development and fortification. ChasquiNet looks for the self sustainability of the telecentres that contributes to create, which are handled like microcompanies where the community is responsible to manage and administer. Mr. Stoll distributed CD-ROM's containing a toolkit developed specially for the use in telecentres.

Mr. Antonio José Sáenz Albanés, working as CTO in ISOTROL, an spanish engineering company offering professional services in the scope of the design and implementation of ICT based systems, presented the case of Free Software in the region of Andalucia. Because the government decided to use free software, to learn from Extremadura's experience and start the project in a subset of 150 schools, the project's main guidelines were based on technology, methodology, available solutions and software deployment. The challenge was to satisfy the final clients, the schools, so "teachers must teach, pupils must learn, we cannot have one administrator in each centre, and technology and deployment must be invisible". The solution found was a project comprising geographical and physical aspects for the centres (location, infra-structure, layout, etc.), network structure (based on Guadalinex GNU/linux distribution and different networks for students, professors and administration staff, Debian GNU/linux repositories, test centre and user's call center, etc.), desktop/educational software (debian, gnome, open office, mozilla, e-Learning "e-ducativa", softwares for small children, chemistry, mathematics, music, astronomy and Squeak educational platform) and management/monitoring software (hacker tools for network administration and management).

The Research Unit ACCESO is a group created in 1994 by Dr. Francisco Alcantud and which works within the Department of Educational and Evolutive Psychology of the University of Valencia, in Spain. Mr. Alcantud reported the participation of ACCESO in projects where the information and communication technologies are applied to the development and education of people with physical and/or sensorial disabilities, making intensive use of Assistive Technologies, especially the ones based in all New Information and Communication Technologies. ACCESO focus is placed on projects where these three main areas appear in combination: disability, technology and education. ACCESO is formed by a group of people with different professional backgrounds (psychologists,

pedagogues, engineers...) that evolves along time to accommodate to the needs of the projects being carried out each year and which includes several full time lecturers of the department. The Research Unit ACCESO is working on the project Auxilia, a project that is aimed at gathering information on the increase of opportunities for disabled youth. This increase has been made possible due to the use of ICT. The objective is to create an European model for the integration of disabled youth in all the educative scopes (schools and universities). This project tries to involve authorities and directors of centers, professors and families, so that they also contribute to the development of a methodology for the integration of disabled people in the formal education and in social surroundings.

Mr. Giovanni Spagnolo, representative from the city of Porto Alegre, in Brazil, introduced the experience of "Projeto Software Livre Brasil" (PSL-Brazil), a non-governmental initiative that puts together public and private institutions of Brazil: government, universities, entrepreneurs, groups of users, hackers and NGO's. The main objective is the promotion of the use and development of Free Software as an economic and technological alternative. Stimulating the use of Free Software, PSL-Brazil invests in the production and qualification of the local knowledge, starting from a new paradigm of sustained development and a new posture that inserts the technological question in the context of constructing a new world, with social inclusion and equal access opportunities to the technological advances. PSL-Brazil is articulated in many states of the country through regional PSL's, that are integrant parts of the national initiative. They also deal with women's issues through their very own PSL-women. The International Forum of Free Software is held annually in Porto Alegre, since the year 2000. In 2004 around 5,000 people attended the event, to discuss technical, ethical, social, economical, philosophical, political and educational issues of Free Software and to learn from technical lectures, successful cases presentations from business, governments, academic researchers and the latest advances of the international Free Software community.

To finish the first round, Mrs. Eva Pellegrini, an italian teacher, explained about her work inside the Eduardo De Filippo Institute. Working for more than 10 years with technology, she lead many ICT courses for teachers, using free software tools. She reported also some problems faced during this time, regarding the change of values needed to work with the new technologies. Leaving a mark on the audience, she asked for help on her projects, because leading alone is really difficult to carry on.

Mr. Mario Luis Teza, the other representative from Brazil unfortunately couldn't attend the workshop to speak about the "Rede Escolar Livre" project, aimed to make 100% of public schools in the city of Porto Alegre to work over a free software platform. Although he couldn't participate on the workshop, he left a message and links for the project at the Rome Workshop Forum web page, that can be accessed through the URL <http://www.e-inclusionsite.org/phpBB2>, inside the Free/Open Source Software for e-Inclusion discussion thread.

In the afternoon, the participants focused around discussions on their needs and ways to collaborate and possibly work together for a Global e-Inclusion Movement. With an intervention of Prof. Alfonso Molina, the group was introduced to the idea of a Global Movement to gather together all initiatives and provide an "action oriented" environment to help processes going on. A note released in november 2004 by Prof. Molina can be read at the e-inclusionsite, inside the section "Documentation" (direct link: <http://www.e-inclusionsite.org/en/documentationGet.php?doc=7>).

The result of this workshop is a collaborative area on the internet, where the first draft for the GeM's portal specification <http://www.e-inclusionsite.org/wiki> is now published and open for collaborations and suggestions.

If you want to help us, you can create an account inside Wiki and start sharing your ideas!