

<b>Action Reflection Note – Project “T-Centres”, UNDP Bulgaria</b>	
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<b>Total budget for project::</b>	USD 4,010,000
<b>UNDP contribution:</b>	USD 10,000
<b>Title of Project:</b>	T-Centres
<b>Timeframe:</b>	2 years, December 2003 – December 2005 (on going)
<b>Introduction:</b>	<p>The project addresses the issue of narrowing the digital divide between the global information society and the civil society in Bulgaria by establishing a broad-base network of public telecenters (also called T-Centres or “i-Centres”), which to provide services to the widest possible range of users in small or economically underdeveloped communities. A total of 160 telecenters have to be established. The offered services are of three main types: internet access, education and training, and consultations. their total number being 29. The project’s beneficiaries are local communities, businesses, students, children, minorities, and disadvantaged groups.</p>
<b>Objectives:</b>	<p>The main objective is to provide free or affordable access to ICT, Information and e-Government Services. The aim of the established network of telecenters is both achieving social impact and seeking self-sustainability. The project has developed clear plans for its financial sustainability, but it does not seek to establish commercial chains or to make profit.</p> <p>Other objectives include: Building of national network infrastructure, Developing telecenter technology model and guidelines, Developing a database and content distribution network, Developing and demonstrate high technology (VoIP, Video, etc.) services, Security infrastructure (PKI) and payment services establishment.</p> <p>The project will also provide service providers with an affordable distribution network for e-Services to businesses and citizens, while providing identity confirmation and payment receipt services for content providers:</p> <p>Further, the telecenters are expected to play an important part in employment generation and poverty reduction in the respective towns and villages in many different ways.</p>
<b>Analysis:</b>	<p>The project objectives are met so far and a network of 80 telecenters is successfully operating in the country with the other 80 to be build in the next year. As the telecenters were build in small and underdeveloped areas, the impact of their work is very big and there was and still is a big demand for expanding the network of new telecenters. More than 50,000 people were trained in the first 10 months of the project deployment. In the process of project implementation it appeared that the focus has to be shifted towards smart content provision within the network and the project has to build its own content system. In implementation of its Business Plan, the project started developing its own CADN (Content Aggregation and Distribution Network). It is a technology solution based on the leading database and e-learning technologies but the real focus was put on the content. Process-oriented approach was defined describing the relevant processes and clarifying them to the telecenter managers.</p> <p>The success of the Project so far is based on its well developed and approved by all the project partners Project Business Plan. It is providing a clear definition of steps that are needed in order to move to one or another stage of the project implementation with the supporting financing and expected revenues. Selection of host organizations for the telecenters is also one of the crucial elements in the whole project. By having the Bulgarian Posts as a host by definition and in the project document, the project has secured a big partner to guarantee the success and future sustainability of the project.</p>
<b>Lessons Learned:</b>	<p>A clear “Business Plan” for the implementation of such large infrastructure initiative should be defined and approved in advance. There should be a political decision that to be reflected in this “Business Plan” either to focus on business modality and to develop business network, or to introduce more social oriented model and bring affordable social e-services to the citizens.</p> <p>Serious partners have to be secured to stay behind the project during its entire lifetime.</p> <p>One of the first goals of the Project should be to educate telecenters’ managers and to improve their competences in the IT, business and language areas if the emphasis is to be on the provision of valuable content and services by the telecenters. Then the project could rely on experience.</p> <p>The educational processes require establishment partnerships with other educational institutions and projects in the country. Universities or other educational institutions can provide education expertise, content, image and licenses if necessary for the content part of the project.</p>