
DIGITAAL.TALENT@GENT

GENT

The programme started in 2007 and will last until 2020, as set out in [Gent2020](#) (the long term strategy of the city of Ghent).

Background

In Belgium, 60% of households have an internet connection and yet there are many disadvantaged communities and individuals (both in Ghent and in other parts of Belgium) that continue to suffer from the digital divide.

The 'digital divide' is one of the themes of Ghent's development strategy ([Gent2020](#)). The digital divide is defined as the differences among people in their access and usage of digital communication (internet, mobile phone, computer etc) as well as the information and services that are provided by such technologies.

[Digitaal.Talent@Gent](#) is a programme that initiates and coordinates activities of many different actors (city services, social organisations, local groups and training organisations) in Ghent. Until the launch of the programme, various groups have been expressing the need for coordinated activities. Projects were launched here and there but many organisations had doubts about the effectiveness of these divers and often overlapping activities.



Objectives

The broad aims of the strategy are that all residents of Ghent should have equal access to information, communication and participation in order to have equal opportunities at school, at work and in terms of leisure activities. So by the year 2020, all residents of Ghent will have:

- adequate knowledge of ICT that allows them to use basic ICT services;
- access to assistance to remedy problems related to ICT;
- the opportunity to participate in political consultations and other aspects of policy making;
- all jobseekers will be offered a basic ICT training (with diploma) to help them find work.

To meet these goals, the city implemented various projects, each of them with specific goals designed to meet these aims.

The [Digitaal.Talent@Gent](#) was introduced as a horizontal strategy that includes all relevant actors active in the field of ICT development in the city. Its main objective is to coordinate and initiate projects in the city in an integrated way. To this end, the project has a steering group, programme group and project teams. The programme group sets the policy priorities according to which the projects are selected and assessed. The programme allows to make sure that the initiatives in the city are compatible with each other and that

there are no overlaps.

The specific objectives of the project include:

- developing expertise in the field of ICT and how it can be used to promote social inclusion through encouraging and supporting research in this field;
- testing new methods of using ICT as a means to promote social inclusion (pilot projects);
- providing access to ICT by ensuring a minimum level of quality of the public computers in Ghent and by promoting the use of the PC classes. The computers are provided by the city and partner organisations (see map).
- developing skills through developing a training offer, especially on basic computer skills to help citizens take the first steps. This also consists of working with training organisations to help citizens learn even more.
- internal and external communication on services offered and best practices.

The programme looks into the possibility of encouraging usage of open source software for social organisations and individuals. Moreover, it promotes recycling of used computer equipment.

All residents of Ghent are part of the programme [Digitaal.Talent@Gent](#) and are targeted by numerous projects. However, there are specific projects targeted at:

- low-income families and individuals;
- the unemployed;
- senior citizens;
- handicapped individuals;
- migrants;
- staff of the city administration.

Responsible institution

The programme is coordinated and supported by the city. Its implementation is spread across all city services and organisation in the city, as well as local support groups and businesses.

Activities

[Digitaal.Talent@Gent](#) is implemented through a coordinated action of different actors in the field of the digital divide. The city supports all involved so that they can start, continue and/or improve their projects. The support provided by the programme team includes the needs analysis, analysis of available services and communication support (for example, when a project is completed).

Results

The programme's team completed a list of existing projects in the field of ICT that take place in the city. These include:

- Mobile PC class;
- Inventory of all projects in Ghent;

- Inventory of all the public computers in Ghent (more than 100);
- [Digital Week](#) 2007, 2008 and 2009;
- Tasters course (ABC Centrum);
- Academic videoconference over the digital divide with Mangaung (South Africa) (University of Ghent);
- [Stand at the international trade fair in Accenta](#) (Flanders Expo);
- I Volunteer! (Het Perspectief) (Grundtvig project for senior volunteers).

At present, the projects the programme team is working on are a helpdesk and a quality label for the public computers.

Other projects are being developed.

Evaluation and follow-up

A steering committee evaluates the programme as a whole. In addition, each project is evaluated individually. Each project develops its own set of indicators and is evaluated during and after being completed.

Lessons learned

After the launch of the programme, the interest among local actors was considerable and is still present. This is very helpful in increasing the coverage of the programme and in involving new partners in it.

Budget and resources

There is no information available on the budget for the programme.

Contact person

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<http://www.gent.be/eCache/THE/1/22/407.html>

If you have an example of a good practice that you would like to include in the database, please send an email to caroline.greene@eurocities.eu.