VALENCIA YA

VALENCIA

Objectives

Valencia Ya aims to reduce the digital gap through personalised computer and Internet courses specifically targeting people at risk of social exclusion. The courses are focused on the possibilities and advantages offered by new technologies. To achieve this objective the project is carried out along two lines:

- providing free access to Internet in more than 110 access points located in such institutions as public libraries or municipal social services premises;

- providing free basic digital skills training in seven centres across the city.

Timeline

The Valencia Ya initiative was launched in 2002 and continues to operate across Valencia today.

Background

The programme aims to improve access to ICT for all city residents. Valencia Ya is geared towards improving ICT provision among people who are at risk of exclusion, particularly in terms of access to the labour market.

Who is responsible for project implementation/delivery?

The project is implemented by the Valencia City Council through two private companies which were selected following a public tender.

How does the project work?

The project consists of several activities:

- **Setting up access points across the city** – Valencia City Council has set up more than 110 access points with free-broadband Internet access. Furthermore, it created 50 WiFi Zones in different parts of the city, all of them with free Internet access. They are located in Public Municipal Libraries, Youth Centres, Elderly Centres and other municipal buildings.

- **Providing training on digital skills** – there are over 600 classes on new technologies taking place each year. The courses are free of charge and organised in six locations across the city.

- **Recycling computers through PC Solidario** – PC Solidario is an initiative carried out in cooperation with non-profit associations or NGOs. The city council recycles computers and gives them to the NGOs. In this way, the computers had a longer life cycle. Some of the computers were given to neighbourhood associations in Valencia, other to cultural associations or even to NGOs that have brought them to countries in the Third World.

- **Mobile classroom** – Launched in 2008, a mobile classroom works in districts which do not have one of the six permanent classrooms. It consists of a set of 10 laptops that are set up in a different location every two weeks. During this period, the classroom offers introductory courses to the computers, Internet, email or Office tools. Most of the course followers are elderly and migrants but there are also specific courses for young people and the unemployed, as well as for other groups in risk of exclusion. Other courses specifically for youngsters (to avoid the risks of social networks or how to create their own website) and the unemployed (how to use the Internet to search for new job). The courses are one-week one-hour-per day courses. People can repeat the course as many times as necessary and possible.

- **Cybervolunteers** (*Cibervoluntariado*) – An educational service on the use of new technologies aimed at people with disabilities (both mental and physical). The service is provided by volunteers (*cybervolunteers*) in the classroom setting (sometimes with specially adapted devices) or at a learner's home. The volunteers have to have a minimum command of the IT (at least a user level) and are further trained by the city. The volunteers usually establish a very strong link with the learners. This results in a high level of satisfaction within users and their families. Depending on availability, there are sometimes other groups taking part in the courses. They are usually immigrants, unemployed, divorced housekeepers, elderly and other groups in risk of exclusion.

What are the results of the project?

The city council has set up more than 110 locations with free-broadband Internet access and 50 WiFi zones in different parts of the city, all of which have free Internet access. There are more than 600 ICT courses organised each year. So far, 300 recycled computers were delivered to associations and NGOs in the framework of PC Solidario. Between 2002 and 2009, the overall number of people that had been trained stood at 248,398.

The Cybervolunteers initiative has increased its figures to more than 1,500 participants (pupils, volunteers and associations) in 2008.

Evaluation and follow-up

The project has been successful so far as the number of people that follow a training course has been increasing each year. At the same time, however, the offer can be improved through more and better tailored classes, as well as through encouraging more cybervolunteers to take part in the project. The programme has already been extended to address the needs of elderly people.

Lessons learned

It is important to get directly in contact with the users and find out about their priorities and demands. It is also necessary to work with associations of companies that are specialised in training and at the same time familiar with the people who are at risk of exclusion. Lastly, the classrooms should be located in accessible locations in the city.

Budget and resources

The annual budget for the project is €220,000 and the resources come from municipal funds. This project is undertaken with two companies who provide teachers and manage the cybervolunteers. Cybervolunteers project is allocated €80,000 each year.

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More information

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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.