SIXTH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME

FP6-045003-WEB-DEP
Western Balkans Democratic Participation

EXISTING E-PARTICIPATION PRACTICES WITH RELEVANCE TO WEB.DEP

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1   EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is based on a sample of e-participation initiatives, both within and external to the European Union. It was scoped by looking for initiatives which are relevant to the context of the WEB.DEP project[1] –specifically the forum. This context is a combination of the features arising from the situation (current and historical) in the Western Balkans and the outline specification of the WEB.DEP tools and related actors as described in the Technical Annex. This was summarised into 7 features, which were used to guide both our choice of Case Studies and the development of a framework for their analysis.

An analysis framework was developed to ensure that our method revealed relevant information at the right level of detail. This framework was based on a combination of frameworks for describing e-participation tools and initiatives developed by other research groups. From these we chose dimensions that would support the description we needed. The framework was further modified to emphasise the characteristics that we felt were most relevant and useful to the WEB.DEP context.

29 e-participation initiatives were analysed as Case Studies using this WEB.DEP framework, leading to 29 structured descriptions. In order to highlight the parts of these descriptions which would be most useful to WEB.DEP, 2 further matrices were devised:

1. The first of these included an axis of characteristics arising from features of the WEB.DEP context. This was plotted against the Case Studies to illustrate which aspects of the initiatives were relevant to which aspects of WEB.DEP.
2. The second used a series of factors which seemed, from analysing the Case Studies, to be positively correlated with success. These factors were plotted against the Case Studies, so that where a factor seemed to be implicated in the success of a Case Study, its implementation could be traced to a Case Study and read within the description.

The conclusion takes both the characteristics from the Context Matrix and the factors from the Success Factors Matrix and illustrates how each was successfully tackled or implemented within the Case Studies.

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[1] http://www.web-dep.eu/

2   INTRODUCTION

The overall objective of this report is to inform the specification of the WEB.DEP forum, both in terms of use of technology and roles to be undertaken by actors. It is within Work Package 2: *Base-line Definition*. The aim of this Work Package is

- to provide an overview of the current status in the Western Balkans with respect to existing structures, practices and initiatives.
- To prioritising the issues upon, and means, functions and procedures with which WEB.DEP will intervene to promote its objectives.
- To define the actors in WEB.DEP
- and to define the technology infrastructure to be used for the deployment of the WEB.DEP Community Forum and Communication mechanism

Specifically, this report will feed directly into task 2.1 – (deriving the base line definition) by identifying best practices in e-participation that can be brought in and applied in WEB.DEP. As such it will appear as part of   D 2.1: *Current situation, high –level definition of WEB.DEP Priority areas and stakeholders*, where its results will be aggregated with the results of the questionnaires completed by news agencies. This will become the basis for D 2.2 (WEB.DEP High level Stakeholder Requirements: Part I: Content and Functions) and D 2.3 (WEB.DEP High level Stakeholder Requirements: Part II: Technology).

In order to do this, the E-Participation Practices report aims to identify the most important e-participation characteristics of the proposed WEB.DEP forum within its Western Balkan context. Using these characteristics, various e-participation (or related) initiatives are identified and prioritised as Case Studies. These initiatives are investigated and described. The descriptions are analysed and the results are compared and presented.

3   METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

In order to systematically identify e-participation projects that might be relevant in a WEB.DEP context, we used an analytical framework[2] originally developed under the DEMO-net project "Dimensions to describe and compare eParticipation tool categories" [3]. Table 1 (below) provides the key dimensions developed by the DEMO-net partners. The Democracy Network (DEMO-net) is an IST Network of Excellence Project (Framework Package 6). Napier, as a key partner in the Network, supported the development of the framework.

Table 1: DEMO-net Framework: "Dimensions to describe and compare eParticipation tool categories"

Criteria for description	Explanation
General description	Brief description of tool according to categories in DEMO-net 5.1: Table 2: Core eParticipation Tool Categories Table 3: Tools extensively used in eParticipation, but not specific to eParticipation Table 4: Basic tools to support eParticipation
Participation area	Participation areas where the tool category is relevant as grouped and detailed in section 2.1: Participation areas (DEMO-net 5.1)
Direction of communication	Level of participation as introduced in section 2.2: level of Participation addressed (DEMO-net 5.1)
Stakeholders	Distinct actors as introduced in section 2.3 (Actors in different participation areas – DEMO-net 5.1) using a tool category for specific purposes such as: • To use the tool category in a certain participation area and direction of communication • To provide content for a certain participation area • To manage the use of the tool in a certain participation area
Stage in policy cycle	Tool category supporting in one or more stage(s) in the policy lifecycle as introduced in section 2.4 :Stage in the policy lifecycle of participation (1) agenda setting [includes awareness and problem perception] (2) policy formulation (3) decision-making (4) policy implementation (5) policy evaluation.
Special concerns / Rules of engagement (owner/provider and/or end-user)	The typical level of security available and what amount of personal information is required for using the tools need to be understood. Questions to address include: • Can users be made aware of how the personal information they enter will be used and who will have access to it? • What, if any, authentication of the user is supported? To ensure the eParticipation tool category has the potential to reach a wider audience there is a trade off between making it easy for any member of the public to participate and asking them to provide details of who they are before or after doing so. A registration process enables the users to be identified and contacted at a later date, for example with feedback or information on any follow-up initiative. Also, demographic questions could form part of the registration process to support the analysis and evaluation of the exercise (related to the dimension 'evaluation'). • Furthermore, requirements from the users' side in order to use the tool are being described (e.g. having a PC and an internet browser).

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[2] The framework and its basis are described in the DEMO-net Deliverable D5.1 - DEMO-net (2006) "Deliverable 5.1: Report on current ICTs to enable Participation", edited by Thorleifsdottir, A and Wimmer, M. available at: [url, date]

[3] DEMO-net: The Democracy Network. IST Network of Excellence Project, FP6-2004-IST-4-027219 Thematic Priority 2: Information Society Technologies. http://www.demo-net.org/

	• It describes also what stakeholders can and cannot do with the tool.
Accessibility of the tool (owner/provider and/or end-user)	Extent to which stakeholders are realistically able to access and make use of the tools in this category: • Level of experience and skills needed to develop, to add content and to use. Such information helps to provide a better understanding of resource implications and level of technical competency required; • Access for users with disabilities; Are appropriate standards such as the Web Accessibility Initiative guidelines (www.w3.org/wai) applied and implemented to ensure accessibility for all (WAI conformance level the tool category is implemented in; we are aware of the fact that it is difficult to provide precise information of WAI level of conformance for a tool category but an indication is useful); • Languages the tool may be used in – given the number of spoken languages across Europe and the associated number that must be legally support in various EU countries; indication of whether a specific tool category is available in a range of languages;
Channel availability	Channel(s) the tool category is available in, for example, PCs, mobile phones, and interactive digital TV.
Technologies used in building the tool	Technologies mentioned, e.g. web server, database management system, application server, hardware dependencies, technical realization (e.g. web-application to use in browser) – see also chapter 5 (Analysis of existing tool categories in eParticipation contexts – demo-net 5.1) for a more detailed discussion on technologies
Evaluation of the tool	Implications for evaluating any associated eParticipation activity are examined. As such, the tool categories are examined for any inbuilt evaluation data collection mechanisms, for example, exit questionnaires, ability to generate web-usage statistics, etc.
Further information, examples of tools, practical application of tools in this category	URL and whether (and where) further (also critical) information about applications and their performance is available (references to articles, books etc.)

However, for WEB.DEP, we needed to focus on certain aspects of the initiatives, in order to match the context. Therefore, the DEMO-net framework was modified and expanded in order to draw out aspects of Case Studies that are relevant to the WEB.DEP context. To inform this, the situation of WEB.DEP forum was described as a list of 7 salient features. These features are based on the Technical Annex and discussions during the Kick Off meeting in Athens.[4]

1. New democracies, aiming to enter the EU
2. Historical context of the region: e.g. conflict
3. Central role of news agencies (not government initiated)
4. Focus on information provision
5. Various languages spoken by users (not to become a divide)
6. Digital Divide (Internet access and uptake, technical skills)
7. Limited resources for sustainable use (e.g. to fund staff for facilitation and moderation)

Modifications were also made to better adapt the framework to describing initiatives, rather than tool categories – either specific instances of an e-participation tool in use or a collection of tools brought together as an online environment to suit an objective. For example: dimensions allied to the context (such as geographic area) were added.

This expansion was rooted in 2 other frameworks:

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[4] 13th February 2007

1. one developed by the Council of Europe Ad hoc Committee on e-democracy[5]: "Framework for reporting e-democracy initiatives" (2007)[6];
2. the second used by Coleman and Kaposi to create the report "New democracies, new media, what's new? A study of e-participation projects in third-wave democracies"[7].

Council of Europe, 2007

The "Framework for reporting e-democracy initiatives" is a work in progress, under development by the Council of Europe Ad hoc Committee on e-Democracy. Their framework (in the working paper) includes a category "Basis of Initiative":

a) Who initiated the project? (Type of actor: political leader, civil servant, political party, NGO, citizens, media, commercial organisation)?
b) When was it initiated?
c) What was the main objective / goal of the initiative?
d) How was it developed from the initial idea - and what were the timelines ?
e) When - if - and how was it finished ?
f) How does this initiative relate to other democracy initiatives in the area (both online and offline)?

This was added to our framework to reveal the context of the Case Studies, as this summarises a series of important features related to the WEB.DEP forum. The category became the 3rd category in our framework: "Basis of Initiative"

Coleman and Kaposi, 2006

A further category illustrating the Case Studies' context was adapted from the report "New democracies, new media, what's new? A study of e-participation projects in third-wave democracies". This report is focused on

> "a qualitative appraisal of six diverse e-democracy initiatives launched in periods following regime change. Each was crafted under different, challenging infrastructural, political and cultural conditions" [8]

The report includes summaries of the "challenging infrastructural, political and cultural conditions" and describes ways that the initiatives and their actors attempted to meet these challenges. Their analysis inspired the additional category Democracy Context: "Any relevant information about the context of democracy the initiative is designed to be used in and any features designed for this context." Where available/relevant this category includes information about the media and telecommunications context in the country or area in which the initiative is based.

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[5] http://www.coe.int/t/e/integrated%5Fprojects/democracy/02%5Factivities/002%5Fe%2Ddemocracy/
[6] The CAHDE framework is currently unpublished, as it is a work in progress.
[7] Coleman, S., Kaposi, I. (2006); "*New democracies, new media, what's new? A study of e-participation projects in third-wave democracies*"
http://www.ega.ee/handbook/#_Toc132047448 Accessed March 2007
[8] Coleman, S., Kaposi, I. (2006); "*New democracies, new media, what's new? A study of e-participation projects in third-wave democracies*" (p10)
http://www.ega.ee/handbook/#_Toc132047448 Accessed March 2007

3.1 The framework

The WEB.DEP analytical framework is presented in Table 2 (below). It comprises 17 key dimensions which are used to fully describe Case Studies and draw out information relevant to the Western Balkans context.

Table 2: WEB.DEP analytical framework

Criteria for description	Explanation
1. Title	Title used to identify Case Study in this context
2. General description	Brief **description of tool** or initiative • including main URL • type of tool, functions supported • geographical area • specific target group
3. Basis of initiative	Include: • Who initiated the project? (Type of actor: political leader, civil servant, political party, NGO, citizens, media, commercial organisation)? • When was it initiated? • What was the main objective / goal of the initiative? Potentially include: • How was it developed from the initial idea - and what were the timelines • Completion? Success? • How does this initiative relate to other democracy initiatives in the area (both online and offline)?
4. Democracy Context	• Any relevant information about the context of democracy the initiative is designed to be used in. • May include media and telecoms situation.
5. Participation area	Participation areas where the tool category is relevant as grouped (e.g. Information Provision, Community building / Collaborative Environments, Consultation, Campaigning, Electioneering, Deliberation, Discourse, Mediation, Spatial planning, Polling and Voting)
6. Direction of communication/ level of participation	• Direction of communication • Level of participation e.g. eInforming, eConsulting, eCollaborating, eEmpowering
7. Stage in policy cycle	Tool category supporting one or more **stage(s) in the policy lifecycle**: (1) agenda setting [includes awareness and problem perception] (2) policy formulation (3) decision-making (4) policy implementation (5) policy evaluation.
8. Stakeholders	**Distinct actors** (e.g. Expert Administrators, Elected Representatives, Professional Stakeholders, Lay Stakeholders, Randomly Selected Recruits, Non-Randomly Selected Recruits, Self-selected Participants) using a tool category for specific purposes such as: • To use the tool category in a certain participation area and direction of communication • To provide content for a certain participation area • To manage the use of the tool in a certain participation area

9. Rules of engagement (owner/provider and/or end-user)	The typical level of **security** available and what amount of **personal information is required** for using the tools need to be understood. **Privacy** and **conditions of use** • Registration and authentication • Privacy: Can users be made aware of how the personal information they enter will be used and who will have access to it? • Conditions of use describe also what stakeholders can and cannot do with the tool.
10. Moderation, facilitation, content-rating	Moderation and facilitation roles, policies and technologies. Includes any roles available to users, such as content rating.
11. Accessibility of the tool	Extent to which stakeholders are realistically able to access and make use of the tools in this category: • Level of experience and skills needed to develop, to add content and to use. • Access for users with disabilities; (e.g. WAI[9] conformance level or any other accessibility statements)
12. Language support	• Languages the tool may be used in • Technology or process used to support mixed language use
13. Channel availability	Channel(s) the tool category is available in • Internet technologies: web, email • End-user hardware: PCs, mobile phones, and interactive digital TV.
14. Technologies	• More detailed description of specific functions –e.g. forum • Technologies mentioned for hosting and accessing e.g. web server, database management system, application server, hardware dependencies, technical realisation • software licensing
15. Evaluation mechanisms	Implications for evaluating any associated eParticipation activity are examined. As such, the tool categories are examined for any inbuilt evaluation data collection mechanisms, for example, exit questionnaires, ability to generate web-usage statistics, etc.
16. Further examples	• Examples of tool in use (if generic) • Related initiatives
17. Further information	Evaluation reports and information sources, especially 3rd-party

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[9] WAI: Web Accessibility Initiative http://www.w3.org/WAI/

3.2   Methodology for finding the Case Studies

The Case Studies were chosen from a pool of initiatives derived from:

1. projects the ITC were aware of[10]
2. requests to eParticipation researchers and networks[11] for initiatives covering specific aspects relevant to WEB.DEP (e.g. mixed language initiatives)
3. relevant Case Studies collated by other projects:
    o   Matrix of online methods to support consultation and deliberation maintained by the staff of America Speaks[12]. Deliberative-democracy.net provide the matrix and encourage researchers and practitioners to add projects they are involved in.
    o   The "Do-Wire wiki" of UK e-democracy projects[13]. As in the Matrix of Online methods, Do-wire provides the wiki and encourages users from its large e-democracy network to add projects.
    o   Projects described in Coleman and Kaposi, 2006. As well as the 6 full Case Studies pursued by the "New democracies, New media" project, the report contains an inventory of e-democracy projects in new Democracies covering 37 countries.

Out of the projects identified, Case Studies were chosen on the basis of:

1. Relevance to the WEB.DEP context, using the features outlined above. Particular emphasis was given to initiatives based in new contexts of democracy.
2. The success of the initiative or of some aspect of it.
3. Information available about the project.

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[10] http://itc.napier.ac.uk/ITC/links.asp

[11] E.g. E-Democracy and E-Government Researchers Network:
http://groups.dowire.org/groups/research/index.xml

[12] http://www.deliberative-democracy.net/resources/library/online_matrix_041004.pdf

[13] http://dowire.org/wiki/UK_highlights

4   DATA GATHERING AND ANALYSIS

30 Case Studies were identified. Of these 29, were fully analysed as Case Studies. The full analysis of the Case Studies is presented as an annex to this report.

Where possible, contact was made with someone who was involved in the initiative. A draft of the analysed Case Study for their initiative was sent to them by email. Their amendments, additions and clarifications then fed into the Case Study as used in this report. In some cases, this was a cyclical process of revision.

In order to highlight useful attributes of the Case Studies, they are also presented via 2 further matrices. The "Context Matrix" highlights which Case Studies are relevant to the specific features we identified as defining our context. The "Success Factors Matrix" emphasises aspects of the Case Study that we have identified as having a positive correlation with a successful e-participation initiative.

4.1   List of Case Studies

1.   Albanian-Serb Information Exchange Forum (kosovakosovo.com)

- http://www.kosovakosovo.com/
- Internet-based news resource. Forum structured around invited contributions.
- Area: Kosovo (and surrounding area)
- Target users: Serbs and Albanians, especially media and journalists.

2.   Armenian Forum

- http://www.forum.am/
- Forum hosts online discussion groups or 'communities'. These communities are organised thematically into groups. Bulletin boards, mailboxes, photo galleries and newsletters available.
- Area: Armenia
- Target users: individuals and groups

3.   BBC Action Network

- http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/actionnetwork/
- Open online forum, run by the BBC, for people to influence issues they care about. Most of the content is written by the public and reflects their views. Citizens can raise issues/campaigns called 'networks'. These can be searched by issue or locality. Citizens can comment on/join each other's campaigns. Designed to have a strong relationship with the real world.
- Area: UK
- Target users: UK public

4.   Caithness.org

- http://www.caithness.org/
- Forums: http://forum.caithness.org/
- Community website, with various notice boards (local and community news, tourism, commerce, local groups and entertainments), directory services and forums
- Caithness, Scotland – most northerly county in mainland Britain; about 700 square miles; population of around 27,500.
- The website is aimed at everyone with an interest in the area

5.   Debatepedia

- http://debatepedia.com/

- Enables users to present and organise unique arguments made by third-party sources (e.g. by scholars, experts, leaders) on both sides of a debate. By providing a "logic tree" debate methodology, it enables debates to be organised in the most understandable way.
- Wiki-based technology.
- Nominally International, but has so far been mostly taken up by US issues
- Target user group: Any English speaking Internet user

6. Deme – Platform for online deliberation

- http://groupspace.org/
- Web-based platform for online deliberation (formerly referred to as "POD"). Deme is being developed as an asynchronous environment for groups to meet, discuss, and come to decisions via the World-Wide Web. Deme can either be installed on your own server, or accessed via the free prototype hosting service on Groupspace.org.
- Geographical area – project based in the US but open to groups from anywhere
- Groups that might find Deme useful include advocacy, service, or civic organizations, trade union groups, neighbourhood/homeowner associations, religious organizations, university groups, social clubs, loose groups of activists, and "online communities" (those whose interaction takes place primarily on the Internet). We especially have in mind small-to-medium sized groups of between 2 and 200 people, who interact outside of the Internet (i.e. in "real life"), and who have some purpose or mission that requires collective decision making. Although it is particularly aimed at civil society groups, government organizations should be able to use it as well.

7. Demos: Delphi Online Mediation System

- http://demos-project.org/index.html
- DEMOS supports the full process of discussion/consultation through various online tools, including an online forum, polling, surveying (and formulating the results). Note that demos uses the deliberation system "Zeno", which is included here as a separate Case Study.
- Demos has been used in Hamburg (Germany) and Bologna (Italy)
- It has so far been used to involve citizens in discussions about the future of their areas (planning)

8. e-Community Council

- http://www.ecommunitycouncil.org.uk/
- An online environment based on blogs and questionnaires to support the work of community councils (representing neighbourhoods of approx 3-5000 people) – especially informing local citizens and encouraging their participation.
- Project involved 6 community councils in central Scotland, UK
- Each community council website is aimed at people in that community council's area (e.g. a village and its surroundings)

9. e-consultation.org

- http://www.e-consultation.org/
- Long-running project to study the use of electronic computing and communication technologies in consultation processes. Over the course of the project a variety of technologies have been used for consultation/ discussion with "real" groups. This includes polling and preference-matching.
- Ireland (Northern Ireland and Eire: Republic of Ireland)

10. EPA.net East Palo Alto Community Network

- http://www.epa.net/
- The Community Network has brought technology access points, a community web portal, and knowledge transfer to residents of the low-income, multi-lingual and multi-

ethnic community of East Palo Alto, California. This Case Study concerns the portal (online resource centre) which includes:

- Local news and information, notice board/CMS
- Tools to support transparency and community development (also hosts websites of community groups)
- Forums for engaging in community life, sharing ideas and thoughts, and for experimenting with technology
- Space to post/store photos, documents etc
- Area: East Palo Alto has a low-income, ethnically diverse population of approximately 30,000 within a 2.5 square mile area, near San Francisco Bay and Silicon Valley.

11. Funredes Tradauto

- http://funredes.org/tradauto/
- Funredes have been working with automatic translation technologies to support multilingual virtual conferences – mostly based on email list technology. However, the process is more than an automated translation service: Funredes call it an "intercomprehension" aid service.
- The current version of this is known as Tradauto.
- The Tradauto process is used in over 20 contexts internationally.

12. Global Kids: Newz Crew

- http://www.newzcrew.org/
- A discussion forum based on 'youth circles' (inspired by Weblab's Small Group Dialogues[14]). Newz Crew uses the Internet and news media to develop and promote media literacy and youth engagement in the democratic process.
- People register and are allocated discussion groups. Discussion groups exist for a preset amount of time – though the group can vote to continue.
- News items are posted on the website and group discussions are mostly based on these items. Group members can start new topics for their group.
- Featured discussions are shown on the website.
- Participants come from all over the world, though the organisation is US – based. There is also a US slant to the news and topics
- Participants should be between 14 and 19 years old

13. Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement Review

- http://www.webdialogues.net/cs/ijc-greatlakes-home/view/di/77?x-t=home
- Web-based bilingual dialogue/online consultation with long range planning theme. Focussed over 4 days.
- Part of wider consultative process to identify issues for US and Canadian governments to consider prior to reviewing the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement.
- November 29-December 2, 2005
- Region: Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River basin, US and Canada.

14. HeadsUp

- http://www.headsup.org.uk/
- Discussion forum for young people (under 18) based on political issues.
- The forum is supported by relevant background information and reference material for both young people and educators.
- One issue at a time with each issue organised into topics.
- Moderators take on characters.
- Members of parliaments and assemblies take part in the discussions.
- Area: UK
- Aimed at under18s

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[14] http://weblab.org/

15. Highland Youth Voice (Your Voice forum)

- Website: http://www.highlandyouthvoice.org/home.asp
- Forum: http://www.highlandyouthvoice.org/YourVoice/
- e-Democracy website for youth parliament. The parliament is called Highland Youth Voice (HYV). The tools are developed and hosted by the ITC (International Teledemocracy Centre, Napier University)
- Includes
  - o Content management system for dissemination of news and information, recording and archiving parliament business
  - o E-voting system and online support for elections
  - o Policy debating forum
- Aimed at mostly 12 – 18 year olds
- In the Highland Region of Scotland (Highland is the Authority for most of Northern Scotland)

16. Junior Summit (1998)

- http://www.jrsummit.net/
- 1998 Summit: Nearly 3,000 participants from 139 countries communicating with one another through an innovative on-line forum, using translation technology.
- People were grouped into home rooms (small groups, mostly sharing languages). They suggest topics (first stage for a few weeks). List of 60 topics, participants vote to choose 20. They then choose topics and move to topic groups (mixed languages) –i.e. well-defined schedule
- All content (including the discussions) could also be used via email
- The forum was international. The project was based at MIT (US)[15]
- Participants mostly 10-16. Specific inclusion efforts were made. 3,000 children from 139 countries took part.

17. Law Commission Forum

- http://forum.lawcom.gov.uk/
- Forum to enable people to participate in a discussion on law reform. The forum should feed into the Law Commission's program of reform. The forum is divided into timed stages, so that one phase of the discussion feeds into the next.
- Format –a discussion forum (visually resembles a blog)
- The forum is part of a wider study: Digital Dialogues[16]
- Target audience –anyone with an interest
- Area – England and Wales

18. Local issues forums

- http://e-democracy.org/
- http://forums.e-democracy.org/
- Email lists for discussing local issues. Each list is an online community (forum) for a geographical area. Over time both software and policies for use have developed. Now available as a tool (GroupServer) which combines the lists with online forum/community tools.
- Each forum is specific to an area. Forums are currently live in:
- United Kingdom: Brighton & Hove, Bristol, London Borough of Newham
- United States: Minnesota (State-wide), Minneapolis, Roseville, St. Paul, Winona
- New forums are starting in New Zealand.
- Forums are aimed at everyone with email access and an interest in local issues.

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[15] http://web.mit.edu/
[16] http://www.digitaldialogues.org.uk/

19. Ministry of Finance Forum – Macedonia

- Ministry of Finance website: www.finance.gov.mk
- Introduction in English: http://www.finance.gov.mk/gb/index.html
- Forum where citizens could make suggestions about draft laws or initiatives. It's not clear if the forum section is still live.
- Area: FYRO Macedonia
- Aimed at experts and general public

20. Oncom – Online Communities

- http://www.oncom.org.uk/
- Portals for geographic communities and for communities with particular interests (e.g. Arts, Business, Environment), with community news, notices, consultations, photographic features, campaigns. The open forum takes the form of "Letters to the editor". Format is entirely web-based and designed to look colourful and familiar, something like an online "local paper"
- The website also hosts consultations and online "hustings" for elections
- Web space for local councillors and community groups
- 12 geographic communities e.g. http://www.richmond-online.co.uk/
- Area: London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, South East England, UK. Each portal covers a small geographic area aligned with the democratic geography/natural communities of the borough (e.g. Barnes –population 12,900)
- Aimed at people in the local community.

21. Open Government Website Of Mongolia

- http://open-government.mn
- Website established in order to promote public-private dialogue on economic matters, and to involve citizens in law and policy-making. The site was intended to include information, draft laws, forum, online conference, and interviews conducted by the site's journalists. Rather than being a purely top-down initiative, the website has been run, until recently by various subcontractors (mostly NGOs) working for USAID - the US Agency for International Development.
- The Government of Mongolia is currently re-developing , re-designing and re-launching the Open Government Website (OGW) with an aim to integrate the new site into the Government of Mongolia's broader communications goals, and to improve the public/private dialogue on key economic issues.
- The new website is primarily conceived of as a web-based Content Management System (CMS). The content for the web-based CMS site is divided into three categories:
  - o Information (News, Cabinet Resolutions, Your Government, Who Said What, The Press Room, National Programs & Priorities, FAQ, Kids, Invest Mongolia, Employment Opportunities, Scholarships)
  - o Communications (Ask The Government, Vote Now, Contact us)
  - o Services (Mobile services, downloadable PDF forms for scholarship, Subscription to press releases and employment opportunities, downloadable PDF press releases and downloadable photos).
- Some of the functions that the Government of Mongolia would like the site to contain include: Subscription – email, PDF downloads, on-line chat, interactive map of Mongolia, on-line Poll, m-services, links
- and an abbreviated English version that will contain a limited News section, Your Government section and Invest Mongolia section.
- Area: Mongolia (though also used by people abroad)

22. Politika.lv

- http://www.politika.lv/
- http://www.policy.lv/index.php?id=100373&lang=en

- Online portal dedicated to public policy in Latvia. Organised around three key components: resources (policy studies, draft legislation etc.), discussion (by way of publishing opinion articles and allowing for user comments) and providing interactive tools for public participation.
- Discussion is largely linked to and conducted through articles: analysis and interviews, political and social studies, draft policy papers.
- "Op-ed" (opinion editorial) articles published alongside lengthy, specialised policy papers, which may be less interesting to majority of users. Op-ed articles are commissioned from experts on specific topics describing a policy issue in non-technical language. This feature helped to make policy issues understandable to the general public, and has since proved a popular resource. Most of Politika.lv users read the op-ed articles, while few consult the lengthy policy papers.[17]
- Questionnaires and quick polls
- Also thematic specials e.g. election special: analysis of past party manifestos and interactive tool "Try on a party!" (users could compare their views on issues with those of five leading candidates from the 10 main political parties)
- The initial website included open, user generated forums, but these did not prove to be popular and are now used only in the context of on-line consultations, when users may introduce a new thread of discussion.
- Independent
- Area: Latvia

23. Reconciling for the future online forum

- Have not found an online archive of the forum. URLs used have now been usurped.
- Information about the project: http://www.cdsee.org/project_reconcilingforthefuture.html
- Project to develop links and dialogue between people working in reconciliation and related fields in South East Europe. This included an online forum, plus a Youth forum, a database (of relevant people and organisations) and an offline conference.
- The online forum existed for only a short time to get input into the conference's agenda.
- Targeted at people in working in reconciliation in South East Europe, young people and people working with young people.

24. Self-Sufficiency Task Force

- http://www.gnb.ca/2026
- Forum archives: http://www.gnb.ca/2026/forumarchive-f.asp (French)
- http://www.gnb.ca/2026/forumarchive-e.asp (English)
- Bi-lingual (French/English) consultation, aiming to inform people of new Brunswick, stimulate debate and gather opinion.
    - o Online means of consultation used:
    - o Online Discussion Forum
    - o Briefs and comments submitted by e-mail, fax and mail (made available online if permission given)
    - o Online questionnaire (surveys to measure opinion with collated results displayed)
    - o Online booking of private meetings with the Task Force
- Plus regional Focus Groups.
- Area New Brunswick, Canada

25. Seoul's Cyber Policy Forum

- http://forum.seoul.go.kr

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[17] Coleman, S., and Kaposi, I. (2006); "*New democracies, new media, what's new? A study of e-participation projects in third-wave democracies*"
http://www.ega.ee/handbook/#_Toc132047448 p77

- An online discussion forum on a different topic for each month. The forum is run by Seoul Metropolitan Government(SMG). Topics could be suggested by citizens and e-Democracy experts -- typically "hot" political issues affecting citizens' lives around the time of the discussions. Relevant materials are posted to guide citizens on topics, and expert opinions are posted to highlight the pros and cons of various issues. After the month-long discussions end, results are published on the web site. A few excellent discussions are given awards to encourage further discussions.
- The Seoul Metropolitan Government posts summaries of the discussion results which list citizen opinions that are reflected in policies. This allows citizens to see that their opinions are meaningfully used in the policy-making process. Moreover, online opinion polls are used if issues warrant more input.
- There is a separate Youth Cyber Forum – as young people may have a different policy agenda to adults.
- Area: Seoul, South Korea
- Seoul Metropolitan Government is the largest municipal government in Korea, administering services to 10 million citizens.

26. Slashdot

- http://slashdot.org/
- "News for nerds"
- Long standing community for people to share news and discuss technology, largely used by people interested or involved in software production –e.g. the Open Source community.
- Users create the content by publishing articles (stories)
- Comments are attached to articles (stories) similar to a blog format.
- Has evolved an innovative and influential process for users to rate content provided by each other
- Area: International (US-focus)

27. Today I Decide (TOM)

- https://www.eesti.ee/tom/
- Portal provided by the Estonian government which includes facility for Estonians to present proposals for legislation. If a proposal receives sufficient support, it is discussed by the government.
- 6 stage process:
  (1) Citizen submits an idea
  (2) Discussion with the author - Others have 14 days to comment on the idea
  (3) Editing period –– the originator of the idea takes arguments into consideration amends as necessary.
  (4) The idea is voted on ––A simple majority endorses the idea.
  (5) Author and supporters "sign it"
  (6) The idea moves to the government for processing - directed to the public agency whose administrative area it belongs to. According to the Public Information Act, the public agency has one month to either start implementation or to submit a substantiated answer that explains why the idea / proposal does not merit implementation. The answers are published on the portal.
- Can also be used by the government for consultation.
- Area: Estonia
- Target audience- citizens, but especially younger people.

28. V@W - International Virtual Workshop

- http://tecfaseed.unige.ch/users/frete/ciarisworkshop/
- International Virtual Workshop:
- Bilingual 4 week online event (March 2007)
- in Portuguese and English with "gist translations" of every post (mostly done by humans)

- Supporting information available in both languages.
- Discussion structured over 4 weeks, including weekly summaries
- Inclusion of "Guest Speakers"
- Target –People working against social exclusion/with an interest in social inclusion
- Area - The majority of participants at the Workshop came from Brazil and other Portuguese speaking countries.

29. Zeno (Dito 2)

- http://zeno8.ais.fraunhofer.de/zeno/
- Discourse support system/groupware/platform for goal-oriented moderated online discussion
- Tools to manage
    - o users/groups who participate and
    - o content (created and used in the discourse)
- Tools-set includes argument-mapping, content management, discussion forums, surveys and integration with Geographical Information Systems.
- The Zeno kernel is a Java library for building groupware systems for the Web. The library provides facilities for content management, user administration, as well as an email interface and notification services.
- Target: Any group that needs to deliberate and make decisions

4.2   Context Matrix: Characteristics for WEB.DEP

The WEB.DEP framework was used to fully describe these 29 Case Studies (see Annex). These descriptions were then further investigated to highlight which parts of them were of specific importance to the WEB.DEP context. We took the 7 salient features of the context we had identifies from the Technical Annex and the kick off meeting:

1. New democracies, aiming to enter the EU
2. Historical context of the region: e.g. conflict
3. Central Role of news agencies (not government initiated)
4. Focus on information provision
5. Various languages spoken by users (not to become a divide)
6. Digital Divide (Internet access and uptake, technical skills)
7. Limited resources for sustainable use (e.g. to fund staff for facilitation and moderation)

From these we derived a series of characteristics. These are aspects of e-participation tools (or initiatives) with special relevance to the WEB.DEP forum and its context. The characteristics do not necessarily correlate on a one to one basis with the features outlined above. Rather one or more characteristic may be related to one or more feature. Following each characteristic is a description of how this was identified in the Case Studies.

- **Consensus building** – The tool or initiative includes functions to support consensus.
- **Trust-building** – An objective of the initiative or functions/ modification of the tool to support trust-building.
- **Deliberation support** – For example the tool includes features which help participants to interact with each other's contributions
- **Media involvement** –The initiative has a strong relationship with one or more media organisations.
- **Information provision (focus)** – the provision of information is an important focus of the tool. The tool has been structured to promote use of this information to support discussion.
- **Languages** – Mixed language initiative (or aiming to move that way)
- **Digital divide** –Specific efforts have been made to include the digitally disenfranchised. These may be technical modifications, equipment supplied or workshops held offline with potential users.

- **Moderation and facilitation schemes** – Comprehensive rules, roles or system support for moderation, facilitation, content-rating.
- **Citizens raising issues** – Participants can choose topics or raise new topics for discussion.
- **Influencing policy or law** – The initiative has a strong relationship with government or policy-makers with a view to influencing policy or law.

These enabled us to develop the "Context Matrix". This illustrates the presence of these characteristics within the Case Studies. It is shown in Table 3: "Context Matrix".

Table 3: Context Matrix

Name	URL	Country /area	Consensus building	Trust-building	Deliberation support	Media involvement	Information provision (focus)	Languages	Digital divide	Moderation and facilitation schemes	Citizens raising issues	Influencing policy or law
Albanian-Serb Information Exchange Forum (kosovakosovo. com)	http://www.kosovakosovo.com/	Kosovo and surrounding area	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes		yes		
Armenian Forum	http://www.forum.am/	Armenia		yes						yes	yes	
BBC Action Network	http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna /actionnetwork/	UK (but with localisation)				yes	yes				yes	
Caithness.org	http://www.caithness.org/	Caithness, Scotland, UK					yes				yes	yes
Debatepedia	http://debatepedia.com	International (US-based)	yes	yes			yes					
Deme – Platform for online deliberation.	http://groupspace.org/	US-based	yes		yes		yes		yes			
Demos: Delphi Online Mediation System	http://www.demos-project.org	EU – Germany, Italy	yes		yes		yes			yes		yes
e-Community Council	http://www.ecommunitycouncil.org.uk/	Small towns in Scotland, UK					yes		yes		yes	yes
e-consultation.org	http://www.e-consultation.org/	Ireland	yes	yes	yes		yes		yes	yes		yes

Name	URL	Location										
EPA.net East Palo Alto Community Network	http://www.epa.net/	East Palo Alto, US			yes		yes	yes	yes		yes	
Funredes Tradauto	http://funredes.org/tradauto/	South America, Caribbean			yes			yes	yes	yes		
Global Kids: Newz Crew	http://www.newzcrew.org/	International, though heavily US.-based			yes	yes	yes		yes	yes		
Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement Review	http://www.webdialogues.net/cs/ijc-greatlakes-home/view/di/77?x-t=home	Canada and US			yes		yes	yes		yes		yes
HeadsUp	http://www.headsup.org.uk/	UK		yes	yes		yes			yes	yes	yes
Highland Youth Voice (Your Voice forum)	http://www.highlandyouthvoice.org/home.asp	Highland region, Scotland, UK			yes		yes		yes	yes		
Junior Summit (1998)	http://www.jrsummit.net/	International, US-based	yes		yes			yes	yes	yes		
Law Commission Forum	http://forum.lawcom.gov.uk/	England and Wales, UK			yes		yes			yes	yes	yes
Local Issues Forums	http://e-democracy.org/	Specific cities or areas in the US or UK.		yes	yes	yes			yes	yes	yes	yes
Ministry of Finance Forum - Macedonia	http://www.finance.gov.mk	Macedonia		yes			yes					yes
Oncom – Online Communities	http://www.oncom.org.uk/	South East England, UK			yes		yes		yes	yes	yes	

Name	URL	Location									
Open Government Website Of Mongolia	http://open-government.mn	Mongolia		yes		yes	yes				yes
Politika.lv	http://www.politika.lv/	Latvia	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes			yes	yes
Reconciling for the future online forum	No longer live	South – East Europe		yes							
Self-Sufficiency Task Force	http://www.gnb.ca/2026	New Brunswick, Canada			yes		yes	yes			
Seoul's Cyber Policy Forum	http://forum.seoul.go.kr	Seoul, S. Korea			yes		yes			yes	yes
Slashdot	http://slashdot.org/	International (US-based)			yes		yes		yes	yes	
Today I Decide (TOM)	https://www.eesti.ee/tom/	Estonia	yes	yes	yes		yes			yes	yes
V@W - International Virtual Workshop	http://tecfaseed.unige.ch/users/frete/ciarisworkshop/	International (in English and Portuguese)			yes		yes	yes	yes		
Zeno (Dito 2)	http://zeno8.ais.fraunhofer.de/zeno/	International (German)			yes		yes		yes		yes

4.3　Success Factors Matrix

During the analysis certain factors seemed to be positively correlated with success – i.e. when a factor was present it seemed to increase the likelihood of the initiative being successful. These factors ranged across people and technology – including various stakeholders (participants, organisers), architecture of information, functions of the technology and, in the case of Open Source Software, the development of the code-base itself. Many of these factors arise from a combination of people and technology. For example – facilitation is a human skill that can be learned: software may include functions that support facilitators in their task.

Given their importance to the success of other initiatives, these should be carefully considered within the WEB.DEP context.

1. **Shared agenda** (a strong theme or well-defined objective) - Participants want to work together or are keen to work on the topic. Users may share a strong relationship with the topic or a geographic area. Users may share a relevant attribute –e.g. age.
2. **Defined schedule** – A schedule that organises the discussion over a specific period of time. Often the themes of later discussions are influenced by the content/conclusions of earlier ones. The schedule may be defined by news/articles posted. A defined schedule gives participants a reason to return at a specific time.
3. **Carefully structured** – The tool is carefully structured/tailored to support the objective.
4. **Strong (active) facilitation**– Moderators take an active role in the discussion. Technology may be designed to support this (e.g. gives moderators powers to structure the discussion)
5. **Small groups** (an alternative to active facilitation)– Participants are split into small "discussion groups" either throughout the process or for certain phases. (These can be a good alternative to strong facilitation, as long as the group are clear about the aims and structure of their discussion)
6. **Impetus to support good forum use** - comprehensive netiquette policy/advice, some sort of technical support for this, a content rating system
7. **Open source technology** – More durable software (already de-bugged) allows more time to structure the initiative appropriately and focus on content
8. **Good publicity** – Initiative can achieve the number of participants it needs to succeed. Note that only a small percentage of visitors will actively participate.
9. **Political support** – The initiative has a relationship with government (or other powerful body) that implies its results will be acknowledges by and impact on government.

Their place within the Case Studies is illustrated by the matrix in Table 4: *Success Factors Matrix* below.

Table 4: Success Factors Matrix

Name	URL	Country/area	Shared agenda	Defined schedule	Carefully structured	Strong active facilitation	Small groups	Impetus to support good forum use	Open source technology	Good publicity	Political support
Albanian-Serb Information Exchange Forum (kosovakosovo.com)	http://www.kosovakosovo.com/	Kosovo and surrounding area	yes	yes	yes						
Armenian Forum	http://www.forum.am/	Armenia				yes	yes	yes		yes	yes
BBC Action Network	http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/actionnetwork/	UK (but with localisation)			yes					yes	
Caithness.org	http://www.caithness.org/	Caithness, Scotland, UK	yes					yes	yes		yes
Debatepedia	http://debatepedia.com	International (US.-based)			yes				yes		
Deme – Platform for online deliberation.	http://groupspace.org/	US-based	yes		yes		yes		yes		
Demos: Delphi Online Mediation System	http://www.demos-project.org	EU – Germany, Italy	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes		yes		yes
e-Community Council	http://www.ecommunitycouncil.org.uk/	Small towns in Scotland, UK.	yes								yes
e-consultation.org	http://www.e-consultation.org/	Ireland	yes		yes						yes
EPA.net East Palo Alto Community Network	http://www.epa.net/	East Palo Alto, US	yes					yes	yes		
Funredes Tradauto	http://funredes.org/tradauto/	South America, Caribbean	yes		yes	yes		yes			

Global Kids: Newz Crew	http://www.newzcrew.org/	International, though heavily US-based	yes	yes	yes		yes	yes		yes	
Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement Review	http://www.webdialogues.net/cs/ijc-greatlakes-home/view/di/77?x-t=home	Canada and US	yes	yes	yes			yes			
HeadsUp	http://www.headsup.org.uk/	UK	yes	yes	yes	yes		yes		yes	yes
Highland Youth Voice (Your Voice forum)	http://www.highlandyouthvoice.org/home.asp	Highland region, Scotland, UK	yes	yes	yes						yes
Junior Summit (1998)	http://www.jrsummit.net/	International, U.S.-based	yes	yes	yes		yes			yes	
Law Commission Forum	http://forum.lawcom.gov.uk/	England and Wales, UK	yes	yes	yes			yes			yes
Local Issues Forums	http://e-democracy.org/	Specific cities or areas in the US. or UK	yes			yes		yes	yes		
Ministry of Finance Forum - Macedonia	http://www.finance.gov.mk	Macedonia	yes								yes
Oncom – Online Communities	http://www.oncom.org.uk/	South East England, UK	yes		yes						yes
Open Government Website Of Mongolia	http://open-government.mn	Mongolia		yes	yes						yes
Politika.lv	http://www.politika.lv/	Latvia	yes	yes	yes						yes
Reconciling for the future online forum	No longer live	South – East Europe	yes	yes							
Self-Sufficiency Task Force	http://www.gnb.ca/2026	New Brunswick, Canada		yes	yes	yes			yes		yes

Seoul's Cyber Policy Forum	http://forum.seoul.go.kr	Seoul, S. Korea	yes	yes	yes			yes	yes	yes	yes
Slashdot	http://slashdot.org/	International (US-based)			yes			yes	yes		
Today I Decide (TOM)	https://www.eesti.ee/tom/	Estonia		yes	yes						yes
V@W - International Virtual Workshop	http://tecfaseed.unige.ch/users/frete/ciarisworkshop/	International (in English and Portuguese)	yes	yes	yes	yes			yes		
Zeno (Dito 2)	http://zeno8.ais.fraunhofer.de/zeno/	International (German)	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes		yes		

5   RESULTS

The objective of this section is to bring out the most useful aspects of the Case Studies for the WEB.DEP project. Thus the characteristics from the Context Matrix and the factors from the Success Factors Matrix are taken in turn. Ways to tackle or implement them are illustrated using examples from the Case Studies. The examples are designed to be illustrative rather than exhaustive.

The level of detail for each factor, the number of options shown and the most appropriate Case Study or method referred has been influenced by the early stages of the project. This includes discussions at the WEB.DEP technical meeting in Edinburgh and information destined for D2.1 (Current situation, high –level definition of WEB.DEP Priority areas and stakeholders) D2.2 – (High level Stakeholder Requirements: Part I: Content and Functions).

5.1   Characteristics from the Context Matrix

Consensus building

Note that consensus building is a specific objective and one not shared by all e-participation initiatives.

One way to support the building of consensus is to structure the discussion over time, so that there are clear stages for discussion, which build upon each other. In *Today I Decide*[18] the person making a proposal amends the proposal according to the comments received. All participants can then vote on this proposal. In many of the Case Studies, issues raised in one stage are summarised and feed into the next one. This helps to clarify and de-personalise disagreements, but relies on the facilitator's time and skill. An example of this is the *Demos* platform[19], which gives facilitators a range of tools to help them to summarise and structure the discussion.

A different approach to the problem is taken by *Debatepedia*[20] where contributors may only add "facts" from 3rd-party sources. This is particularly relevant to WEB.DEP, where facts are the basis of the news agencies' data.

Various ways to build consensus have been investigated by the consultations under the umbrella Case Study *e-consultation.org*[21]. Some of these consultations were based in places still riven by conflict. One method trialled was the use of preference matching software to establish areas of agreement.

Trust-building

A project with the objective of building trust between 2 groups of people is the *Albanian-Serb Information Exchange Forum*[22]. This involved an initiative in which Albanian and Serb journalists worked together and created a shared (and public) resource for news and information. The website was edited and moderated by journalists from one country one day and the other the next.

In other projects, the trust-building has been based on increasing government transparency. Publishing government processes online, opens them to public and expert scrutiny as well as increasing understanding. This was a major objective in the *Armenian Forum*[23], the

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[18] https://www.eesti.ee/tom/, Estonia, Case Study 27
[19] http://demos-project.org/index.html Germany and Italy, Case Study 7
[20] http://debatepedia.com/ US-based, Case Study 5
[21] http://www.e-consultation.org/ Ireland Case Study 9
[22] http://www.kosovakosovo.com/, Case Study 1
[23] http://www.forum.am/, Armenia, Case Study 2

Macedonian Ministry of Finance Forum[24] and the *Open Government Website of Mongolia*[25]. This is also considered to be a major tool in tackling government corruption. However, it should be noted that this process is much more powerful if it includes opportunities for real participation.

Deliberation support

Many of the forums studied provided features to encourage deliberation, for example by helping participants to interact with each other's contributions. At the most basic level, these include simple threading mechanisms, such as the "reply to this" link following each comment in the *Highland Youth Voice Forum*[26]. Other tools offer participants a range of functions to help them interact with comments in the discussion – both in terms of ways to view discussion threads and support for quoting or linking to other comments, when making a contribution. Facilities for users to preview their comments before posting are also helpful here. A good example of this is Drupal[27] - the forum software used by the *V@W (Virtual International Workshop)*[28] . In some of the Case Studies, deliberation support is enhanced by the facilitators' interaction with the discussion (see below).

Media involvement

The involvement of media organisations in WEB.DEP is one of its strengths. The news agencies will be able to supply good quality information to support discussions, publicise the initiative and increase its wider influence. A similar successful partnership is enjoyed by *Global Kids' Newz Crew*[29] and the non-profit media organisation PBS[30]. The site's editors (young members of Global Kids) choose stories from the news (from News Round Extra) as "Newz Flashes" and these form the basis for the groups' discussions. As well as providing inspiration and background for discussions, this process helps to develop media literacy (as well as engagement in the democratic process).

Information provision (focus)

For almost all the initiatives analysed, the provision of information was an important attribute. The challenge seems to be structuring the tool to promote use of this information to support discussion. Many initiatives chose a blog format (or something similar) to do this. For example the *e-Community Council*[31] and *Politika*[32]. The salient characteristic of the blog format here is a piece of information (which may be opinion-based) which is followed by comments. The comments begin as reactions to the information provided. This structures the discussion in terms of both theme and time: the initial piece of information serves to both inspire and define the topic for the discussion; the blog format seems to encourage visitors to comment on the most recent posts, which gives each discussion a natural time limit. In forums following a blog format, comments tend not be threaded.

In the Self Sufficiency Task Force[33], experts and non-expert citizens were invited to contribute "briefs" by forwarding them to the consultation team. These were made available on the website. The website also included online questionnaire (surveys to measure opinion) which were displayed with the results usefully collated, including graphs. Information from offline consultation events was also displayed.

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[24] http://www.finance.gov.mk/, Macedonia, Case Study 19

[25] http://open-government.mn, Mongolia, Case Study 21

[26] http://www.highlandyouthvoice.org/YourVoice/, U.K. Case Study 15

[27] http://drupal.org/

[28] http://tecfaseed.unige.ch/users/frete/ciarisworkshop/ Case Study 28

[29] http://www.newzcrew.org/, US-based. Case Study 12

[30] http://www.pbs.org/

[31] http://www.ecommunitycouncil.org.uk/ UK, Case Study 8

[32] http://www.politika.lv/, Latvia, Case Study 22

[33] http://www.gnb.ca/2026/ Canada, Case Study 24

Languages

A handful of the Case Studies were specifically chosen due to their mixed language context. This was tackled in 3 ways:

1. Make the discussion and some/all of the content available in a **common language** (not the first language of the majority taking part). The language used for this was English. An example of this is *Global Kids Newz Crew*. Although the initiative is based in the US, discussion groups are international.

2. Use **translators** – professionals or volunteers. In some initiatives, the translators also took on facilitation duties – if only by summarising comments to give a "gist translation". One example of this is the *International Virtual Workshop* where (mostly volunteer) translators provided gist translations of each post (between Portuguese and English). The *Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement Review*[34] used professional translators for its bi-lingual (French/English) forums.

3. Use **translation software**. Projects which routed all messages through machine translation needed to have language inclusion very high on their priority list, as well as having sufficient resources. The first of these is 1998's *Junior Summit*[35]. This managed to support English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Chinese (Simplified). Notably the summit existed for a limited amount of time and the process was supported by MIT. The second of these is *Funredes Tradauto*[36] which uses a series of processes to make comments suitable for translation and parse them through machine translators. Having worked on a variety of processes, they note a trade-off between quality of translation and cost of the system.

Some initiatives used a mixture of 2 and 3 – either by translators using online translation software or by facilitators amending messages before they were parsed by the machine translator. Only the Canadian example (*Self Sufficiency Task Force*) described above, used a mixed-language process to support a minority language within a nation. However, the PIECE researchers at Stanford, seem to be looking into ways to support the non-English-speaking community's use of *EPA.net (East Palo Alto Community Network)*[37].

It's also worth noting that issues surrounding language inclusion are rising up the agenda of international organisations like UNESCO.[38]

Digital divide

Many of the projects made specific efforts to include the digitally disenfranchised. These included workshops held offline with potential users to introduce them to online forums and e-democracy. In 2001, organisers of the *Armenian Forum* held workshops with potential users and facilitators to develop understanding of the objectives and functions of the forum, including an offline simulation of the forum. (These workshops in turn fed into the deign of the forum). Similar workshops would be helpful to WEB.DEP in helping journalists develop a shared understanding of the project. These could also feed into the development of governance statements such as "Conditions of Use".

Other projects had a strong relationship with technology access centres- places where technology and support are provided for people to access the Internet. See the *Armenian*

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[34] http://www.webdialogues.net/cs/ijc-greatlakes-home/view/di/77?x-t=home, US and Canada, Case Study 13

[35] http://www.jrsummit.net/, International, Case Study 16

[36] http://funredes.org/tradauto/ Based in South America, Case Study 11

[37] http://www.epa.net/ US, Case Study 10. See EPA.net Non-English Functionality Group (2002) Report on the Non-English Speaking Community in East Palo Alto in relation to their potential use of EPA.net http://piece.stanford.edu/piece-community-interviews.pdf

[38] E.g. see Pimienta, D (2005) "Linguistic Diversity in Cyberspace –Models for Development and Measurement" in Paolillo, J. Pimienta, D. and Prado, D. (eds)(2005): "Measuring Linguistic Diversity on the Internet" Paris, France, UNESCO. http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=12850&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

Forum's relationship with the Armenian Freenet[39] and *EPA.net's* relationship with Technology Access Points.

Comprehensive help pages, which supported participants on all aspects of forum use are also helpful here. The ones provided by *EPA.net*[40] and the *Virtual Workshop (V@W)*[41] were particularly good. The Virtual Workshop help pages include screenshots and the option to post a comment within the guide to request more information. "In this way, the other participants will also benefit from the answers."

Moderation and facilitation schemes

Ways to organisation moderation and facilitation are dependant on both resources and context, but can usefully be divided into 3 aspects:

1. **Governance statements for users** to abide by (e.g. Conditions of Use) and "netiquette" advice. These can be more or less prescriptive, from a couple of lines advising on good manners and legal issues, to a long list of what is desired and what is not acceptable. An example of the first is from the *e-Community Council* websites[42]. A very comprehensive statement is provided by *Caithness.org[43]*. (This is probably to be due to its diverse audience). Note the inclusion of an infraction system (red card etc). It should also be noted that the tone of the rules can help to set the tone of the forum. The rules from the *Law Commission Forum[44]* are to be commended due to their positive tone e.g. "Stay relaxed – though this inquiry is important and influential, taking part should be a positive experience."

2. **Guidance for facilitators/moderators**. Facilitation is usually used to describe a kind of *active* moderation, where facilitators intervene to improve the quality of discussion. Moderation tends to describe the removal or approval of each comment, though it can be extended to content-rating (e.g. giving comments or threads a number of stars). 2 good examples of this from the Case Studies are the *Armenian Forum*, where, as mentioned above, workshops were held with potential facilitators and other stakeholders to develop shared objectives for the forum, including the guidance rules. The other is the Local Issues Forum[45]. As the Local Issues lists are continuous, the moderator needs to "keep things going" as well as deal with off-topic messages or bad manners. Their moderator is also the forum's manager. The manager's job is to aid the smooth running of conversation – by enforcing the rules in the most diplomatic or practical way. Detailed instructions/advice on fulfilling this role are contained in The Forum Managers' Guide section of the Guidebook. These are recommended reading for anyone hosting or moderating any sort of online forum[46].

3. **Technology** to support facilitation/moderation. Most forum software enables moderators to approve or remove contributions. This process can be more or less public, but it's good practice to indicate that some comments have been removed if this is the case. Note also that posts can be checked before they are displayed (pre-moderation) or afterwards (post-moderation). Pre-moderation may cause delays in posts appearing on the website, which can be frustrating to contributors. Post-moderation may result in offensive material appearing temporarily on the site.

Some tools enable facilitators to manipulate comments in the discussion, for example

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[39] http://www.freenet.am/

[40] http://www.epa.net/epa_help/epahelp

[41] http://tecfaseed.unige.ch/users/frete/ciarisworkshop/?q=node/4

[42] Conditions: http://www.ecommunitycouncil.org.uk/bannockburn/item.asp?id=677#conditions

[43] http://www.caithness.org/ UK, Case Study 4.
Forum rules: http://forum.caithness.org/showthread.php?t=13581

[44] http://forum.lawcom.gov.uk/ UK, Case Study 17. Web Discussion Rules:
http://forum.lawcom.gov.uk/forum/web_discussion_rules

[45] http://forums.e-democracy.org/ US, UK, NZ Case Study 18

[46] http://www.e-democracy.org/uk/guide.pdf p26

by moving them from one thread to another –e.g. *Zeno*[47] which also supports the rating and tagging of content. *Local Issues Forum* software limits each member's contributions to 2 per day. The *Highland Youth Voice Forum* distinguishes comments from the moderator (called Expert Witness in the forum) by displaying them in a different colour.

Forums may also provide opportunities for users to rate each other's posts to reward and encourage good discussion: e.g. *Seoul's Cyber Policy Forum*[48] and *Global Kids Newz Crew*. The most elaborate of these systems is provided by *Slashdot*[49], which even includes tools for moderators to moderate each other's moderation!

Note also the method used by Oncom (Online Communities)[50], where form comments take the form of "letters to the editor" and begin "Dear Sir". This encourages contributors to continue politely.

In many cases, organisers find that contributors moderate themselves/each other and that very few comments need to be removed. A lack of comments is often a more serious problem. However, spam can be a problem and emotions can run high on certain issues. Some forums have also run into trouble with legal issues and the law may not be clear or consistent on this.

Various governance policies are being collated, to feed into Work Package 4 and the development of WEB.DEP governance statements.

Citizens raising issues

Participants may either suggest topics which editors or facilitators organise into discussion topics (e.g. by collating supporting information) or organise topics themselves. The *BBC's Action Network*[51] enables citizens to raise issues/campaigns called 'networks'. Seoul's citizens are also encouraged to forward topics for discussion in *Seoul's Cyber Policy Forum*. Seoul Metropolitan Government's website now also hosts a "Real-time Discussion Forum" where intensive discussions are tossed and passed between relevant civil servants, citizens and experts in real time. Topics arise here which feed into the Cyber Policy Forum.

Influencing policy or law

Today I Decide enables Estonians to present proposals for legislation. If a proposal receives sufficient support, it is discussed by the government. *Politika* is focussed on experts and citizens discussing government policy and has become influential due to the quality of its contributions. One of the topics in the *EPA.net* forums is Community Resources and City Government" which is used by city government to post notices and answer questions. The *Law Commission Forum's* objective is to involve citizens in the development (modernisation) of Law in England and Wales.

5.2   Factors from the Success Factors Matrix

These factors were identified in light of the analysis of the Case Studies. They should be considered as desirable factors in developing the WEB.DEP forum.

Shared agenda / objectives

Participants want to work together or are keen to work on the topic. Organisers are advised to carefully define their themes and encourage users to share objectives. In the Case Studies participants worked well together when they shared a strong relationship with the topic. This

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[47] http://zeno8.ais.fraunhofer.de/zeno/ Germany, Case Study 29
[48] http://forum.seoul.go.kr Korea, Case Study 25
[49] http://slashdot.org/ US-based Case Study 26
[50] http://www.oncom.org.uk/, UK, Case Study 20
[51] http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/actionnetwork/ UK, Case Study 3

may be concern and affection for their local area: e.g. *Local Issues Forums* and *Seoul's Cyber Policy Forum.* Some initiatives encouraged communities to form and govern themselves, by putting people together and giving them well-defined tasks and objectives: e.g. 1998's *Junior Summit*[52]. Users here were also bound by the shared attribute of age – in this case "not adult".

Defined schedule

Related to the Shared Agenda factor is Defined Schedule. This refers to a schedule that organises the discussion over a specific period of time. The questions posed in later discussions are influenced by the content/conclusions of earlier ones. The schedule may be defined by news or articles posted. A defined schedule gives participants a reason to return at a specific time. Theorists of online community, such as Kim[53] call these reasons "events". These mark stages in the community's lifecycle, as well as encouraging visits and contributions. *Zeno* and *Demos* are designed for consultations in which one stage feeds into the next in a planned way. The *International Virtual Workshop* also held its discussions in stages and held planned events in the form of online presentations by experts, followed by discussion[54]. The *Great Lakes Dialogue* agenda[55] was structured over 4 days, with a different topic each day. *Global Kids Newz Crew* groups each run for a set amount of time. Groups can vote to continue for another set period.

Carefully structured

The tool is carefully structured/tailored to support the objective. This may usefully include the 2 points above- shared objectives and a defined schedule, but primarily refers to the architecture of the website. For example, it must be easy for users to move between background information and discussion. The *Great Lakes Dialogue* is a good example of this, with tabbed links to the agenda, discussion, panellist, participants, supporting library and guidelines clearly available on each page. In addition, text links under each day's topic provide information about that topic's panellists and a summary of the discussion.

Many of the initiatives also included space for introductions or more open discussion. Encouraging participants to say something about themselves in an introduction (or as part of a public "profile") gives them a persona to live up to. It also encourages other participants to consider them as human beings – rather than abstracts represented by text. To this end, some forums (e.g. the *Local Issues Forums*) insist participants use their real names. The *International Virtual Workshop* included a space it referred to as a café. Newz Crew groups are encouraged to begin by introducing themselves, including what they hope to gain by taking part: "Self-introductions are critical to a good start. Without them, you're talking to a bunch of strangers!"[56]

Strong (active) facilitation

Many of these projects have benefited from moderators taking an active role in the discussion. Technology may be designed to support this (e.g. by giving moderators powers to structure the discussion). Strong facilitation is particularly useful for diverse groups and people new to online community forums. Moderators can also be used to keep discussions moving forwards towards their goal as in this description from the *Demos* project: Moderators summarise the discussion and choose main issues/agreements to move forward from one phase of the discussion to the next. Moderators also manage the discussion by summarising the developing debate on a regular basis, trying to tease out and manage emerging conflicts and answering questions. They also deal with bad manners and potential conflict. In many of

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[52] See especially Cassell, J., Tversky, D. (2005). "The Language of Online Intercultural Community Formation in Junior Summit '98" in "Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication".
http://www.soc.northwestern.edu/justine/publications/JCMC.Cassell.Tversky.pdf
[53] Kim, A.J. (2000) "*Community building on the Web*" Berkeley, CA: Addison Wesley
[54] See the workshop's agenda: http://tecfaseed.unige.ch/users/frete/ciarisworkshop/?q=node/30
[55] http://www.webdialogues.net/cs/ijc-greatlakes-agenda/view/di/77?x-t=agenda.view
[56] http://newzcrew.org/webx?98@440.Kpg9agRZsFG.0@sgd_process.html

the projects, it was suggested that this should be done away from the forum. From the *Demos* Hamburg City debate: "In general the moderators used two different ways to communicate with the users: messages in the forum (one-to-all-communication) and messages in the personal area or emails (one-to-one-communication). The strategy of the moderators was to intervene as early as possible. Nearly all messages concerning violations of rules were sent by email instead of posting them into the forum, in order to not disturb the constructive discussion. Almost all of the admonished participants acted insightfully and changed their behaviour after such an intervention." [57]

The various roles of a moderator are nicely illustrated by the *HeadsUp*[58] moderators. These are presented as characters, with each character taking on a facilitation role or attribute. For example, "BigEd" looks like a scientist and asks for facts and evidence – "It's natural to disagree during a discussion. You can feel so strongly about an issue that you will want to convince people that you're are right. Best way to do this is back up your argument or opinion with stats, quotes, figures and details. In the spirit of good science, you'll see me on the site when I think people need more evidence to back up their argument. But feel free to ask questions too."[59]

Small groups

While large and diverse groups seem to benefit from active facilitation, small groups seem to manage themselves, as long as they are clear about their task. This process is used in the *Global Kids Newz Crew* groups, who use software developed by WebLab[60] for the process. WebLab have been developing this process for nearly 10 years. They call it Small Group Dialogue and it is well documented and evaluated[61]. The Junior Summit is another example in which small groups worked very well with people new to online discussions.

This technique needs to be pre-planned, but is less resource intensive than active facilitation once it gets going.

Impetus to support good forum use

There are 2 aspects to this:
1. Comprehensive policy or advice on forum use: "netiquette". Well thought out Forum Rules, such as those provided by the *Law Commission Forum* are a vital first step here. More in depth advice is helpful, such as that provided in the *Local Issues Forum* Handbook[62].
2. Some sort of impetus to follow this advice –e.g. featured discussions, as in *Seoul's Cyber Policy Forum* and *Newz Crew*. Technical support is often given for these, such as a function to nominate good discussions or rate comments. *Slashdot* has evolved the most comprehensive system for this, as mentioned above.

Open source technology

More durable software (already de-bugged) allows more time to structure the initiative appropriately and focus on content. While the resources needed to tailor software to a specific project should not be underestimated, this activity mostly takes place early on in a

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[57] Rolf Lührs, Steffen Albrecht, Maren Lübcke, Birgit Hohberg (2006) "How to Grow? Online Consultation about Growth in the City of Hamburg: Methods, Techniques, Success Factors" http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/other/ unpan024321.pdf
[58] http://www.headsup.org.uk/ UK, Case Study 14
[59] The "Heads" page: http://www.headsup.org.uk/content/default.asp?page=s5_2
[60] http://www.weblab.org/
[61] See Small Group Dialogue history: http://www.weblab.org/sgd/history.html and evaluation http://www.weblab.org/sgd/evaluation.html Their most famous dialogue is "Listening to the City" http://dialogues.listeningtothecity.org/ a post September 11th dialogue in New York
[62] the Local Issues Forum Guidebook http://www.e-democracy.org/uk/guide.pdf. See p18 "How to Effectively Participate in a Local Issues Forum"

project. When using proprietary software, new bugs become apparent as the project takes its course, often arising at inconvenient times (when the forum starts to be busy or after the technical team have left the project). Modular Open Source systems also make it easier to add, remove or modify elements at a later date. Many of the projects here have developed technology for e-democracy (or similar) and made it available via Open Source licensing: e.g. *Demos*[63] and *Zeno*[64]. *Debatepedia* are also making their logic tree/wiki software available. The GroupServer[65] tool was further developed to support the *Local Issues Forums*. Other projects use well established Open Source tools: the forums of Caithness.org use vBulletin[66]. One of the most successful adaptations was made by the organisers of the Virtual International Workshop, who used Drupal[67]. Note that Drupal runs on English by default, but software can be downloaded to translate the interface. Available languages include Albanian, Serbian and Greek.

Good publicity

Good publicity is vital to secure the number of participants a project needs to succeed - especially considering that only a small percentage of visitors will actively participate. In the Case Studies, this publicity came from one of 2 sources:

1. Prominent links from a busy government website, as in government initiated projects like *Seoul's Cyber Policy Forum.*
2. Publicity via a media organisation involved in the project, such as the *BBC's Action Network.* However, involvement does not always result in adequate long-term publicity –There is currently no mention of the Action Network on the BBC website's home page[68].

Any offline publicity should prominently display the website's URL.

Political support

The initiative has a relationship with government (or other powerful body) that implies its results will be acknowledged by and impact on government. This not only increases the possible influence of the project, but increases people's desire to participate. *HeadsUp* is an example of a project that was not started by the government, but has built a strong relationship with various government bodies in the UK. Representatives at Parliaments and Assemblies take part in the forums and its discussions have been mentioned in the House of Commons at Westminster. This has increased its reputation for efficacy and more young people and teachers want to take part.

Caithness.org is an example of a popular grassroots site that local Councillors, Members of the Scottish Parliament and Members of Parliament have realised is a both a useful resource and something they cannot afford to ignore.

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[63] http://www.wornex.com/content/view/16/83/

[64] https://developer.berlios.de/projects/zeno/

[65] http://groupserver.org/

[66] http://www.vbulletin.com/

[67] http://drupal.org/

[68] http://www.bbc.co.uk/

6   CONCLUSIONS

This report aims to identify current best practice in e-participation. In order to scope the report to the time available and its position within the WEB.DEP project's deliverables, the search focussed on those aspects of e-participation felt to be particularly relevant. Thus characteristics of the project as outlined in the Technical Annex and identified as relevant to the context were defined. These were used to guide the search for Case Studies and the development of the framework used to analyse them.

29 Case Studies were chosen, both from within and outside the EU. Care was taken to include initiatives based in contexts of "new democracies". Some bias crept in towards choosing initiatives which used English as one of their main working languages.

A framework for analysing the Case Studies was developed, based on amending current e-participation analysis frameworks to suit the WEB.DEP context. The Case Studies were analysed using the framework and this full analysis forms the Appendix to this report, to be used in tandem with it. Where possible, contact was made with people involved in the each Case Study, so that they could review and improve our analysis of their project.

In order to present the results of this analysis in the most useful way, we returned to the characteristics which we used to describe WEB.DEP. These were identified in each project and ways to tackle or implement them were illustrated using examples from the Case Studies. This formed one of the last parts of our analysis: plotting the characteristics against the Case Studies in a matrix – the *Context Matrix.* The illustrations using examples formed the first part of the results.

In order to draw out more examples of best practice within the Case Studies, a series of Success Factors were identified: when a factor was present in a Case Study it seemed to increase the likelihood of the initiative being successful. Given their importance to the success of other initiatives, these needed to be emphasised by this report. To do this, these factors were plotted against the Case Studies in a second matrix – the *Success Factors Matrix.* This formed the final part of our analysis. Examples of the success factors, reviewed and illustrated by examples from the Case Studies, formed the final part of our results.

Few of the results indicate absolutes or proscriptive functions, methods or actions. Rather, they show a variety of ways to tackle pertinent issues. In many places trade-offs need to be made between attributes or choices between different paths. In creating a specification for the WEB.DEP forum, choices will need to be based on the specific context of WEB.DEP –the situation within the Western Balkans, the objectives of the portal and the resources available in both the long and short term.

7 ANNEX

The Annex to this report is presented as a separate document to facilitate use of the report and Annex in tandem. It includes the full analysis of case studies using the WEB.DEP framework.