

Inclusion by eParticipation

Project abstract

Partners: University of Helsinki, Södertörn University College, Tallinn University, Ministry of Justice (Finland), Ministry of Gender and Equality (Sweden), Ministry of Justice (Estonia), mCult (Finland), eGovernance Academy (Estonia), City of Lahti (Finland), City of Botkyrka (Sweden)

As the Internet has become accessible to the majority of citizens in most European countries, it is well justified to consider new social media paradigm as a potential instrument of supporting citizens' inclusion and participation in the society (e-inclusion and e-participation). However, as emphasised in the EU's i2010 programme, and especially in the Riga Ministerial Declaration many obstacles remain on the way of harnessing the new possibilities to the service of facilitating inclusion and participation of marginalized groups, in particular, outdated administrative practices and incompatible technologies. This is valid also in the development areas of the Central Baltic countries.

Community and Collaborative Media (CCM), such as wikis, blogs and content sharing applications, appear to open new kinds of self-organizing community practices and applications that support these goals in a self-organizing bottom-up fashion.

i2010 programme's special emphasis is put in the opportunities that CCM offers for better inclusion of such social groups as immigrants, elderly, women, and youth. This project will focus on immigrant communities in three Baltic countries. The aims of the proposed project include bridging the governments' top-down participation practices and technologies on one hand and on the other, the tools, activities and concepts of citizen communities, in terms of interoperability and integration. The expected outcomes materialize as recommendations of bridging participatory activities of citizen communities with participation-facilitating approaches of governments by means of 1) Governance practices 2) Interaction and community design models 3) Interoperable and integrating technologies. Through these outcomes and actions, it is possible to enhance social inclusion, participation, equality and greater social cohesion among marginalized groups.

All the partner organisations has been working with these issues, but are convinced that through cooperation and collaboration these inclusion issues can be developed in more effective way. Proposed project would find solutions more effectively to mentioned challenges above and clearly bring cross-border added value, since all the partners are bringing in somewhat different expertise to benefit the objectives of the project.