Report by Serbian Commision for UNESCO
to the General Conference
On the Implementation of the Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace

GENERAL INDICATIONS.

The unstable political situation in Serbia and several changes of government has delayed the telecommunications sector regulation. The Community of Yugoslav PTT performs some regulation on technical matters, type approval, numbering and Master plan, but this body is financed by post and telecommunications operators and there is no independency in its operation. After the last change of the Government of Serbia, the Ministry of Transport and Communications was dismantled and the Ministry for Capital Investments took over responsibility for the telecommunications sector. The Telecommunication Agency, as an independent regulatory body with a wide range of responsibilities such as regulation, coordination, development, tariff regime, and also the issue of licenses for public telecommunications networks and services, spectrum management and technical approvals. On May 23, 2005 the Serbian National Assembly appointed the Managing Board, and this could be a first step towards regulating the sector.

DEVELOPMENT OF MULTILINGUAL CONTENT AND SYSTEMS

Serbian Language Contents

Serbia is in the early phase of content production. Internet penetration in Serbia is still around 20% of the population and is just crossing the threshold of the early usage. As the Internet user is right now changing from the very well educated urban English speaking to a more average Serbian citizen, the related "content industry" is preparing to take off.

Until now, Serbian language content has been mostly found in four categories:

- Contents targeted to the Serbian Diaspora (hundreds of thousands expatriates that have credit cards and will be the first target of S erbian Ecommerce)
- News magazines and Newspapers (targeted both to the Diaspora and to local consumers)
- Companies' commercial presentations
- Spontaneous, grass roots, academic and not for profit websites

News magazines and newspapers are actively developing their presence online. The relatively small investments needed for the operation (the content is produced anyway, for the printed version) has spurred various well done websites, part of which carries online the entire content of the printed version. The online presence of press is aimed at capturing market share while waiting for Electronic Commerce to be possible.

Companies' commercial presentations are mostly online brochures, which often carry outdated content and seldom carry also an English language version. Companies are not yet interacting with customers through their websites that are today more a matter of prestige and emulation than business tools.

Production of s pontaneous, academic a nd not f or p rofit c ontents i s v ery much active and often of very good quality, but obviously lack the continuity and timing of funded operations.

There are about 40,000 websites registered under the YU domain, while estimates guess that a comparable number of additional Serbian sites are under the N ET, O RG, B IZ, T V a nd C OM d omains. V arious s mall companies design, realize and manage websites (also very dynamic and interactive, and/or for Ecommerce) for third parties abroad, on outsourcing contracts.

UNESCO National committee on ICT, Serbia, during 2002-2006 was officially supporting Linux Center, for development of multilingual content for Linux applications. Linux Center is non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion of free software and open hardware. Goal of support and collaboration with Linux center, Belgrade, was innovation, freedom of information, freedom of assembly, freedom of expression that should be guaranteed and that modern technology is important phenomena in which those freedoms must be preserved.

Linux Center, Belgrade, Serbia, has organized training seminar for Roma people from Slovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro. Seminar was held in the village Cortanovci December 04-08, 2005. The participants localized 11 KDE packages dedicated for education and general purpose use. As far as we know, this is the first localization of free software o n Romani language. This project is supported by t he O pen Society

Institute, Hungary and Executive Council of Vojvodina. Participants wrote localization-primer that will be translated on several languages including Romani language. You can find localization-primer at:
http://www.gnulinuxcentar.org/localization-primer.pdf
In Serbia there are efforts focused on localization of Linux GNOME and KDE environments. Localizers of GNOME environment present their work on their site: http://www.prevod.org/. Localizers of KDE environment in Serbian, are gathered around their own site: http://www.kde.org.yu/

FACILITATING ACCESS TO NETWORKS AND SERVICES

In Serbia under the Law, the conditions and the manner of performing activities in the field of telecommunications are regulated in accordance with international legal standards; the Republic Telecommunications Agency is established; the powers for regulating relations in the telecommunications sector are stipulated; and it regulates the issues referring to the elimination of monopolies and monopolistic behavior; principles and procedures for granting operating licenses; regulation and control of telecommunications service tariffs under the conditions of a limited market; interconnection between telecommunications networks and operators; leased lines; scope, contents and quality of universal service, as well as rights and obligations of telecommunications operators in this field; radio communications; international telecommunications unless regulated by some other law; and other issues of importance for the functioning and development of telecommunications in the Republic.

Pursuant to Article 5 of the Telecommunications Law (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia no. 44/2003 and 36/2006), the Government adopts the STRATEGY for the Development of Telecommunications in the Republic of Serbia from 2006 until 2010 (Official Gazette of Republic of Serbia no.99/2006.) http://www.ratel.org.yu/doc_nov_2006/Strategy%202007-2010.pdf

Scientific research and development work are the pillars of the telecommunications development. Furthermore, education, scientific research and development work are key contributors to the knowledge-based economy. In accordance with the telecommunications development in the Republic of Serbia, one of the set priorities is the development of education, scientific and research potential in the Republic of Serbia.

Research and development are mainly financed through projects of the Ministry of Science and Environment Protection. In the period 2002-2005, 13 projects from the telecommunications area were financed. The total financial means on annual level amount to approximately 630,000 EUR, which is below actual needs. For the 2005-2007 periods, 12 new projects from the field of telecommunications have been approved.

DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC DOMAIN CONTENT

Open source software (OSS) usage was growing steadily between both individuals and companies, and the recent crackdown on software piracy, coupled with the law enforcement on copyrights, is giving a boost to OSS adoption.

ISPs (like in the rest of the world) were the first big adopters of OSS, for the reliability, security, interoperability of the server's software and today they represents very skilled competence centers, able to consult and to develop tailored solutions for their customers.

Other competence centers are under development in Technical and Business Universities, e.g. FON (the business faculty) is releasing the complete Serbian language documentation for the main desktop OSS software, while the Serbian language version of OpenOffice is ready.

Under UNESCO National committee on ICT sponsorship, Linux Center started its project to install free software in five high schools in Serbian cities Krusevac, Ivanjica, Sremski Karlovci, Backi Petrovac and Velika Plana. High schools in these cities will have installed GNU/Linux on their computers, various educational software and GNU/Linux distributions dedicated with specific subjects (bioinformatics, computer aided engineering, general education, electronics, music. In addition, teachers and the students will be trained how to use and to contribute to the public sources of knowledge such as Wikipedia, and open-access repositories of scientific, artistic, cultural and scholarly materials. However, a special emphasis will be given to training the how to use OpenOffice with social responsibility emphasized in methodology of training of use of OpenOffice.

A group of artists and people who like free software and modern technology realized a project to celebrate 150 years of birth of Nikola Tesla, a great inventor. Science and arts enthusiasts built a cluster based on Flashmob GNU/Linux cluster in downtown Belgrade and performed theatrical, musical and light installation artworks celebrating Nikola Tesla. The cluster software and scientific free software were made available free of charge to thousands of visitors of the cluster project presentation, which took place from July 05-10, 2006. The citizens saw various free software presentations that may be used in medicine, biology, chemistry, physics, math and related disciplines. Visitors who were interested in studying such disciplines were informed about open access repositories of scientific information. The project was managed and produced by the Belgrade Summer Festival (BELEF).

REAFFIRMING THE EQUITABLE BALANCE BETWEEN THE INTERESTS OF RIGHTS-HOLDERS AND THE PUBLIC INTEREST

Internet regulations - The Managing Board of the Republic Telecommunication Agency, in its session held on June, 6th 2006, adopted Rules on terms and conditions for Internet service provisions and on contents of authorization: http://www.ratel.org.yu/doc_sept/Rules%20on%20Internet.pdf

Public Information and Internet - Law on Public Information ("Official Gazette" No. 43/03) is the first law in Serbia that defines electronic publication of media outlet on Internet as a media outlet. According to the Law on Public Information, media outlets shall comprise newspapers, radio and television programs, news agency services, Internet and other electronic editions of media outlets as well as other public information media that use words, images and sound to publish ideas, information and opinions intended for public dissemination and to be used by an unspecified number of users.

Copyright - The recent new Copyright Law meets the modern standards and is in line with EU recommendation and WTO TRIPS. The Agency for Intellectual Property Rights is in course of reorganization, with a project funded by EAR that will results in effective capability of enforcing IPRs.

Privacy - Serbia has a Law on the Protection of Personal Data (No. 139, enacted 12 May 1998) that is in line with the most common EU and western regulations.

FINAL COMMENTS

Serbia is still in the phase of building infrastructure for distributing Internet access and the investments in services are waiting for infrastructure buildup. There is wide expectation that the boom for Internet services, e-commerce, marketplaces and value added applications will begin in 2007, after the completion of spending in equipment and infrastructure. Until now most players in the Internet area are undercapitalized. Moreover an entrepreneurial culture of surviving in an adverse environment has been obstacle to medium term development projects. An eager market has been forgiving toward quality issues.

While for high income countries the main reasons to adopt OSS are security, functionalities and control, in Serbia OSS is the sole possibility to join the Information and Knowledge Based Society. The adoption of OSS in Serbia is one of the ways that allows the low budget building of national skills in software development, and the path for SME and Public Administration informatization to avoid software piracy (e.g. the illegal copying of software).

Often the general vision is to spread the use of OSS to foster ICT usage in the society, and to use non OSS software when and where needs arises (e.g. for big enterprises databases, complex billing solutions, etc.).